PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 187

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FOURTH SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTIETH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1990-91

COMPRISING PERIOD
4 March—15 March 1991

328.42
REFERENCE LIBRARY
-5 OCT 1991

ISBN 0 10 681187 8

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(FORMED BY THE RT. HON. JOHN MAJOR, MP, NOVEMBER 1990)

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Waddington, QC.
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Norman Lamont, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE—The Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY—The Rt. Hon. John Wakeham, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY—The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER—The Rt. Hon. Chris Patten, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke, MP
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. Michael Howard, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. David Hunt, MBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH—The Rt. Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Ian Lang, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. David Mellor, QC, MP

LAW OFFICERS

ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
LORD ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Alan Rodger, Esq, QC

MINISTERS NOT IN THE CABINET

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. Richard Ryder, OBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE, (MINISTER FOR THE ARTS)—The Rt. Hon. Tim Renton, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE—
- Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. Lynda Chalker, MP
- The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Caithness
- The Hon. Douglas Hogg, QC, MP
- Tristan Garel-Jones, Esq, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE, HOME OFFICE—
- The Rt. Hon. John Patten, Esq, MP
- The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Angela Rumbold, CBE, MP
- The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers

FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Hon. Francis Maude, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, TREASURY—Mrs. Gillian Shephard, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT—
- Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities—Michael Portillo, Esq, MP
- Minister for the Environment and Countryside—David Trippier, Esq, RD, MP
- Minister for Housing and Planning—Sir George Young, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE—
- Minister of State for Defence Procurement—The Rt. Hon. Alan Clark, MP
- Minister of State for the Armed Forces—The Hon. Archibald Hamilton, MP

MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE—Tim Eggar, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT—
- Minister for Public Transport—Roger Freeman, Esq, MP
- Minister for Aviation and Shipping—The Lord Brabazon of Tara

MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY—
- Minister for Social Security and Disabled People—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Scott, MBE, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE, NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE—
Paymaster General—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Belstead
Minister of State—Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—The Baroness Trumpington
MINISTER OF STATE, WELSH OFFICE—Sir Wyn Roberts, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY—
Minister for Industry—The Lord Hesketh
Minister for Trade—The Hon. Tim Sainsbury, MP
Minister for Corporate Affairs—John Redwood, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH—
Minister for Health—Mrs. Virginia Bottomley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, SCOTTISH OFFICE—Michael Forsyth, Esq, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—
MINISTER—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Baroness Trumpington
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES—
David Maclean, Esq, MP
David Curry, Esq, MP

Arts and Libraries, Office of—
MINISTER FOR THE ARTS—The Rt. Hon. Tim Renton, MP

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—
The Rt. Hon. Chris Patten, MP

Civil Service, Office of the Minister for the—
PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE (MINISTER FOR THE ARTS)—The Rt. Hon. Tim Renton, MP

Defence—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—The Rt. Hon. Alan Clark, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—The Hon. Archibald Hamilton, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—Kenneth Carlisle, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—The Earl of Arran

Education and Science—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Tim Eggar, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Alan Howarth, Esq, CBE, MP
Michael Fallon, Esq, MP
Robert Atkins, Esq, MP (Minister for Sport)

Employment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Michael Howard, QC, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Robert Jackson, Esq, MP
Eric Forth, Esq, MP
The Viscount Ullswater

Energy—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. John Wakeham, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
David Heathcoat-Amory, Esq, MP
The Hon. Colin Moynihan, MP

Environment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities—Michael Portillo, Esq, MP
Minister for the Environment and Countryside—David Trippier, Esq, RD, MP
Minister for Housing and Planning—Sir George Young, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Tony Baldry, Esq, MP
The Baroness Blatch, CBE
Robert Key, Esq, MP
Tim Yeo, Esq, MP

Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. Lynda Chalker, MP
The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Caithness
The Hon. Douglas Hogg, QC, MP
Tristan Garel-Jones, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—The Hon. Mark Lennox-Boyd, MP

Health—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH—The Rt. Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Health—Mrs. Virginia Bottomley, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Baroness Hooper
Stephen Dorrell, Esq, MP

Home Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. John Patten, Esq, MP
The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Angela Rumbold, CBE, MP
The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Peter Lloyd, Esq, MP

Law Officers' Department—

ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP

Lord Advocate's Department—

LORD-ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Alan Rodger, Esq, QC

Lord Chancellor—

The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern

Northern Ireland Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Belstead
MINISTER OF STATE—Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Richard Needham, Esq, MP
Jeremy Hanley, Esq, MP

Privy Council Office—

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Waddington, QC.
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Tim Renton, MP

Scottish Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Ian Lang, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Michael Forsyth, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, MP
The Lord Strathclyde
Allan Stewart, Esq, MP

Social Security—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY—The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Social Security and Disabled People—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Scott, MBE, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Lord Henley
Michael Jack, Esq, MP
Miss Ann Widdecombe, MP

Trade and Industry—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—
The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Industry—The Lord Hesketh
Minister for Trade—The Hon. Tim Sainsbury, MP
Minister for Corporate Affairs—John Redwood, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDUSTRY AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS—Edward Leigh, Esq, MP

Transport—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Public Transport—Roger Freeman, Esq, MP
Minister for Aviation—The Lord Brabazon of Tara
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Christopher Chope, Esq, OBE, MP, (Minister for Roads and Traffic)
Patrick McLoughlin, Esq, MP, (Minister for Shipping)

Treasury—
PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Norman Lamont, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. David Mellor, QC, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Hon. Francis Maude, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Mrs. Gillian Shephard, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY—John Maples, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. Richard Ryder, OBE, MP
LORDS COMMISSIONERS—
The Hon. Tom Sackville, MP
Sydney Chapman, Esq, MP
Greg Knight, Esq, MP
Irvine Patnick, Esq, OBE, MP
Nicholas Baker, Esq, MP
ASSISTANT WHIPS—
Timothy Wood, Esq, MP
Timothy Boswell, Esq, MP
Neil Hamilton, Esq, MP
Timothy Kirkhope, Esq, MP
David Davis, Esq, MP

Welsh Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. David Hunt, MBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Sir Wyn Roberts, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Nicholas Bennett, Esq, MP

Her Majesty's Household—
LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Airlie, KT, GCVO
LORD STEWARD—The Viscount Ridley, TD
MASTER OF THE HORSE—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Westmorland, KCVO
TREASURER—Alastair Goodlad, Esq, MP
COMPTROLLER—David Lightbown, Esq, MP
VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—John Taylor, Esq, MP
CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Denham, KBE
CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—The Viscount Davidson
LORDS IN WAITING—The Viscount Long, The Lord Reay, The Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne, The Lord Cavendish of Furness, The Viscount Astor

---

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—The Rt. Hon. Michael Alison, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

THE SPEAKER—Rt. Hon. Bernard Weatherill, MP

CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Rt. Hon. Harold Walker, MP

FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Sir Paul Dean, MP

SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Miss Betty Boothroyd, MP

CHAIRMEN'S PANEL—

Patrick Cormack, Esq, MP, Stan Crowther, Esq, MP, Dame Janet Fookes, MP, James Hill, Esq, MP, Norman Hogg, Esq, MP, Geraint Howells, Esq, MP, Roy Hughes, Esq, MP, Sir John Hunt, MP, David Knox, Esq, MP, James Lamond, Esq, MP, Michael Latham, Esq, MP, Ted Leadbitter, Esq, MP, Geoffrey Lofthouse, Esq, MP, John McWilliam, Esq, MP, Michael J. Martin, Esq, MP, Sir Anthony Meyer, MP, Michael Morris, Esq, MP, Robert Rhodes James, Esq, MP, Sir Giles Shaw, MP, Sir Michael Shaw, MP, Michael Shersby, Esq, MP, Sir John Stradling Thomas, MP, Nicholas Winterton, Esq, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—

Rt. Hon. The Speaker (Chairman), Alan Beith, Esq, MP, Dr. John Cunningham, MP, Rt. Hon. Sir Barney Hayhoe, MP, Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP, Rt. Hon. Peter Shore, MP

SECRETARY OF THE COMMISSION—W. A. Proctor

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—

Sir Clifford Boulton, KCB (Chairman), Sir Alan Urwick, KCVO, CMG, D. Menhennet, DPhil., G. A. Roberts, I. D. Church, W. J. J. Smillie, FHCIMA, FCFA, ACF

SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—B. A. Wilson

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

SPEAKER'S SECRETARY—P. J. Kitcatt, CB

ASSISTANT SECRETARY TO THE SPEAKER—Miss S. Holt

TRAINBEARER—D. J. Lord

DEPUTY TRAINBEARER—P. L. Warwick

DIARY SECRETARY—Mrs. S. Norvell

SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—Rev. Canon D. C. Gray, TD, PhD

SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—H. Knorpel, CB, QC, G. E. Gammie, CB, QC

ASSISTANT TO SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—P. Harvey, CB

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS

SECRETARY TO THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—R. I. S. Phillips

DEPARTMENT OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—Sir Clifford Boulton, KCB

CLERK ASSISTANT—D. W. Limon

CLERK OF COMMITTEES—J. F. Sweetman, CB, TD

PRINCIPAL CLERKS—
- H. M. Barclay (Public Bills)
- W. R. McKay (Journal Office)
- C. B. Winnifrith (Table Office)
- R. B. Sands (Overseas Office)
- G. Cubie (Select Committees)
- A. J. Hastings (Select Committees)
- R. J. Willoughby (Private Bills)
- D. G. Millar (Financial Committees)
- M. R. Jack, PhD (Standing Committees)

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL CLERKS—S. A. L. Panton, Mrs. J. Sharpe, Ms. A. Milner-Barry, R. W. G. Wilson, W. A. Proctor, F. A. Cranmer, R. J. Rogers, C. R. M. Ward, PhD, Ms. H. E. Irwin, D. W. N. Doig, A. Sandall, MLitt, D. L. Natzler, E. P. Silk, A. R. Kennon, D. W. Robson, L. C. Laurence Smyth, D. F. Harrison, A. H. Doherty, P. A. Evans

SENIOR CLERKS—S. J. Patrick, D. J. Gerhold, C. J. Poyser, S. J. Priestley, R. I. S. Phillips, R. G. James, Ms P. A. Helme, D. R. Lloyd, R. A. Lambert, B. M. Hutton, J. S. Benger, DPhil, Miss E. C. Samson, J. M. Hope (acting), H. R. Neilson (acting), M. J. Reeves (acting), D. Steel (acting)

CLERK OF SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEES—K. J. Brown

ASSISTANT CLERKS—N. P. Walker, M. D. Hamlyn, P. C. Seaward, DPhil, C. G. Lee, C. D. Stanton, A. Y. A. Azad, C. A. Shaw, P. M. Hensher

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—G. E. Clayton, Miss R. J. Challis, P. G. Moon

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—L. L. Kaye, A. P. Hubner, Miss S. J. Fox, Mrs. P. Fisher, F. McShane, J. D. Whatley, S. D. Barrett, M. Clark, Miss A. M. Loader, Mrs. S. M. Barrett, Miss F. L. Allingham, Mrs. L. M. Nugent, J. A. L. Dresner, M. P. Oxborough N. P. Wright (temporary)

SPECIALIST ASSISTANTS—M. P. Hillyard, M. J. Cremin, Mrs. K. Lewis, E. Thompson, I. G. Henderson, J. K. Wheatley, Miss S. Phipps, PhD

EDITORIAL SUPERVISOR OF THE VOTE—G. H. Bright, MBE, DEPUTY—B. Tidball, ASSISTANTS—Miss B. Balcomb, Miss L. Lewis, J. Puricelli, K. B. Wood, P. D. Howlett, Mrs. L. R. Shade, P. A. Jack

EXAMINERS OF PETITIONS FOR PRIVATE BILLS—R. J. Willoughby, B. P. Keith

REGISTRAR OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS—A. J. Hastings

TAXING OFFICER—R. J. Willoughby

SUPERVISOR OF BROADCASTING—J. F. Grist (temporary)

TECHNICAL CO-ORDINATOR (BROADCASTING)—R. Longman, OBE (temporary)

SUPERINTENDING CLERK—R. A. Broomfield

CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—Mrs. B. Ward, Miss D. E. Symes, Ms. C. M. Genis, J. Hole, Ms. L. Gardner, Miss E. Segal (temporary), P. R. Coppack (acting)

DEPARTMENT OF THE SERJEANT AT ARMS

SERJEANT AT ARMS—Sir Alan Urwick, KCVO, CMG

DEPUTY SERJEANT AT ARMS—P. N. W. Jennings

ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—M. J. A. Cummins

DEPUTY ASSISTANT SERJEANTS AT ARMS—P. A. J. Wright, J. F. Collins

CLERK IN CHARGE—Miss S. J. Scott Thomson

ADMISSION ORDER OFFICE—A. Chipperfield, BEM, Mrs. S. J. Warren, A. J. Spencer

PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—R. T. Warboys

SECOND PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—R. H. Usher

SENIOR DOORKEEPERS—R. A. F. Chapman, J. D. Garnett, C. E. Gray, J. C. W. Cooper, D. L. Hurley, D. Shiels

HEAD OFFICE KEEPER—W. H. Hazard, MBE

SENIOR OFFICE KEEPERS—M. Bryant, K. R. Kemp, BEM, K. R. Dickason

ACTING NURSING SISTER—Miss L. Davies

DEPARTMENT OF THE LIBRARY

LIBRARIAN—D. Menhennet, DPhil

DEPUTY LIBRARIAN—D. J. T. Englefield

LIBRARY AND RESEARCH—

ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Heads of Division)—G. F. Lock, Miss J. B. Tanfield

DEPUTY ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Heads of Section)—S. Z. Young, Mrs. H. R. Coates, Miss P. J. Baines, BLitt, K. G. Cuninghame, Mrs. J. M. Wainwright, FIInfSc, C. C. Pond, PhD, Mrs. C. B. Andrews, R. C. Clements, Mrs. J. M. Lourie

LIBRARY CLERKS, SENIOR—Ms. F. Poole, Mrs. J. M. Fiddick, C. R. Barclay, Mrs. C. M. Gillie, Ms. C. E. Nield, R. J. Ware, DPhil, R. J. Twigger, B. K. Winetrobe, T. N. Edmonds, R. J. Cracknell, FSS, Miss O. M. Gay, Miss E. M. McInnes, Miss M. Baber, Ms. A. Muir, Mrs. H. V. Holden ALA, Mrs. G. L. Allen (period).

ASSISTANT—A. J. L. Crompton, E. J. Fishwick, MPhil, Mrs. K. Greener, Miss P. Strickland, Miss V. A. Miller, Ms. N. R. Donlon, Ms. H. M. Jeffs, J. R. Lunn, PhD, R. S. Dewdney, Ms. L. E. Sloman, DPhil, Mrs. P. Carling (period) Dr. A. Davies (period)

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—S. A. Wise

SENIOR LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—K. N. H. Parry, ALA, Miss C. E. Fretten, ALA, Mrs. P. V. Wiles, Miss I. O. White, ALA (acting)

EDUCATION OFFICER—Mrs. C. Weeds ASSISTANT—Mrs. C. C. O'Connor

PROJECT MANAGER, NEW BUILDING—Miss J. Seaton FLA

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. P A. Bozdan, E. L. V. MacGregor

HIGHER LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—J. A. Prince, MLS, Mrs. D. W. Clark, Miss M. H. Fletcher, Mrs. P. E. Cook, ALA, Ms. H. Armstrong, Miss E. J. Jones, ALA, G. Haig, Miss B. Mee, MIInfSc, Miss G. L. Cooper, Mrs. E. H. Riley, ALA, Mrs. F. M. Ward, Mrs. M. A. Azim, ALA, Ms. F. Whittle, T. C. Holmes, R. Freebury (acting), A. D. Parker, ALA, (acting) C. M. Sear (acting)

SUPERINTENDING CLERK—J. R. Hutson

EDITOR, WEEKLY BULLETIN—Miss B. A. Rowlands, ALA

LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Miss S. Holland, Ms. J. B. Hall, ALA, P. E. M. Ward, Mrs. J. M. Smith, ALA, Miss J. Lyall, Ms. Z. A. Smallwood, Miss C. Owens, Miss C. M. Blair, ALA, S. A. H. Jones, Miss D. J. Gillings, Miss L. K. Fleming, Mrs. J. Priestley, Miss P. Rix, Ms. A. Crook, G. G. Newall, (acting)

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss N. Harland, D. B. Inns, Mrs. A. J. H. Mara, D. A. Brown, J. P. Brevitt, M. Greenhill (Head Library Attendant), B. Smith, Miss A. J. Hatton, Ms. J. Fessey, A. J. Fuller, Miss J. M. Perkes, Mrs. H. Onyskiw, Miss N. Sutherland (acting)

VOTE OFFICE—

DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—G. R. Russell

DEPUTY DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—H. C. Foster

ASSISTANT DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—O. B. T. Sweeney

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—C. D. Lister

SUPERINTENDING CLERKS—Mrs. S. Fuzio, B. G. Underwood, A. J. Ashton (Sales Office)

VOTE OFFICE ASSISTANTS—T. S. Wilson, G. E. Howard, C. P. Williams, P. Hannett

ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT—G. A. Roberts

FEES OFFICE—

ACCOUNTANT—J. L. G. Dobson

DEPUTY ACCOUNTANT—A. J. Lewis

SENIOR ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT—A. R. Marskell

ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—M. J. Barram, Miss M. M. McColl, M. Fletcher, R. H. A. Russell

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. G. Crowther, Mrs. D. C. Hill (temporary), Miss P. J. Hurford (temporary)

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—R. Gunn, M. J. H. Caswell, Mrs. P. D. Page, Mrs. N. Norman, Mrs. J. S. Peach, Mrs. G. M. Baker, Miss R. Harrison, Ms. M. R. Morris (temporary)

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss D. E. Johnson, D. M. Allen, D. J. D. Woods, G. L. Turner, Miss P. R. Mills, Mrs. J. D. Mead, P. F. Dawson, Mrs. S. E. Caffrey, Miss S. V. A. Weaver, P. H. Olden, A. D. Rowlands, P. J. S. French, Miss T. D. Ruewell, C. J. Bumstead, Miss M. Oliver, Miss D. M. McGuire, Mrs. S. M. Chalmers (temporary), Miss V. E. Wilson (temporary), Miss D. O. McElderry (temporary)

ESTABLISHMENTS OFFICE—

HEAD OF OFFICE—B. A. Wilson

DEPUTY HEAD OF OFFICE—J. A. Robb

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. R. A. White, V. H. Stocker, N. P. Crawley (temporary)

PERSONNEL OFFICE MANAGER—Miss J. Bremner (temporary)

PERSONNEL OFFICERS—C. L. Watson, Miss C. E. Jackson (temporary), Miss Y. C. S. Bland (temporary)

COMPUTER OFFICE—

COMPUTER OFFICER—R. S. Morgan, FBCS, FIInfSc

ASSISTANT COMPUTER OFFICERS—S. J. Lewis, J. Fishenden

EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Mrs. J. M. Cleveland

INTERNAL AUDITOR—A. A. Cameron

STAFF INSPECTOR—R. C. Collins

WELFARE OFFICER—Mrs. A. Mossop

DEPARTMENT OF THE OFFICIAL REPORT

EDITOR—I. D. Church

DEPUTY EDITOR—P. Walker

PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT EDITORS—R. V. Hadlow, J. Gourley, J. Withers, W. G. Garland

ASSISTANT EDITORS—Vee Grainger, Miss V. A. A. Clarke, Miss H. A. Hales, Miss L. Sutherland, S. M. Hutchinson

COMMITTEE SUB-EDITORS—D. Crosswell, Mrs. A. Roberts, Miss V. A. Widgery, C. Fogarty, Mrs. H. J. G. Natzler, Miss M. Babington, Mrs. A. Street, L. Gilmore, Ms. G. Hardgrave, P. Oglethorpe, P. Hadlow, Miss C. Hanly, M. Watson, Miss K. Stewart, J. Ransley

REPORTERS—Mrs. E. J. Gregory, Miss J. A. Bradshaw, Miss E. Morris, Miss J. Goodman, Ms. J. Dall, Mrs. P. Pickford, Miss K. Myers, Ms. J. Burden, J. Robinson,

PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—D. N. Harrington, MBE

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBERS—Mrs. M. J. Harding, Miss J. L. Brown

PRINCIPAL HANSARD ASSISTANT—Miss R. Washington

SENIOR HANSARD ASSISTANT—J. Brake

ANNUNCIATOR SUPERINTENDENT—G. Carpenter

REFRESHMENT DEPARTMENT

GENERAL MANAGER—W. J. J. Smillie, FHCIMA, FCFA, ACF

DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER—E. J. Nash, MCFA

ASSISTANT MANAGER—P. Gale, MHCIMA

PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATOR—Mrs. S. M. Nicholls, FHCIMA, MIPM

PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO GENERAL MANAGER—Mrs. A. G. Lunn

BANQUETING MANAGER—C. J. Griffiths

CATERING ACCOUNTANT—D. R. W. Wood, FCA

ASSISTANT CATERING ACCOUNTANT—Mrs. B. A. Langley

EXECUTIVE CHEF—I. Gabay, MBE

HEAD CELLARMAN—D. Balcombe

HEAD STOREMAN—A. E. Edmond

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland

PARLIAMENTARY WORKS OFFICER—B. C. Sewell

HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent G. K. Dark

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—A. Blake

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—R. H. Hyde

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

FORTIETH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES VOLUME 187

EIGHTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1990-91

House of Commons

Monday 4 March 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensioners

1. **Mr. Dover:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners own their own homes.

4. **Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners own their own homes.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): The latest information shows that, in 1987, 49 per cent. of pensioners owned their own homes; 45 per cent. owned their homes outright.

Mr. Dover: Does my right hon. Friend agree that pensioners have become better off in the years of Conservative government? Will he confirm that, by 1989, 85 per cent. of them had telephones, 71 per cent. had washing machines and 62 per cent. had their own cars?

Mr. Newton: Indeed, all the evidence suggests that pensioners have been becoming considerably better off in general—although, obviously, with exceptions, to whom we have tried to give additional help through the income support rate. The increases in durable ownership are very striking, as my hon. Friend pointed out, especially in the number of those owning telephones, which has risen from just under half the total to over 85 per cent.

Mr. Robert Banks: Does my right hon. Friend agree that aspiring to home ownership is a basic human instinct and that the Government have made remarkable progress in satisfying that desire? Will he take positive steps to encourage banks and building societies to make incomes and payments available to pensioners on the basis of the asset value of the homes that they occupy, once the mortgages have been repaid?

Mr. Newton: I think that my hon. Friend is referring to a type of scheme which, as he knows, has been advanced with some success in recent years. I have certainly noted his suggestion and I am sure that it will be noted outside the House, too.

Mr. Winnick: I have been informed in a parliamentary answer that two thirds of pensioners have annual incomes of less than £5,000. What justification can there be for requiring those who either own their homes or rent accommodation to pay the poll tax—a tax which is levied on them in the same way and, even more important, in equal amounts as it is levied on multi-millionaires? Is not it very odd for some Conservative Members to be so determined to retain a tax which penalises pensioners, as it penalises so many others in the community?

Mr. Newton: I fear that the hon. Gentleman is once again engaging in extravagant generalisations while completely ignoring the fact that, because the calculation of community charge benefit is based on income support rates as a threshold, and because those rates are, owing to the premiums, higher for pensioners than for most other groups in the population, pensioners receive considerable help with their community charge payments.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Secretary of State accept that, although pensioners can own their own homes, it does not necessarily mean that they are wealthy? Of course, the increase in pensioners' average income is welcome, but

have not the Government a duty to do more and yet more for those who must rely on nothing more than the state pension?

Mr. Newton: As the hon. Gentleman knows, very few pensioners have only the state pension to live on, unless they are living in someone else's household. If they are renting accommodation, as many will be, they will receive substantial assistance through housing benefit; if they have only the state retirement pension, they are in any case likely to be in receipt of income support. The hon. Gentleman must not overplay his hand. We have been directing additional help to the least well-off pensioners —those on income support.

Benefits Agency

2. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes there will be in the service provided to claimants when the Benefits Agency comes into operation later this year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Services (Miss Ann Widdecombe): Customer service will be one of the new agency's core values. The prospect is of a more dynamic organisation, more responsive to change and to the needs of local customers, which gives better value for money to the taxpayer while at the same time providing a sensitive, caring and professional service.

Mr. Waller: Does my hon. Friend agree that many benefit offices have left and continue to leave a great deal to be desired in the speed and quality of delivery of service to claimants? Will the Benefits Agency make one of its main priorities an improvement in the quality and speed of service to claimants?

Miss Widdecombe: That will be one of the agency's top priorities. When the business plan and targets are published, they will be a source of reassurance. We are aware that the most urgent need is to improve service to customers. I commend the efforts made by the Keighley local office of which I am sure my hon. Friend is aware.

Mr. Battle: Is the Minister aware that the introduction of the new agency was partly forecast by the introduction of computerisation? As computerisation has been introduced staff have been made redundant in advance of the improvement in service. The result is staff cuts in offices which has reduced the quality of service. Could that matter be considered? In Pudsey, for example, it is a serious problem.

Miss Widdecombe: On the introduction of operational strategy we gave a guarantee that there would be no compulsory redundancies and there has been none. We will consider staffing as a result of networking, although we are in consultation with all concerned. So far, reductions have been achieved through natural wastage and voluntary agreement and we hope that that will continue.

Service Men's Families

3. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance he has given to local offices about benefit payments to families of service men in the Gulf.

Mr. Newton: Several instructions have gone to local offices on this subject. In particular we have emphasised the importance of giving help quickly and sympathetically to people who are likely to be in stressful circumstances.

Mr. Dalyell: My general impression is that local offices have dealt sympathetically and sensitively with those in emergency, straitened circumstances arising from the Gulf. Is the special allocation which was available in September likely still be be available to those who now come back in special straitened circumstances of one kind or another?

Mr. Newton: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks. I, too, pay tribute to the work of our local offices and the central office at North Fylde, which deals with war pensions claims. It is a matter of satisfaction to us all.

I am not absolutely clear what the hon. Gentleman has in mind with his latter point, but he must mean the special arrangements that we made in respect of assistance with travel and resettlement for people returning from the Gulf in the immediate aftermath of the Iraqi invasion. Those arrangements remain in place.

Pensioners

5. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of the average pensioner's income comes from occupational pensions, savings and earnings.

Mr. Newton: In 1987, 21 per cent. of the average pensioner's gross income was derived from occupational pensions, 19 per cent. from savings and investment and 7 per cent. from earnings.

Mr. Carrington: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that it is important that everybody in employment should be encouraged to make provision for their retirement? Is not the large increase in the number of people taking out personal pensions schemes to be greatly welcomed?

Mr. Newton: In a word, yes.

Dr. Reid: Should not every pensioner in Britain have two pensions: the first being the pension which the Government already give them and the second being the supplementary pension which they would receive, had not the Government, as one of their first and most scandalous acts, cut the link between pensions and earnings?

Although the Secretary of State boasted that fewer than 50 per cent. of British pensioners own their homes, will he confirm that the amount that has been lost by a pensioner couple because of cutting that link, £20 a week, is equivalent to a mortgage, even at the crucifyingly high rates of interest under this Government, of £12,500 a year? Why does not he do the decent thing, supplement the pension with the money that he has already taken away and allow many more pensioners to own their home?

Mr. Newton: The number of pensioners in Britain owning their own homes is likely to rise steadily because of the general rise in home ownership to which this Government's policies have significantly contributed, often against vigorous opposition from Opposition Members in respect of one of the main engines of that growth: the sale of council houses.

A growing number of pensioners have additional pensions, either from the additional SERPS pension or from occupational pensions or from the growth, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) referred, in personal pensions. That has happened a great deal more and a great deal faster than it would have had the policies of the Opposition remained in place.

Mrs. Roe: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the most positive contributions that the Government can make to raising pensioners' living standards is to take whatever measures are necessary to curb inflation?

Mr. Newton: Yes, I do. One of the striking aspects of pensioners' incomes is the extent to which they have gained from increases in savings income during the past 10 years—whereas the average value of pensioners' savings income appears to have fallen under the Labour Government.

Mr. Meacher: Will the Minister confirm that the figures that he has given today and on other occasions detailing the rise in pensioner incomes are completely out of date because they go up only to 1987, since when the average pensioner has become poorer as a result of high inflation, high interest rates, falling dividends, falling asset prices and rising poll tax? Will he have the honesty to admit that the Government failed the pensioner 10 years ago when they broke the pension link with earnings and that the market on which the Government have since relied to increase pensioners' incomes has also failed the pensioner? Is not he ashamed that, as a result, the British pension is now much the lowest in Europe?

Mr. Newton: Let me simply give the hon. Gentleman the figures in real terms—at constant prices—for pensioners' average income from savings in 1974, 1979 and 1987, the latest year for which, as the hon. Gentleman said, figures are available. In 1974 the figure was £10·70 a week; after five years of Labour Government it had fallen to £9·10 a week; after eight years of Conservative Government it had more than doubled to £20·10 a week. If the hon. Gentleman can take any satisfaction from the record of the Government in which he was a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the DHSS—a Government who reduced pensioners' incomes from savings—I shall be somewhat surprised.

6. **Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners have some form of second income to add to the basic state pension.

Miss Widdecombe: My hon. Friend will be interested to hear that, in 1987, 84 per cent. of pensioners received some form of income in addition to the retirement pension and other state benefits.

Sir Anthony Durant: The whole House will agree that those figures are very encouraging. Do not they prove that we should concentrate our efforts now on pensioners in the greatest need?

Miss Widdecombe: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is why we have already directed £200 million of extra support towards poorer pensioners and why we intend to devote a further £80 million, as already announced.

Mr. O'Hara: Is the Minister aware of the situation of widows on pensions? A constituent of mine was recently widowed and was therefore—rightly—in receipt of a widow's pension based on her husband's contributions. She inherited no occupational pension from him. She has worked and paid social security contributions all her life. In her late 50s she became unemployed and because of overlapping benefits regulations she is not entitled to any recompense for her lifetime's contributions. Would not such a widow feel cheated by a Government who can treat her in that way?

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that through the safety net of income support and other benefits we try to assist those who, through no fault of their own, may not have successfully made the provision that they originally intended. The benefits are regularly uprated and reviewed and we shall continue to support such people in that way.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my hon. Friend confirm that from 1979 to 1987 occupational pensions rose by 77 per cent. and that they continue to rise?

Miss Widdecombe: I can confirm those figures. We should also note that because of the abolition of the earnings rule, earnings are included in that additional income.

Mr. Allen: Will the Minister endorse the thanks of the Peterborough pension group that I met this morning to Peterborough city council for salvaging the concessionary fare scheme for elderly people which had been cut by the Conservative county council? Is not that another example of local government, of whatever political party, stepping in to salvage the Government's reputation over their treatment of the elderly? Does she agree with Julie Owens, the next Labour Member of Parliament for Peterborough, that the Government have taken from the married pensioner couple £1,000 that they would have had if the pension had been linked to earnings?

Miss Widdecombe: I find it increasingly distasteful that a party that completely decimated pensioners' savings by the inflation of the 1970s should have the gall to ask us to revert to the very system which produced no more than a 3 per cent. rise whereas we have produced a 31 per cent rise in pensioners' incomes. When the hon. Gentleman is talking to pensioners and others, perhaps he would tell them the absolute truth about how the Opposition's promises will be paid for.

Child Maintenance

7. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average assessment for child maintenance under the current system.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Michael Jack): A recent survey of DSS local offices and courts found the average child maintenance assessment to be £25 a week per family.

Mr. Burns: Does my hon. Friend accept that Chelmsford is by no means unique in having far too many single mothers who face financial hardship because of being abandoned by the fathers? Does he agree that it is a national disgrace that only [illegible] per cent. of mothers receive regular maintenance payments and that the current

two-pronged approach in the House and the other place to tighten up on maintenance should go a long way towards helping mothers?

Mr. Jack: First, I congratulate my hon. Friend on his continuing interest in this important subject. I agree with him. It is interesting that about 10 years ago 50 per cent. of maintenance orders were honoured. Today only 30 per cent. are honoured. The Child Support Bill would redress that and would compensate the taxpayer for the £300 million bill that he has to foot because people are not honouring their maintenance obligations.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister agree that a great deal of money would be available for child maintenance and other causes if there was a reduction in tax avoidance and tax evasion? Did he notice a recent parliamentary answer which showed that a married woman on an income of £1·8 million a day should be paying £262 million a year in income tax? Does he think that every woman in Britain with an income of £1·8 million a day should be paying income tax?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman tries to tempt me into areas that are rightly the province of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Government's tax policies have ensured that we have gained in terms of total cash revenues from income tax. That is why we have been able to make substantial increases in our social security budget, to the extent that this year we shall spend £60 billion.

Pensioners

8. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what extra help has been directed to lower-income pensioners in the last two years.

Mr. Newton: We directed an extra £200 million in income-related benefits to elderly and disabled pensioners in October 1989. We will be directing a further £80 million to pensioners aged from 60 to 74 from next month. These increases total more than a quarter of a billion pounds and are in addition to the normal annual upratings.

Mr. Bowden: I am reassured by my right hon. Friend and pleased to hear that the greatest resources are being targeted to those in the greatest need. Will he confirm that Government policy will continue to provide benefits to those in the greatest need rather than blanket cover for all pensioners?

Mr. Newton: I have made it clear on a number of occasions that we stick firmly to our commitment to protect the value of the basic retirement pension. We have faithfully done that and will do so again in just over a month. It is right to recognise, as I have consistently recognised in exchanges with hon. Members, that many pensioners do not have additional savings and occupational incomes. We have deliberately sought to steer additional state help to such groups and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support.

Mr. Skinner: Are not the Government creating another form of low-income pensioners? I refer to those who have an occupational pension of, say, £10 a week as a result of the husband having worked in the pits for 40 or 50 years. If that occupational pension is increased by 50p per annum, for example, housing benefit is lost and poll tax is increased. After two small increases to the state pension and the miners' pit pension, the widows of retired miners will be worse off than hitherto.

Mr. Newton: As with the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) the hon. Gentleman may not understand fully how the benefit system works. Not the least of the advantages of the sort of increases in income support pensioner premium rates to which I referred in my main answer is that they raise the starting point for assistance with housing costs and the community charge. They feed through from pensioners on income support to those who are slightly above that level. Those who are a little above income support level are also assisted by the changes that we are making.

Family Credit

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest figure for the number of families benefiting from family credit and the number benefiting from the predecessor scheme in 1978-79.

Mr. Jack: At the end of November 1990, the latest date for which comprehensive information is available, the family credit caseload was 324,000. This compares with 82,000 families on family income supplement in November 1978.

Mr. Amos: I congratulate my hon. Friend on being able to concentrate more resources on more people who are in real need. Will he consider the merit of abolishing child benefit and using the money to target more help to more people through that mechanism instead of giving over £1 billion to people who are very wealthy and do not need child benefit?

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for his appreciation of the help that we are giving to families with children. I remind him that on 24 October my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that

"child benefit . . . is and will remain a strong element in our policies for family support".—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1990; Vol. 178, c. *352*.]

My hon. Friend will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister accords with that view.

My hon. Friend's supplementary question refers to the breadth of support that we are now able to give through family credit and the higher premia in income support to families with children. It is our intention to continue to help poorer families in that way.

Mr. Madden: The Minister will understand that I was surprised and delighted when I telephoned the Minister of State earlier this afternoon and found that he picked up the phone himself. I hope that his office will be able to expedite payment of family credit to one of my constituents who won an appeal recently, thereby restoring the suspension of family credit in 1989. She is now owed £2,000. I hope very much that that sum will be paid promptly.

Family credit is no substitute for proper and adequate child benefit. The protests of mothers throughout the country at the way in which child benefit has been frozen and thereby reduced in value will become deafening as we approach the next general election.

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman will not expect me to comment now on the individual case to which he referred.

If he supplies me with the details, I shall follow up the matter. It is good to know that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State is multi-skilled, as we all are in the Department.

It is sad that Opposition Members are prepared to rubbish a benefit that can contribute about £50 a week to 17 per cent. of those in receipt of it, while 30 per cent. receive £40 and 65 per cent. receive £20 a week. That is substantial additional income for families who are back in work—some of them are in work for the first time—and making an effort to help themselves.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Does my hon. Friend accept that family credit is not only available to many thousands more families than its predecessor, family income supplement, but—and just as valuable—the average payment is more than double the value of the supplement which used to be distributed?

Mr. Jack: As I said in my opening answer, the present case load is about 324,000, compared with 82,000 on family income supplement. The benefit is more generously structured and, since the start of the present campaign to increase awareness of the benefit about two weeks ago, we have already received about 10,000 telephone calls from people interested in learning more about this excellent benefit.

Social Fund

10. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will review the grant element of the social fund.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Corbett: Will the Minister acknowledge that people who apply for grants from the social fund are among the poorest in the land? How can he pretend that there is any fairness or equity, when offices such as the one serving most of my constituency in Erdington will consider applications for grants only under the heading of high priority, which means that the majority of those applying for grants are refused before their case is considered? Will he now study the operation of the social fund grants and loans scheme, with a view to removing the cash limits and thereby making it fairer?

Mr. Scott: Expenditure on community care grants increased by 16 per cent. compared with the same period last year, so extra resources have been devoted to the system. I understand that the hon. Gentleman's local office is able only to consider high priority cases. We monitor carefully every aspect of the social fund and its operations, and later this year we shall have the results of the York survey and research into the operation of the fund and will take it into account at the time.

Sir Robert McCrindle: My right hon. Friend is aware of my somewhat dissident view upon the social fund. Could I suggest to him that, while I have no wish to return to the extravagent single payment scheme which was in existence under the previous Government, there is a case for assessing whether we have the balance between loans and grants absolutely right? Does he agree that, by giving loans to people in this section of society—they are indeed among the poorest in the land—we risk perpetuating the problem by not encouraging them to climb out of their difficulties and to cease to be reliant upon state benefits?

Mr. Scott: I certainly take account of what my hon. Friend says. I believe that in practice the social fund has proved to be much more flexible in giving help to the most vulnerable in our society than single payments ever were. We should not forget local authorities' responsibilities to enable people to establish or to maintain themselves within the local community.

Mr. Frank Field: As the Comptroller and Auditor General has said that the accounts that the Government submitted to him were largely worthless and meaningless, why should the House accept the Government's reassurance that the scheme is working well?

Mr. Scott: First, I think that the hon. Gentleman has somewhat exaggerated the Comptroller and Auditor General's comments and I am not surprised at that. In essence, we need to await the research findings which, as I have already said, will come out later this year. We have had a number of other reports which were mainly based upon small, unrepresentative samples. When we review the workings of the scheme we shall take account of all of that.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Is my right hon. Friend in a position to be able to tell the House how much it would cost to reintroduce a grant-based system, as suggested by the Labour party?

Mr. Scott: If we had projected the rise in single payments up to the present date at the rate at which it was growing when it was abolished we would be spending more than £1·1 billion on that scheme this year.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Are not the fund's rules in urgent need of change to address the plight of mentally ill patients, discharged from hospitals? How many of them are among the 779,000 who were refused help last year? How does he respond to the National Audit Office's strong criticisms of the fund and to Saul Becker, the benefits expert at Loughborough university, who described it as "an overwhelming disaster"?

Mr. Scott: I do not accept for a single moment that anyone who was really familiar with the workings of the social fund would support that. Of course, mentally-ill and mentally-handicapped people are a priority when community care grants are considered.

Pensioners

11. **Sir Trevor Skeet:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current value of the assets held by the average pensioner household; and what was the comparable position in real terms in 1978-79.

Miss Widdecombe: My hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that we estimate that the average real value of pensioners' assets doubled between 1979 and 1987.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that beneficial answer. Will she make a comparison with France and Germany, where house ownership is less extensive than in the United Kingdom? Will she also deal with the poorer section of the United Kingdom,

principally those who are over 70, because, although their gross income is considerable, their special circumstances mean that they come off rather badly?

Miss Widdecombe: As I said in a reply a short while ago, we are aware of the need to target pensioners with special needs, particularly those in an age group in which they could not take advantage of occupational pension schemes. We also wish to target those whose savings were completely destroyed by high inflation during the Labour Administration of the 1970s. In comparison with Europe, we come out well on pensions. A far higher number of pensioners own homes and other assets than is generally the case in the rest of Europe.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not true that, as a result of the Government's policy of paying low pensions, pensioners want higher and higher interest rates? Is it not incongruous that pensioners' interests are the direct reverse of the interests of the Government's economic strategy?

Miss Widdecombe: As the value of pensioners' income has risen 31 per cent. under this Government, it is a little extraordinary to talk about low pensions. Pensions have kept pace with inflation and we have kept our promises to pensioners to ensure that the value of their benefits is preserved. However, we have encouraged a great deal of other pensioners' income, such as occupational pensions and personal pensions. We believe that through that encouragement, pensioners are now able better to provide for themselves while we concentrate on those who cannot do so. Only certain forms of savings will be wholly dependent on high interest rates, which are not in the general interest of the economy. I do not believe that pensioners in the hon. Gentleman's constituency would, in general, want high interest rates.

Mr. David Shaw: Does my hon. Friend agree that the increased number of pensioners owning homes and other assets has resulted in more pensioners being able to live off their savings in recent years than there were in 1979? Page 18 of the social security expenditure report shows that, in 1979, there was 20 per cent. more reliance by pensioners living off their earnings, with the result that many of them were probably unable to retire.

Miss Widdecombe: My hon. Friend's analysis is right. We have already heard that the value of savings has doubled. The value of income has gone up by 31 per cent. Savings take many forms and the rapid growth in occupational pensions and in the greater provision that pensioners can make for themselves allows them to retire. That is why there are now more retirements at an earlier age and less pressure on people to continue to work, than under the Labour Government of the 1970s.

Severe Weather Payments

13. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the number of applications for severe weather payments which have been submitted since 7 February; and how many have been granted.

Mr. Scott: Information regarding the number of claims submitted in February, and the number of payments made is not yet available, but will be placed in the Library as soon as it is.

Mrs. Ewing: Does not the Minister understand that the fact that such information is not yet available shows the shambles that exists in relation to that form of payment? The retrospective nature of those payments is inadequate because people need to be able to turn up the heat at the time of the crisis, not worry about whether they will receive the money. The £6 referred to pays for one bar of an electric fire for fewer than 100 hours. Is it not time that an automatic and continuous provision was introduced?

Mr. Scott: This is exceptional help for use in special cold weather circumstances—a top-up scheme. The income support rates already include provision for heating costs throughout the year. During the recent cold snap, fuel companies made it clear that vulnerable people should feel free to turn up their heating and that companies would be prepared to consider making arrangements for phased payments if bills turned out to be high. In practice, we have had only a short spell of cold weather so far this winter.

Invalid Care Allowance

15. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women are in receipt of invalid care allowance; and what was the comparable figure for 1978-79.

Mr. Scott: There were 110,100 women receiving invalid care allowance on 31 January 1991 compared with 3,600 in January 1981, the earliest year for which such information is available.

Mr. Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that spending has gone up from £4 million to £200 million during the past 10 years? Does he agree that, once again, the Government are concerned with hot money, whereas the Opposition are concerned with hot air?

Mr. Scott: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. This is an excellent benefit that delivers good levels of care to severely disabled people.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Disablement Officers

28. **Sir David Price:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, whether there are any proposals to fund the employment of a disablement officer for every diocese.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): The Commissioners are not aware of any such proposals. The General Synod's board for social responsibility regularly considers issues involving the disabled. Each diocese has a social responsibility adviser.

Sir David Price: Is my right hon. Friend aware that despite what he said, access for people in wheelchairs is difficult or impossible in a significant number of Anglican churches and that some vicars and bishops are singularly negative in their attitude towards trying to solve this problem?

Mr. Alison: I am aware of the difficulties to which my hon. Friend refers. He may not be aware that more than half our Anglican church buildings are more than 500 years old, which is the starting point of the difficulties involved in ensuring easy access. I am glad to say that all new parish churches are advised to provide access for the disabled. Having been in touch with the rector, I am glad to be able to report that access will be provided at St. James, Piccadilly for the disabled visitor in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there are examples of excellence in terms of access to church buildings? Can we assume that he will do all that he can, in further consultation with those who can help, to lift the general standard up to that of the existing best?

Mr. Alison: Certainly it is the wish of dioceses and parishes to do everything possible to improve access for the disabled. All new churches are advised to provide easy access for the disabled. I repeat the point that I made to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) that many Church of England churches are more than 500 years old. Their early architectural design was not intended to accommodate wheelchairs and other such aids for the disabled, even if the wheel had been heard of in those times.

Diocesan Boards of Education

29. **Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will make a statement on the revenue implications of the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure.

Mr. Alison: This is not a matter for the Church Commissioners, but I understand that the Measure is not expected to have any revenue implications.

Mr. Field: Does the Commissioner accept that, while the Measure may not have revenue implications, it has other effects? The Measure gives the diocese greater power to direct Church schools than local authorities have to direct state schools. The House would take a dim view if any diocese tried to prevent Church schools from expanding their numbers.

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman will know that some of his reservations have been recorded in the ecclesiastical committee's draft report on the Measure. I am hopeful that, when the Measure is introduced in another place, the bishop who introduces it will address himself to the hon. Gentleman's anxieties and will, I hope, reassure him about them.

Archbishop of Canterbury

30. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what will be the salary and perquisites of the next Archbishop of Canterbury; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: The stipend for the next Archbishop of Canterbury will be about £41,000 a year. As is the case for all diocesan bishops, he will be provided with rent-free accommodation and an official car.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend wish the incoming archbishop every success and happiness in the important task that he is taking on? Will he invite him to dissociate himself immediately from the remarks made by the Bishop of Durham at the weekend and to express strong support for a proper victory parade and service of thanksgiving for success in the Gulf?

Mr. Alison: I do not think that Dr. Carey will be able to make a formal statement on such matters before his official enthronement in mid-April. Meanwhile, I note that at least two diocesan bishops—the Bishops of Chester and Peterborough—have dissociated themselves in the most robust terms from the comments by the Bishop of Durham and have expressed the hope that there should be such a celebration.

Redundant Churches Fund

31. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what is the budget of the redundant churches fund.

Mr. Alison: The maximum budget for the five years beginning on 1 April 1989 is £12·4 million.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the number of redundant and half-empty churches underlines the need for a more positive message to come from the Church in the 1990s than we heard in the 1980s?

Mr. Alison: I hope that the leadership of the new Archbishop of Canterbury, the decade of evangelism, and the striking growth in independent, charismatic, Pentecostal and Afro-Asian churches will register a significant growth in the next 10 years.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Smoking

32. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what progress has been made in implementing a no-smoking policy for the protection of the Commission's employees against passive smoking.

Mr. A. J. Beith (On behalf of the House of Commons Commissioners): No-smoking areas have already been established in the Department of the Library. Their designation in other areas occupied solely by staff employed by the House of Commons Commission is a matter for individual heads of department, who are understood to be willing to establish no-smoking areas where accommodation will allow and where there is evidence of sufficient demand. The co-ordination of policy in this respect is initially a matter for the House of Commons Whitley committee.

Mr. Amos: I am grateful for that reply, but could the hon. Gentleman give me some idea when those people who want to eat and work in a smoke-free environment can do so, bearing in mind that passive smoking increases the chance of lung cancer by between 10 and 30 per cent.? People have the right to eat and work in a smoke-free environment.

Mr. Beith: I fully share the hon. Gentleman's view. Responsibility for such matters extends beyond the House

of Commons Commission which must have regard only for the staff whom it employs. So far, I am not aware that staff have asked for such facilities but not been given them. The provision of such facilities in areas occupied by Members' staff and Members themselves falls within the remit of the Services Committee.

Mr. Harris: Will the hon. Gentleman have a word with the Chairman of the Services Committee about refreshment facilities for Members? Many of us find it tiresome, to put it mildly, that smoking continues in the Members' Tea Room. Dare I say that a certain hon. Lady from the Opposition Benches, who shall remain nameless and who is not here now, persists in smoking small and acrid cigars in the confined space of the Members' Cafeteria.

Mr. Beith: These are clearly matters for the Services Committee. I have long used the section of the Tea Room which I understood to be a no-smoking area.

Mr. Paice: Will the hon. Gentleman also remember that just as people should have the choice of being where smoking is not allowed, other people should be allowed to exercise the right to smoke? Whatever one's individual feeling on the subject, the principle of choice should be paramount. Both groups of people should have equal opportunities in this place.

Mr. Beith: I have long held to the John Stuart Mill principle that the exercise of liberty should not interfere with the liberty of others. The House of Commons Commission tries to have regard to the needs of both groups within its staff.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Brian Wilson. [HON. MEMBERS: "Not here".] Order. We need to go back to the questions on social security. Mr. Richard Page. Mr. John Wilkinson. Sir Marcus Fox. Mr. Anthony Steen. Mr. Kenneth Hind. They are not here. Mr. James Paice.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Maintenance

21. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of a parent's gross income is estimated to be payable in maintenance under the proposals outlined in the White Paper "Children Come First."

Mr. Jack: The proportion will vary according to the individual circumstances of each case. However, in most cases maintenance payments will represent no more than about a quarter—at most a third—of an absent parent's net income and even less of gross income—nearer one fifth.

Mr. Paice: May I thank my hon. Friend for that answer and stress to him the importance that many people attach to the fact that parents, of whichever sex, cannot forgo the responsibilities of parenthood? Does my hon. Friend agree that the courts should have the power to attach whatever proportion of earnings is appropriate to support whatever family has been left behind by the absent parent?

Mr. Jack: I welcome the spirit and content of my hon. Friend's remarks, but I must correct him slightly on matters of fact. One of the objectives of the Child Support Bill, which is being introduced in another place, is to bring under one roof all matters concerning the collection of maintenance, ultimately by 1996. It also aims to remove some of the more costly parts of present maintenance recovery operations from the courts and that is why we plan to establish a child support agency that will do just that job on a consistent and inexpensive basis.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Satellite Television

35. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to improve further the availability of satellite television in the Palace of Westminster.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): I am seeking to ensure that the satellite television viewing facilities provided during the Gulf conflict will continue to be available to Members. Other improvements must await the outcome of our consideration of last year's report from the Services Committee on computer services for Members.

Mr. Coombs: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply. He will be aware that Cable News Network, an American service, has been provided to the House and the other place since the outbreak of hostilities in the Gulf. Does he agree that that sets a good precedent and that right hon. and hon. Members want to see not only American news, but a British-based news service? On that basis, is my right hon. Friend able to say whether he has yet responded to the offer made on 17 January by British Sky Broadcasting to provide a British, 24-hour news service to the Palace on a free basis?

Mr. MacGregor: There are two issues involved—the provision of some television viewing, which was available during the Gulf conflict in Interview Room J and the provision for all Members. The Services Committee has taken a positive attitude to the provision of satellite television in the House, particularly in Members' own rooms. It has recommended, as a matter of urgency, that the type and capacity of the cable needed to supply the long-term needs of the House should be identified. That is what we are in the process of doing.

On the provision of some television available to Members, we must decide exactly on which television supply in relation to the kind of facilities we were providing in Interview Room J. The Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee took the view earlier that it would not be right to accept free offers from individual companies.

Mr. Ray Powell: Can the Leader of the House explain whether it would be possible for the Government to consider acquiring the lease of the London county council building opposite the House for a short term? The requirements for television facilities, Members' accommodation, a children's creche and everything else could be adequately covered if the Government considered acquiring such a short-term lease on that building.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think we need that building to provide satellite television, the problem is the provision of cable and we are considering that and the cost thereof.

On space for the House, the hon. Gentleman will be especially aware that phases I and II of the Bridge street site are being pursued. I hope that Bridge street phase I will be complete by the end of the recess.

Recycled Stationery

36. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when House of Commons writing paper and envelopes made from recycled paper will be made generally available to hon. Members.

Mr. MacGregor: A limited quantity of recycled writing paper and envelopes was ordered from HMSO on an experimental basis and has been available for issue to hon. Members from the Serjeant at Arms' stores since October last year. The Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee will be considering the results of the experiment before Easter.

Mr. Rathbone: My right hon. Friend will be aware that we knew that, but is he aware that I was hoping that he would encourage bringing forward the date when that paper will be readily available, partly because it gives a good lead to others in the country and partly because of the practical fact that such paper happens to work much better in modern machines?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to that point. I understand that, so far, 95 hon. Members have requested and been issued with recycled writing paper and envelopes. I was not in this post when the experiment was introduced, and I must confess that I was not aware that that paper was available. Since my hon. Friend tabled his question, I have examined that paper and it is very good. I am therefore happy to endorse what he said.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the right hon. Gentleman use it before Easter?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, before Easter. The experiment will be reviewed before Easter, which is very soon, so I hope that we shall be able to reach conclusions before long.

European Standing Committees

37. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on the operation of the European Standing Committees.

38. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement concerning the operation of Standing Committees considering draft legislation or other documents originating from the European Community.

Mr. MacGregor: There have now been five debates in the European Standing Committees, three in Committee A and two in Committee B. A number of suggestions have been made to me on ways in which the operation of the Committees can be improved and I have taken steps to act on some of them, for example by giving Committee members more notice of meetings wherever possible.

Mr. Taylor: Can the Leader of the House explain why one Standing Committee has not met on three occasions in the past four weeks when there are urgent issues which the Select Committee asked us to consider? As one issue is the report on export rebates, is not it a matter of huge urgency since the European Community will clearly break its legal limits? Is not it sad that when there are obvious and growing strong feelings in the House about smoking, the Committee is not even able to express a view on the fact that British taxpayers and others will contribute £900 million this year simply to dump high-tar tobacco on the third world and eastern Europe?

Mr. MacGregor: The tobacco issue has been raised many times in the House. On the procedure point that my hon. Friend raises, he will know that we endeavour to ensure that Standing Committees, as indeed the House, whenever recommended, discuss those issues in good time, normally before the European Council of Ministers takes decisions. Quite often, an item that is recommended for debate may not be right for a proper discussion because of the way in which progress has been made in the European Community. We endeavour to ensure that Committees debate such issues well before decisions are taken.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Leader of the House agree that some difficulties at least have been caused by Ministers' actions, the timetable of the European Council, and the nature of the proposals? Does he agree also that, as some documents now going into Committee are of great significance, for example the MacSharry proposals on the common agricultural policy, a matter that was not discussed in previous debates might be, for instance, the possible extension of a Committee session, as indeed was possible in one and a half hours on the Floor of the House, if the matter was of such importance and the attendance was such that the Chairman thought that there should be a carry-over motion? In particular, I refer to the forthcoming important debate on the common agricultural policy.

Mr. MacGregor: As I have said before, we need to review how Standing Committees are operating. Perhaps I shall wish to present specific proposals for change from time to time. We need to see how it goes, but I shall certainly bear the hon. Gentleman's suggestion in mind.

Dr. Cunningham: The House has debated Standing Committees on two occasions. The Government must be breathing a sigh of relief that they did not proceed with their original proposal to have three of them, especially as Ministers seem to be getting the runaround from the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and from my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). Just because Ministers are in difficulties, that is no excuse for saying, "We are going to have yet more changes in Standing Committees." If the Leader of the House envisages further changes will he ensure that they are published and that the House has a chance to consider them properly before they are put in place?

Mr. MacGregor: I have made it clear throughout that I am prepared to look at short-term changes and that we shall certainly have a review at the end of the summer. Some hon. Members are pressing me to make changes now. I have to strike a balance, but I can give the hon. Gentleman an assurance that if we come forward with further proposals for change we shall give the House time to consider them.

The Gulf

39. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will set up a Select Committee to consider military action in Kuwait.

Mr. MacGregor: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Dalyell: Before the Government reply in the debate on 15 March that I have been lucky enough to draw, will they reflect whether, in the light of the Al Sabah family's not returning to Kuwait as yet, in the light of the photochemical smog from the burning oil wells, which is becoming a desperate health problem, causing respiratory and other difficulties, and in the light of what appears to be happening to the Palestinians—the Kuwaitis are saying publicly that the Israelis know how to deal with the Palestinians, and are treating them very cruelly—there is not a serious case for a Select Committee? It looks as if we shall have to be in Kuwait for a very long time.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think that it would be appropriate to have a specific and separate Select Committee. It is possible for individual Select Committees to look into aspects of the issue if they wish to do so. Indeed, I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will give evidence to the Defence Select Committee on Wednesday of this week. The hon. Gentleman knows that Select Committees can take up these issues. From what he said, it is clear that more than one Select Committee may be involved.

Mr. Jessel: As we normally set up Select Committees to discuss what is going wrong, and as the military action in Kuwait plainly went absolutely right, ought we not to set up a Select Committee to determine what went so disastrously wrong with the policies of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend makes a number of fair points, which speak for themselves.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I confess that I was indeed wrong. I forecast that only 300 oil wells would go up; actually, 900 are burning.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This matter may be discussed on Friday 15 March, since the hon. Gentleman has wisely chosen it as the subject for debate.

Point of Order

3.34 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may recall that on 30 January the Minister of State at the Department of the Environment told the House that he estimated that there were 2,000 to 3,000 people sleeping rough in central London. On 22 February, the same Minister told the House that these figures were based on the whole of London—17 London boroughs. Do you, Sir, recall giving me an opportunity, by way of a private notice question, to raise this matter? On that occasion, the Minister said:

"It was because we felt our figures were out of date that we asked . . . the voluntary organisations most experienced at dealing with rough sleepers in London to carry out a more recent count. The estimate that they produced came to 1,046 . . . We shall therefore use that figure to replace the earlier and out-of-date estimate."—[*Official Report*, 8 February 1991; Vol. 185 c.542-43.]

Have you seeen the reply, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: I have not seen the reply, but, clearly, replies given by Ministers are not matters of order. They may be matters for disagreement, but what does that have to do with me?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I wondered, Mr. Speaker, whether you had received a request for permission for a statement by a Minister in the Department of the Environment, in view of the fact that the revised figure related only to seven locations in central London.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an abuse of the points of order procedure.

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY (FINANCIAL PROVISIONS) BILL

Ordered,

That the Agriculture and Forestry (Financial Provisions) Bill be referred to a Second Reading Committee.—[*Mr. Patnick.*]

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the Questions on the four motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Department of Transport (Fees) (Amendment) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Motor Vehicles (International Circulation) (Amendment) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Vehicle Inspectorate Trading Fund Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Central Office of Information Trading Fund Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—[*Mr. Patnick.*]

Prevention of Terrorism

3.34 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I beg to move,

That the draft Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 21st February, be approved.

It is 12 months since the House last considered whether the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 should be continued in force. The House will know that the senseless terrorist campaign in Northern Ireland continues. Last weekend, five people were brutally murdered—a member of the Ulster Defence Regiment by the Irish Republican Army on Friday night, and four last night in another incident. Another four were seriously injured.

During 1990 as a whole, the threat of terrorism has continued without pause. In Northern Ireland, 76 people died and 906 were injured as a result of republican and loyalist terrorism. In mainland Great Britain in 1990, there were more terrorist incidents than at any time since 1975. Three people died and 56 were injured in those incidents. Earlier in the year, the targets were predominantly military ones. The House will recall some of them: in February, a recruiting office in Halifax; in May, an Army education corps establishment in Eltham; in the same month, Sergeant Chapman was killed by a bomb in a van. In June a soldier was shot down and murdered on Lichfield station, and two others were injured. There were also attacks on the Honourable Artillery Company in London, on an Army careers office in Derby, and on the Army information office in Finchley.

In the middle of the year, civilians also became targets. There were attacks on the former houses of Lord McAlpine and Lord Armstrong, as well as on the Carlton club, the Stock Exchange and the Royal Overseas League. Sir Peter Terry was shot in the sitting room of his own house. Everyone will remember the appalling murder of Ian Gow in July. Three men died in Irish terrorist incidents on the continent of Europe.

More recently, we have had the mortar bomb attack on Downing street and the explosion at Victoria station, in which one man died and 38 were injured, some losing their limbs. On Monday of last week, a bomb was planted without warning on the main St. Albans to London railway line with what could have been appalling consequences. The thoughts and prayers of the whole House will be with all those who have suffered as a result of those terrible crimes.

However, we should also recognise the successes that we have had in the past year in disrupting terrorist activities. There is no doubt that the action taken in the autumn of last year as a result of the effective use of intelligence and good policing disrupted the activities of some terrorist groups. There have been similar successes on the continent and elsewhere. In December, two terrorists were sentenced to 30 years each for their role in the arms store in Wales. Two trials are currently taking place in Belfast and Holland. There is a trial pending in Belgium and two trials are pending here. I do not wish to say anything that might prejudice any of those cases, but they show that, as a result of detection, indictments can be brought.

The sole issue before the House is whether the prevention of terrorism Act should be continued in force for another 12 months. The fight against terrorism is a matter which unites us all. We are not here to score party political points. Terrorism is a matter which should unite us all.

I should like to explain to the House why I have concluded, as has each and every Home Secretary before me—of both the main parties—over a period of 17 years, that the prevention of terrorism Act must remain in force.

I shall deal first with the powers under the Act. The first is proscription. The first part of the Act gives the Home Secretary of the day powers to proscribe Irish terrorist organisations. The organisations that are at present proscribed are the IRA and the Irish National Liberation Army. Membership of a proscribed organisation is a serious criminal offence, with a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment. I ask the House to consider what it would mean if, as some Opposition Members want, the Act should not continue in force.

The IRA and INLA are proscribed because they openly profess the use of violence to overthrow our democratic system of government. Members of those organisations are criminals, murderers and thugs who callously use violence in all its forms—death, brutality and destruction. If the Act does not continue in force, the IRA and INLA will be able to meet openly in this country and to plan their nefarious activities; to recruit new members and to raise funds as openly as other political parties. People in this country simply would not tolerate such murderous organisations being given that freedom. If we do not renew the Act tonight, the people of this country would think, with justification, that we had gone out of our minds.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Does not the Secretary of State think that the ban should extend to Sinn Fein, which is part and parcel of the IRA and which the police have said is part and parcel of the IRA?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that other organisations are proscribed in Northern Ireland. Proscription does not extend to Sinn Fein. It is necessary to proscribe organisations that are openly committed to murder and to violence, to which the terrorist arm of Sinn Fein is committed. To those hon. Members who believe that we are being too fastidious about these matters, I note that the two organisations to which I have referred are also proscribed in the Republic of Ireland.

I want next to consider the powers of exclusion. Any Home Secretary would exercise such powers most carefully. I accept that in his 1987 review of the legislation Lord Colville came down on balance against that power. However, we must face the facts. There is now, and has been for a number of years, an organised campaign of intimidation and violence directed against the people of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. That campaign is directed and controlled from the island of Ireland, north and south. The purpose of exclusion is to prevent terrorists from being able to carry out their activities in Great Britain or, in the case of those who are not British citizens, in the whole of the United Kingdom.

Of course, in an ideal world, it would be possible to bring such people before the courts charged with serious criminal offences. However, we do not live in an ideal world. Often our information comes from sources whose identities we cannot disclose without risk to their lives. We

[Mr. Baker]

cannot take that risk. Where we cannot charge, and there are reasonably found suspicions, we have to exclude. We have a duty to protect the public from terrorist attacks in whatever way we can.

In his latest review of the operation of the Act, Lord Colville acknowledges that exclusion cases are handled with meticulous care. Only 97 such orders are in force, a considerable reduction in the numbers in force earlier in the history of the legislation.

If a person is excluded, he or she has a right to make representations and a right to a personal interview with an independent adviser. A solicitor or legal representative may be present at the interview. The advisers are independent, and for security reasons I will not name them, but they have no connection with the Government, the Home Office or with me except through the fact of their appointment. As Lord Colville says in his report, 18 people who had been excluded made representations to an adviser during 1990. As of today, of the 13 cases that have been completed, the adviser has upheld exclusion in 12 of them.

The third main part of the Act is concerned with the powers of arrest, examination and detention. The powers are to examine people entering Great Britain with a view to discovering whether they may be involved in terrorism; to arrest and detain on reasonable suspicion of involvement in terrorism; and to detain without charge for an initial period of 48 hours and for a further period of a maximum of five days on the authority of the Secretary of State, making seven days in all.

It is alleged that the power of examination at ports is exercised in an arbitrary and indiscriminate way and that it alienates the Irish community. There is no immigration control between the island of Ireland and the mainland of Great Britain. The Act thus gives the police the only power they have to identify those entering Great Britain and to prevent terrorists from entering the mainland.

The powers are exercised by asking passengers—some, not all—a few questions of the sort that any of us may expect to answer when we cross a border or move from one country to another. Depending on the answers to those questions, the police may ask further questions and they may check the person's name against criminal and other records. If a false name is given, or if some other suspicion is raised in the officer's mind, it would be wrong to allow the passenger to go on his way before that suspicion has been removed.

Of course, I regret that passengers, British and Irish alike, may be inconvenienced, but law-abiding people understand why that inconvenience is necessary. I acknowledge, in particular, the very considerable support given to the police by Irish people, in helping to bring terrorists to justice. I have no doubt that Irish people understand why it is necessary for the police to take the action that they do.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): My right hon. Friend referred to the Act's exclusion powers. Without naming names, can he say whether those powers have been used only in respect of people suspected of being involved in Northern Ireland terrorism, or have they been used also against others?

Mr. Baker: Without naming names, I can assure my hon. Friend that those powers have been used in cases involving other than Irish terrorism.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): The Home Secretary may want to reflect on his reply, because exclusion orders require those who are subject to them to go to one of the six counties of Northern Ireland. Surely that power would not be used for anyone who was not from Northern Ireland or involved in Irish terrorism.

Mr. Baker: I was referring to the overall powers of the Act. I have exclusion powers, and I have used them in certain cases involving Northern Ireland terrorism. I shall be happy to clarify that point later, but I assure my hon. Friend the Member of Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) that the Secretary of State has powers of exclusion, and that they have been used in relation to certain terrorists who were not directly Irish terrorists.

Turning to the powers of examination and detention, 273 people were examined for more than an hour at ports in Great Britain, and 193 were detained, in 1990. In Northern Ireland, where the powers are used more extensively, 1,764 persons were detained, leading to 376 charges. Some Opposition Members allege that the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1986 provides sufficient grounds for the arrest of a suspected terrorist, and that the prevention of terrorism Act's powers are not needed. That is wrong. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1986 contains a power of arrest on suspicion that a person has committed a serious specific offence, whereas the prevention of terrorism Act confers a power of arrest on the much wider ground of suspicion of involvement in terrorism.

There are many circumstances in which the police may have information that a particular person is involved in terrorism, but no information as to the specific offence in which he may have been involved. Without the prevention of terrorism Act, there would be no power to arrest such a person. Those who would not continue that Act in force would allow known terrorists to walk our streets—with the police powerless to intervene.

At this point, I will say a word about the Government's decision to derogate from a provision of the European convention on human rights in response to the Brogan case. As we made clear, that decision was not taken lightly but only after full consideration of possible alternatives. The derogation was made under article 15 of the convention, which allows for derogation in time of war or other public emergency. The issue is whether authority to detain a suspected terrorist for between four and seven days should be given, as at present, by the Secretary of State, who is accountable to Parliament for his actions, or by a judge, some other person, or a tribunal. Right hon. and hon. Members may want to bear in mind that suspects can be held without charges for longer than seven days in some other European countries.

In Lord Colville's latest review of the legislation, for which the House will always be grateful, he asks whether it is now inevitable that a new tribunal should be set up to exercise that power. The Government's answer is no. We believe, as Lord Colville himself concluded in his 1987 review of the legislation—and as Lord Shackleton and Lord Jellicoe also concluded in their earlier reviews of it

—those powers are rightly exercised by the Secretary of State, who is accountable to Parliament for his actions, and is ultimately responsible for the safety of the public.

If there are any lingering doubts about the value of those powers in the Act that is before us, I invite right hon. and hon. Members to turn to page 2 of Lord Colville's 1989 report on that legislation's operation. Referring to the extension of detention in Great Britain, particularly in relation to Scotland, paragraph 1.6 states:

"In the latter case I have every reason to believe that the detention led to a substantial disruption of terrorist activities, and in all cases I am satisfied that good reasons for the order were put forward to the Secretary of State."

If hon. Members needed only one reason to support the Act, they would find it in that paragraph.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): When discussing the powers of examination, my right hon. Friend mentioned only examination at the ports. Can he confirm that the powers also embrace examination of, say, crew members on ships carrying ammunition and explosives to Eire, or the drivers of trucks carrying similar cargoes? Is it not important to deal with such people in order to contain the threat to such highly sensitive cargoes?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend has asked, in effect, about the transmission of explosives. An internal review has been carried out, on the security of explosives, and the Government are planning to tighten up the controls on their acquisition, transfer and possession. We hope to lay regulations before Parliament later in the Session which would put the proposed tighter controls into effect.

I come now to the powers to investigate terrorist funding. These provisions were introduced in 1989 and form part of the extensive armoury now available to the criminal courts on the confiscation of assets. The police increasingly see the provisions as being at the core of the fight against terrorism; yet, if the Opposition did not vote for this extension, the power would fall.

Lord Colville has uttered some strictures on the provisions, but he does not recommend that they should not be renewed. I acknowledge that the legislation is complex, and that there are differences of detail between the provisions of the three Acts, but those difficulties reflect the different nature of the problems that each of them seeks to address. The value of the provisions lies in the fact that, by clearly defining terrorist financing as a criminal offence, they enable the police to investigate it. In investigating the finance, using the special powers of investigation conferred by the Act, they can obtain information that may lead to charges.

I can, however, offer Lord Colville and the House some consolation. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has recently unveiled new proposals on the confiscation of terrorist funds in Northern Ireland, in the shape of amendments to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill. The amendments, if adopted, will add substantially to the powers available to the courts in Northern Ireland, and it is of course in Northern Ireland that the particular problem of terrorist racketeering is concentrated. I intend to watch very closely the effectiveness of the new powers, and, in the light of that, I shall consider whether in the future any useful improvements can be made to them.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): References to these powers form the bulk of Lord Colville's criticisms of the operation of the Act. He has described the provisions relating to confiscation as a legislative shambles. Will the Home Secretary undertake to report to the House as soon as possible on the review on which he has embarked? It may be too soon to expect him to have produced a review himself, but, in the light of the Colville report, we cannot be wholly satisfied that the changes proposed for Northern Ireland deal adequately with the problem.

Mr. Baker: The legislation is exceedingly complex, and crosses the thresholds of three Acts. However, I shall certainly undertake to let the House know the outcome of our review. Let me emphasise that I have been advised that the powers as they stand are being used very effectively in the investigation of possible terrorist financing.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Lord Colville has been quoted as describing the provisions as a "shambles". Did he not go on to say specifically that, in regard to confiscation, the Bill needed more teeth? Does not this measure need more, not fewer, teeth—and not less sharp teeth?

Mr. Baker: I am glad that my hon. Friend has made that point. Plenty of proposals to water down the effect of the measures are floating around in public debate, but we must think of improving and enhancing them. I see that I have the support of the Liberal Democrat spokesman, the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan).

Mr. Hattersley: As the Secretary of State knows, we have already said that we shall support the tougher proposals in the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill. Has he considered the possibility of amending those tougher, more effective proposals so that they apply also to the United Kingdom, not simply to Northern Ireland? If so, we would certainly support him in that endeavour.

Mr. Baker: I am advised that, as the proposals are laid out, they could not be extended effectively to the United Kingdom. Before agreeing or not, I should like to see exactly how they will operate. They represent a substantial extension and it would be unusual to use this legislation as such a legislative vehicle. I am glad that there may be some agreement on that point, if not on much else, and that we may make progress. If it is possible to make these measures stricter, I am happy to consider that.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland took powers in Committee under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill to extend certain investigative powers to the rest of the United Kingdom. If the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland could extend those powers, which he has, to operations within the United Kingdom we should welcome that. It has been done already, so the Secretary of State does not need to wait and see.

Mr. Baker: I first want to see how the powers will operate because they are a substantial extension of the present powers. My advice from those who conduct investigations is that their present powers, together with the confiscation powers of this measure, give them all the powers that they need to investigate terrorist financing. It is providing a useful power as it stands now.

I turn now to recent changes in the organisation for fighting terrorism on the mainland. I have seen suggestions that we need a single, national agency for the prevention

[Mr. Baker]

of terrorism on the British mainland. I believe that the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) called for that at the weekend. I shall remind the House of two matters about which it knows, and a third matter which I shall announce.

We already have an agency, the Metropolitan police special branch, which has the national responsibility for the collection, analysis and dissemination of intelligence about Irish republican terrorism throughout Great Britain. Secondly, as the hon. Member for Huddersfield should know because it was announced last year, the head of the Metropolitan police anti-terrorist branch was appointed the national co-ordinator of Provisional IRA investigations by the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Thirdly, to increase the effectiveness of those arrangements, a small, dedicated group was created last October. It is chaired by the Metropolitan police assistant commissioner for specialist operations, who has responsibility for both the anti-terrorist and special branches. The other members are three chief constables of police forces outside London with particular responsibilities for counter-terrorism.

This is an important new development, greatly enhancing co-ordination between the Metropolitan police and provincial forces. Only the local police force can bring local knowledge to bear on the investigation of a terrorist crime within its area.

The new arrangements ensure that the special expertise of the Metropolitan police is placed at the disposal of provincial forces. That means that counter-terrorist activity has the right co-ordination at the centre.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): In the light of what the Secretary of State has just said, what liaison takes place between the Metropolitan senior police officers and Scottish police officers? He talked about provincial police forces. Although Scotland seems blessedly immune from terrorist activities committed by the Provisional IRA, we have a deep concern about these matters.

Mr. Baker: I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is close co-operation with the various police forces in Scotland which, as he rightly said, is so far blessedly free from the problem. I hope that it will remain so. One of the three chief constables to whom I referred is Scottish.

In the speech that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook made last week—he kindly sent me a copy of it—he called for discussions between our parties so that we could have a common cause against terrorism. In that speech he did not set out any new proposals, but he continued to express the reservations that the Opposition have about the powers of exclusion and the questioning at the ports, and his reservations about the exercise of the powers of detention. His well-known opposition to this is nothing new. In fact, the latest policy document of the Labour party contains a commitment to repeal the prevention of terrorism Act. Today I have set out in rather more detail than is usual in these debates the reasons why I believe it essential that these powers be continued.

I do not doubt for one moment that the right hon. Gentlemen loathes terrorism as much as does any Conservative Member, but I must tell him that neither in his letter nor in his speech were there any concrete proposals. The right hon. Gentleman restates his reservations. In one way or another he wants the powers to be watered down. He wills the end but denies the means. But rhetoric against terrorism is not enough; nor is invective: one has to be prepared to act. The right hon. Gentleman is willing to wound, yet afraid to strike.

The right hon. Gentleman talked in his speech about the powers of detention continuing to alienate law-abiding citizens of the United Kingdom. I find precious little evidence of that. I find law-abiding citizens of this country are alienated by the fact that terrorists place bombs in litter bins and kill innocent passers-by. They are alienated by the fact that terrorists place bombs on railway tracks. And the law-abiding citizens of this country are appalled and alienated by the fact that Members of Parliament are assassinated in their cars; and I must tell the right hon. Gentleman that the law-abiding citizens of this country do not expect the Government to dismantle such powers as we do have to deal with these crimes. They expect the Government to support the police in providing them with these powers, and to support the police when they exercise them.

In his speech last year, the right hon. Gentleman talked about the resentment felt about the powers of exclusion and the questioning at the ports. I must remind the right hon. Gentleman that the people of this country feel a great resentment against those people—I admit that they are a very small number—who travel either from Northern Ireland or from the Republic with an intent to kill people in this island and to set up cells of terrorism and to plant bombs and to raise caches of arms. That is the resentment felt by the people of this country.

The right hon. Gentleman does not like the powers of detention either—powers that were used by Labour Home Secretaries and by Labour Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland. Not only did they use them: they justified them. Indeed, they were justified quite recently by Lord Mason of Barnsley in a debate in the House of Lords in February 1988, when Labour were in opposition:

> "To defeat the terrorists there is a price to pay. There is the inconvenience, irritation, annoyance with police and Special Branch Officers and the curtailment of our total freedom and civil liberties. But to combat evil men we must maintain the full legal armoury that Parliament has decreed should be available and that is what I urge my party and this House to do."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 16 February 1988; Vol. 493, c. 573.]

The noble Lord had responsibility, and he did not shirk it.

Of course, in those days the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook voted for these powers. He supported them. But there was a change of heart in 1982. I hope that there will be a change of heart again. The public who rely upon their representatives, Members of Parliament, to protect them will not understand or accept a proposal aimed at dismantling and weakening these powers. In a moment, the right hon. Gentleman could forge a bipartisan approach. He could get up at the Dispatch Box and say, "Such is the threat being posed by the IRA at this time that the Labour party is prepared to support the prevention of terrorism Act." This is not the time for sophistry. The signal to the country from the Labour Front Bench spokesman today should be a signal of determination, resolution, and strength.

If the Act were not renewed, who would be happy? There would be rejoicing in the ranks of the IRA. It and its friends would cheer because it would be easier for them to plan and execute their evil deeds. The whole purpose of

the IRA is to sap and weaken the resolve of the Government and the will of the British people. Let us not give the IRA the chance to claim a victory in the House.

The IRA is not succeeding. At every election, both north and south of the border, the IRA's political wing, Sinn Fein, gets fewer votes. After each vicious and wicked attack, it alienates possible allies and loses more support. What decent people would support an organisation that murders innocent people going about their business or going to work? The IRA is politically bankrupt, ethically corrupt and morally evil. It is not a party or a movement. It is a gang of murderous criminals, and it is right that the powers in the Act should be retained and used. I commend them to the House.

4.5 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): We shall vote tonight against the continuation of the prevention of terrorism Act, in the same way that we have voted against it for the past eight years. The criticisms that we shall make are shared and have been publicly expressed by a wide variety of distinguished authorities, including the European Court of Justice and the General Council of the Bar. Now Lord Colville, whom the Government chose to report on the workings of the Act, has expressed reservations about the Act's two major provisions. That Lord Colville, a Government nominee, should express such strong reservations about detention and internal exile is in itself extraordinary. That the Government should not attempt to respond to their nominee's reservations, except by announcing that they do not accept them, is even more extraordinary. Therefore, we shall vote against the Act with Lord Colville's authority to support us.

I make clear my belief that the undoubted disagreements which will characterise our debate should not prevent the Home Secretary from accepting the offer that I made to him last week. He is right to say that in my speech I made no practical proposals; nor, as he rightly said, did I make any in the covering letter which asked him please to read the enclosed copy of a speech that I would make the next day. I propose to make some proposals before the end of the debate, but I repeat that nothing that is said in the debate should make the conversations and discussions that I still offer to the Government impossible or undesirable.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman would not seek to mislead the House. Will he confirm that Lord Colville's most recent report points to specific instances of where the Act has seriously disrupted terrorist activity and that he does not recommend getting rid of the Act but says that he has reservations—which is quite different?

Mr. Hattersley: I used the word reservations because that is Lord Colville's word. The hon. Gentleman has no need to correct me or to interrupt my speech. As he probably anticipates, I shall shortly deal with Lord Colville's criticisms of the Act. If at that time the hon. Gentleman has any doubts about the accuracy of my reports of Lord Colville's views, I shall give way to him. If he has a better interpretation of Lord Colville's criticisms, no doubt he will offer it to the House.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): The right hon. Gentleman must get the matter absolutely right. Lord Colville recommended the renewal of the Act and he cannot be quoted as an authority on reservations that the right hon. Gentleman has expressed.

Mr. Hattersley: If the hon. Gentleman reads Lord Colville's report, he will see that it is impossible to think that Lord Colville supports anything other than a modified Act. Lord Colville expressed strong reservations about the powers of detention and in previous years he expressed strong reservations about exclusion orders. He described the powers to confiscate funds for the IRA and other terrorist organisations as a shambles. I shall shortly come to that. Lord Colville wants an Act that operates more efficiently and with greater justice. That is what we want and it could be obtained if the Home Secretary were prepared to enter into the discussions that I proposed. Such an Act could be passed with the unanimous agreement of the House.

I continue to hope, therefore—I shall repeat my hope at the end of my speech—that there can be some common ground on how the campaign against terrorism can be prosecuted. The Prime Minister was right to say, of course, that the Government and the Opposition are united in their determination to destroy terrorism, and to defeat it in this country. No sensible person doubts that. As the debate continues, I shall make some positive suggestions and outline steps that could be taken to promote that end. The Opposition's view—it is one which runs through the entire speech that I propose to make—is echoed by the first leader of the *Daily Mail* this morning, which states that changes are necessary, but before they come about the Government

"should seek the maximum inter-party consensus."

Nothing that is said today—not even the bit of bravura in which the Home Secretary indulged towards the end of his speech—should prevent the possibility of consensus, agreement and bipartisanship being examined.

I am sure that the Home Secretary knows—this is not fully understood by the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), who interrupted me—that bipartisanship can never be obtained by one party asserting something and expecting the other party slavishly to agree with every detail. Those who want bipartisanship on any issue must be prepared for consensus to be built around a degree of compromise. Bipartisanship will not be achieved by a take-it-or-leave-it approach.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, and then in this short debate I shall feel it necessary to make some progress.

Mr. Nicholls: It is clear that what the right hon. Gentleman says about the need for consensus and bipartisanship is exactly right. I am sure that all my right hon. and hon. Friends welcome that. However, he must work on the basis that his plea for bipartisanship and consensus would be a great deal more convincing if he were to say—we are dealing with legislation which a Labour Government introduced and which has been supported by Labour Oppositions in the past and by the Conservative Government—"We would support our Act tonight if we could enter into negotiations in the near future." I accept that that would be a logical course for the right hon. Gentleman to adopt, but I do not think for one moment that he will take it.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to interpret what I have to say before I say it. I shall pursue the case that I am trying to make and then the hon. Gentleman must make up his own mind in deciding whether I have met my criteria.

Our past criticisms of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act have concentrated on the denial of civil liberties which is inherent within it. We believe, of course, that in times of national danger it may be necessary to introduce special measures that would not be acceptable in normal times. However, those special measures must be judged against strict criteria, and they were laid down by Lord Jellicoe almost a decade ago when he reviewed the workings of the Act for the Government.

The two major criteria are easily described. First, are the denials of civil liberty essential to the defeat of the threat? Secondly, are the special measures, which are denials of civil liberty, effective in achieving the objects set out for them? I think that no one—no one whom I know—doubts or denies that the prevention of terrorism Act constitutes a restriction on our essential liberties. It provides for detention for up to seven days without charge and during that time many of the rights set out in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 are denied to the detainees. It provides for men and women to be excluded from England and Wales and required to live in the six counties of Northern Ireland.

Neither of those powers is subject to any judicial check or supervision. In both instances there are review procedures, but at the end the decision lies with the Home Secretary alone. No matter how benevolent the Home Secretary, it is intolerable that a Minister should exercise such powers. I repeat that we are not alone in making that judgment. Authorities range from the European Court of Justice to the General Council of the Bar. They have expressed their profound reservations about the principles on which the prevention of terrorism Act is based.

The criticisms have intensified with every year that the Act has remained in force. It was intended to be temporary. Indeed, it was called "temporary" and when it was brought before the House it was justified as such. No one who reads the first debate can doubt that it was intended as a brief measure which would have only a short life. What is more, no one who reads the first debate can doubt that one of the principal purposes of the Act was to reassure the British population that tough action was to be taken immediately against terrorism.

Mr. Bowis: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No. It is a short debate and I have given way several times already. I may give way again in a few moments, but first I wish to make some progress.

The reassurance that tough action would be taken was thought to be necessary in the aftermath of the Birmingham bombings, which, as we are about to discover in the Court of Appeal, produced many hasty and mistaken judgments.

The powers inherent in the Act are incompatible with a free society—the sort of society that we seek to protect against the IRA. However, a second criticism, which is often neglected, is the problems created by the Act and the way in which it now operates. An Act which is designed to give the reassurance of tough and effective action is not necessarily the same as an Act which provides for tough and effective action. Mounting evidence exists to suggest that the prevention of terrorism Act has become counter-productive and I shall try to give some examples.

The Act creates the illusion of a campaign against terrorism. It possesses the virtue of a tough title which obscures the need to reconsider the action that we take. That was demonstrated last week in the House of Commons when the Prime Minister was asked about the attack on Downing street and the bombs at Victoria and Paddington stations, and whether they confirmed the need for the Act. The Prime Minister said that those bombs confirmed the fact that the Act was working well, and had served us well. With great respect to the Prime Minister, one could argue the case either way.

Today, the Home Secretary read a tragic and terrible list of the death and destruction caused in this country in the past year. That can be interpreted in two fashions: as the need for the prevention of terrorism Act to continue in its present form, or as evidence of the Act's failure and the need to reconsider the whole issue.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I did not give way to the hon. Gentleman's colleague and I cannot give way to him.

On the evidence of how the Act is working, even in the pursuit of its principal objectives, it needs to be looked at again. I very much regret that the Government are not prepared to give the Act that fundamental re-examination together with other parties in the House.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The right hon. Gentleman used the word "illusion" and said that the Act was an illusion of activity. Therefore, I refer him again to the words of Lord Colville, who said that detention led to a substantial disruption of terrorist activities. What about table 7? That is not illusory. As a result of the operation of the Act last year 28 people were charged in England, Wales and Scotland and 376 in Northern Ireland—some of them with very serious offences indeed.

Mr. Hattersley: The Home Secretary is being less than frank with the House, as 28 people were charged but only six with terrorist offences.

Mr. Baker: So what?

Mr. Hattersley: The Home Secretary says, "So what" and that there were six, but if six is such a startling number I am surprised that he did not give that figure to the House honestly instead of the figure of 28.

I do not think that even the Home Secretary will seek to justify the Act because on 22 occasions offences not connected with terrorism were thrown up and prosecuted as a result. The fundamental point is not the Home Secretary's error—I am sure that it was an error and that he did not intend to deceive us—but swings and roundabouts. Of course the Act has had some effect in preventing terrorism—how extraordinary it would be if it had not. However, this afternoon we have to consider whether, on balance, it has done more to destroy terrorism or less.

Mr. Baker *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: If the Home Secretary will allow me, I shall suggest some ways in which the Act is a detriment to the objectives that he and I both seek.

Mr. Baker: I wish to correct the right hon. Gentleman because he is under a misapprehension. I referred to 28 charges listed in table 7, and 376 charges in Northern Ireland. Of the 28 charges in England, Wales and Scotland, six were for relatively minor offences relating to breaches of the Act—mainly offences against exclusion orders and other offences of that sort. The other charges were serious and grave and the right hon. Gentleman should not be so flippant. If the number were only six it would be worth while, but it is much higher than that.

Mr. Hattersley: I do seek not to be flippant but accurate. In the pursuit of accuracy, I shall read to the Home Secretary calmly—as is appropriate in such a debate—from table B of his report. It says that, in 1990, there were 193 detentions, 16 exclusion orders, six charges concerning terrorism, and 22 charges concerning other offences.

Mr. Baker: I have just explained what that means.

Mr. Hattersley: The Home Secretary says that he has just explained what that means, but he has not explained why he mentioned the figure of 28. However, I shall not pursue his error any further.

Mr. Baker: I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman does not understand, because we have been talking about it for enough years. The six offences relate to offences under the prevention of terrorism Act, which are usually quite minor offences, such as offences against exclusion orders. The other charges relate to serious criminal offences—for example, the possession of firearms. Such serious matters can be legislated against by the Act.

Mr. Hattersley: Those are exactly the serious matters about which I have argued in the past. The Home Secretary has been kind enough to quote me as having done so——

Mr. Baker: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I shall give way in a moment.

Given the chance, I shall argue again that such serious matters should be pursued under normal criminal law. The Home Secretary cannot have it both ways and say that he is operating a criminal law and that special powers are necessary.

Mr. Baker: The right hon. Gentleman does not understand the nature and purpose of the legislation, which, as I clearly stated, deals with cases where there is suspicion of general and terrorist activity. It does not deal with specific offences, where the criminal law operates and action can be taken. That arises from these investigations. I am staggered that the right hon. Gentleman is prepared to dismantle those powers and discard them in such a cavalier way.

Mr. Hattersley: The Home Secretary simply reiterates his original error. I shall pursue the matter in detail, in the hope that he will come to another conclusion and answer the question that he thinks he has already answered.

What, in practical terms, is the Act supposed to do which cannot be done under criminal law? The Home Secretary urged me to turn my mind to that matter and I am doing so now. I did so last year and the previous year. I asked the Minister of State, during his wind-up speech, why criminal powers could not be used in the majority of cases and he answered with an example of his own choosing. He referred to three men who were found in the garden of the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and told me that they had been detained under the prevention of terrorism Act. I said to the Minister of State that, were three armed men found in my garden, I would expect them to be arrested, whether a prevention of terrorism Act were in force or not. Why did not the rule apply in that case? The Minister of State then told me that the case was sub-judice and that he could not speculate any further. Because of an indiscretion by the Secretary of State for Defence, the case is sub judice no longer. Therefore, I shall ask again, hoping that the Minister of State will answer when he winds up the debate, why, if such cases were prosecuted under criminal law 10, 20 or 35 years ago, is the prevention of terrorism Act necessary?

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I shall let the Minister of State intervene in a moment. I wish to cite another case, and he can answer the two questions together—two for the price of one.

A similar case arose in my constituency. An elderly doctor who was held under the PTA was eventually charged with possessing explosives, but was acquitted. If the police believed that she possessed explosives—a crime by any standards—why was she not held and prosecuted under normal criminal law?

Mr. John Patten: I do not know the details of the second case; perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will provide me with further details. I well remember our exchange during the declining moments of the debate last year. The three people detained in the garden in Wiltshire to whom the right hon. Gentleman referred were not, as I understand it, armed. The Secretary of State was satisfied that they had been involved in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism, so he made orders excluding all three from the United Kingdom. The fact that there eventually proved to be insufficient evidence to convict them for conspiracy to murder does not mean that they were not involved in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism.

This will have to be a lengthy intervention because the right hon. Gentleman set me two lengthy tests. He asked what this Act could do that was not possible under general law. It can give the police powers to examine, detain and exclude, although after that process is completed the preference is always to use the ordinary criminal law to bring charges related to murder or explosion.

Mr. Hattersley: I think that I understand what the Minister of State is saying, and I shall quote him making the same point more starkly in Committee. That leads me to the first rational assumption that has been made over the years, which the Minister of State came near to repeating today. The PTA is used to trawl for information, rather than obtain specific convictions—undoubtedly, it was once used for the latter purpose.

In 1983, Sir Leon Brittan, then Home Secretary, was explicit about this. I asked Sir Leon:

"Is he saying that it is right in a free society to detain innocent people without charge for the purpose of obtaining information from them?"

Sir Leon replied:

[Mr. Hattersley]

"It has been made clear . . . that that is a legitimate . . . use of the power."—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1983; Vol. 47, c. 56.]

—*[Interruption.]* I see that some Conservative Members are nodding emphatically. However, since Sir Leon said that, subsequent Home Secretaries in different Governments have made it emphatically clear in the House and in Strasbourg that the PTA will not be used for trawling for information in that way. Therefore, we are left to find another intention of the special legislation. I hope that we can take it for granted that its principal purpose is not that given to the Committee by the right hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), who said:

"under PACE the powers of arrest can only be exercised where a constable has reasonable grounds to suspect that an offence has been committed or is about to be committed."

He continued by saying that the PTA was necessary for occasions

"where one cannot prove or does not have reasonable grounds to suspect the commission of a specific . . . offence."

If one does not have grounds to suspect the commission of a specific offence, why is the man or woman detained? Is it on reasonable grounds, a hunch, prejudice, guesswork? Fortunately, the comments of junior Ministers are not held to be the law. Were that the case and that were the official justification of the Act, every man or woman who was detained would be off to Strasbourg complaining that they had been held unreasonably, arbitrarily and unacceptably. The Minister of State wants to intervene again.

Mr. John Patten: The right hon. Gentleman has done me the favour of quoting some of the excellent words I used in Standing Committee B. I wish that the right hon. Gentlman had learnt something during the past four or five years when he has been addressing his mind to the issue. There is indeed a difference between the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and the prevention of terrorism Act, which is to stop people preparing themselves for the commission or instigation of acts of terrorism. That is the difference between the two Acts. I made it clear in Committee and I am happy to do so again this afternoon.

Mr. Hattersley: It is simply silly to answer the question by being rude to me, which is the easiest thing in the world. We are discussing a serious point. There is a distinction between arresting someone on reasonable suspicion and arresting somebody when reasonable suspicion does not exist. I shall make my point—and I believe the Labour party's point—altogether clear: I am opposed to arresting people when reasonable suspicion does not exist. It turns out that the Minister is not. I do not believe that anyone who has heard what he has said today, which, to my surprise, confirmed his words in Committee, can do anything other than believe that we are now debating a most damaging erosion of our liberties. There are practical objections—involving the politics of Northern Ireland—to the practical erosion of those liberties.

I repeat without hesitation that it prejudices people in Great Britain, people abroad and people in Ireland—the men and women who should be wholly on our side—against us and against the steps that we are taking to defeat terrorism. As an example, I take the powers of detention set out in section 4 of the Act. Under those powers there is no charge, no court appearance and no consultation with solicitors. Detainees are held on the authority of the Minister and on nothing else. That power has been ruled unlawful in the European Court. In his report in 1988, Lord Colville referred to

"worrying indications about the level of charges brought as a proportion of detentions made".

Since then, the situation has got worse. In 1990, 193 persons were detained under the Act. Six or 28 of them —the Home Secretary can choose his figures—were charged with something, but the others were not. One hundred and sixty-five individuals were detained and denied access to a lawyer. They were then released without explanation or apology. There was no prosecution and no acquittal. They were simply told that, having been held without charge, they were now free to go. It is difficult to imagine the resentment which must have built up in them and in their families.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I shall give way when I have finished this point.

We argue—as the court in Strasbourg has argued—that such detention—especially if extended from 48 hours to five or seven days—is tolerable only if it is subject to a judicial examination. The Home Secretary treats the House with less than his normal courtesy when he says that in other parts of Europe individuals are held for longer under emergency powers. In other parts of Europe, individuals who are held under emergency powers are subject to court hearings. The case for holding them is heard by judges. That is what we ask of the Home Secretary and it is also what the court in Strasbourg asks of him.

If the Home Secretary were prepared to introduce a system under which a judge or judges would consider a case if the initial 48 hours had to be extended, we should examine the whole issue from a different perspective—from the perspective that the rule of law rather than the rule of ministerial fiat was operating. Lord Colville, the Home Secretary's own nominee, has reached a similar conclusion. The full recommendation of his report stated:

"It is now perhaps irresistible that some new tribunal be set up to oversee these powers. It could draw on Scottish and Channel Isle methodology, but nothing except a bold new initiative seems likely to deflect a continuing divergence of procedure between the rest of Europe and ourselves."

I repeat my offer on the terms set out by Lord Colville. We are prepared to co-operate in examining the "bold new initiative" which is essential to the successful continuation of the Act.

The recommendation that I read out is not the judgment of a man who shares the complacency about the working of the Act which the Prime Minister exhibited last Thursday and which the Home Secretary echoed today.

Mr. Jones *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I offered to give way and I shall do so.

Mr. Jones: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, not long ago many of my constituents came near to losing life or limb on the St. Albans to London railway line. The wriggling that he exhibits today can only convince them that he is interested not in the civil rights of the majority of travellers but in those of a tiny minority who are charged—or not charged—under this legislation.

Mr. Hattersley: Civil rights always apply to a tiny minority. If we say that they do not matter because they apply only to a few, we are not talking about civil rights at all. The hon. Gentleman can put it in personal terms if he wishes. I am not fully aware of the details of what happened to his constituents, but 15 years ago six of my constituents were killed in the Birmingham pub bombings. I take the view now—as I did then—that the steps that we must take against terrorism must be consistent with belief in a free society and they must be effective. What I have tried to argue today—the House will judge with what success—is that in many ways those new steps are not effective.

Mr. Bowis: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No, I must get on.

I must draw the House's attention to Lord Colville's judgment on detention and the need to inject some judicial review into the process. What the Home Secretary has uniquely done today is virtually to reject the conclusions on every major point of the report by the man whom he requested to examine the operation of the Act.

Mr. Bowis: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: Very well.

Mr. Bowis: The right hon. Gentleman has referred again and again to Lord Colville. Lord Colville pointed out two things: that some 400 charges were brought and that incidents of terrorism stopped. If the right hon. Gentleman has his way tonight and the House votes down the order, we will have not an improved Act, but no Act at all. If that happened, what reassurance could the right hon. Gentleman give to my constituent who was injured as a result of the bomb at Victoria station and who may never walk again?

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman's constituent must judge whether the Act is being as effective as his Member of Parliament clearly believes.

I have been meticulous in describing the words that Lord Colville used to criticise the major powers in the Act. I shall now outline, having given way for the last time—

Mr. Robert G. Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: No, I have given way for the last time.

Lord Colville reported—the Home Secretary again, disingenuously, read simply the brief words at the end of the paragraph—that the rules governing exclusion orders —part II of the Act—were meticulously observed. Of course they were; we expect no less. What the Home Secretary was less precise about, however, is the fact that Lord Colville does not believe that there should be exclusion orders. He came to that judgment three years ago—he was opposed to exclusion orders in their entirety.

The exclusion order provision, described by a previous Attorney-General as "internal exile", was equally opposed by Sir Cyril Phillips, who reported on the Act, at the Government's invitation, before Lord Colville. Sir Cyril Phillips, in masterly understatement, described exclusion orders as possessing advantages which it was "difficult to demonstrate in a convincing way". He went on to describe them as "objectionable in principle".

Lord Colville was even more categorical. I quote from his report of 1987:

"I renew my recommendation . . . that Part Two of the Act should not be renewed in 1988 or replaced in the new Bill". It was, of course, replaced in the new Bill and we discuss the replacement this afternoon against the explicit, repeated advice from the man whose judgment on the Act the Government requested.

Whatever the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) may say, it is not simply the civil liberties aspect that we regard as cause for concern. Frankly, it is absurd to tell the people of Northern Ireland that they are an integral part of the United Kingdom if we then take powers to require individuals who are suspected of terrorism to leave the mainland and live in the six counties. Northern Ireland should not be a dumping ground for terrorists. If it was a simple requirement that a terrorist should return home and a Belfast terrorist was required to live in Belfast, there might be some justification for that power. Under the Act as it now stands, however, a Birmingham born and bred terrorist, a Manchester born and bred terrorist or a Mole Valley born and bred terrorist might be required to live in the six counties. When Northern Irish men and women read that provision of the Act it is not surprising that they ask, "Why do you pretend we are part of the United Kingdom with the normal rule of law running here as it runs there when this special provision is made that applies to us in a way in which it does not apply to other parts of the United Kingdom?"

I should like to refer to another aspect of Lord Colville's report—the confiscation of the proceeds of terrorism or funds built up to finance it and the prosecution of those who finance terrorism. We supported the measures when they came before the House of Commons and we must therefore share with the Government blame for what Lord Colville describes as a legislative shambles.

I repeat to the Home Secretary what I said in an intervention. Of course we shall support the proposals in the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill that toughen up the law against terrorist funds. If, after advice, the Home Secretary decides that the provisions can be applied to Scotland, Wales and England, we shall support an extension. I hope that the Minister will be clear about one proposal and one issue that the Home Secretary got wrong. He said that without those powers, which, after all, were introduced only a little more than a year ago, there would be no ability on the part of the Government to act against terrorist funds. That surely cannot be right. What the Government tried to do two years ago, what we supported them in doing and what we both found to be inadequate in Lord Colville's judgment was a toughening up of the procedure and a more effective administrative way of denying terrorists the money that they want.

Clearly, under the normal law, anyone who provides money to assist in murder, destruction, arson or bombing would have to be subject to some prosecution were they apprehended and brought before the courts. That is a minor error that the Home Secretary made. The important point is that we are prepared to see the extension of the emergency powers, and if there can be a toughening of the process we should gladly vote for it and discuss it with the Home Secretary as part of the discussions that I still hope will be held.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The right hon. Gentleman implied in a letter to me last week that he would say something new today. At the beginning of his speech he said that he would

[Mr. Kenneth Baker]

say something new today. He has said nothing new today. All his comments and the limitations that he seeks to introduce have all been well rehearsed by him and his colleagues in the past. He wishes to water down the powers in the prevention of terrorism Act because he rightly says that they impinge in some way upon civil liberties. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) said, his constituents could have had their civil liberties eroded by being killed by the action of terrorists. The right hon. Gentleman is far too cavalier in saying that it is only 22, and six and so on. We must act. If the right hon. Gentleman ever held responsibility in this role—I do not think that he ever will—he would have to act to protect public safety. He is not trying to create a bipartisan approach today. He has drifted further from the Act. He wants to dismantle, water down and weaken the Act. The people of this country will not understand him and they will not understand his case in the next general election, either.

Mr. Hattersley: Again, I urge the Home Secretary to listen to the final passage of my speech with as much calmness as he can muster, for he was uncharacteristically over eager in saying that I have made no suggestions. I am about to do that. I am about to offer to the Home Secretary five ideas. None of them is brand new, but few ideas are these days—*[Interruption.]* I see that there has been no change in Government policy—it is just as it ever was. We have been arguing that for the past 100 days and the Home Secretary has been denying it. I am glad for his admission that things are as they ever were.

Let me proceed with my suggestions about the Act. I have one or two suggested improvements. First, we should accept the view of the European Court and Lord Colville that detention should be extended only after the case has been reviewed by a judicial tribunal. Secondly, we should abandon exclusion orders. Thirdly, we should toughen up provisions affecting the financing of terrorism. Fourthly, we should consider the feasibility and desirability of setting up a national agency—a British intelligence bureau—to provide an effective countrywide response against terrorism. I should make it clear that we remain wholly committed to the principle of local police forces, but some threats can be dealt with only nationally. In our view, terrorism is one of them. *[Interruption.]* We shall extend our suggestions on special request from Conservative Members not only to No. 5 but to Nos. 5, 6 and 7.

Fifthly, we should fully and immediately introduce the Colville suggestion of video-recording of interviews of all suspects in police custody. Our proposal and the Colville proposal are completely reasonable. We should also, as Lord Colville recommends, remove internment from the statute book and introduce an independent complaints procedure for the Army.

On the basis of those five proposals I reiterate, and I shall continue to reiterate, my strong view that there is everything to be gained for the country in a demonstration of common purpose. I regret that the Home Secretary did not accept the offer today, but chose more and more as his speech went on to make the speech not of a Home Secretary but of a failed chairman of the Conservative party. *[Interruption.]* The right hon. Gentleman is not only a failed chairman of the Conservative party but a failed Secretary of State for Education and Science and a failed Secretary of State for the Environment.

I prefer to rely on the Prime Minister's assertion that we are all equally opposed to terrorism and all wish to work against it. Only the Provisional IRA has anything to lose from a common view on how terrorism can be combated. Again, if the Home Secretary comes to the idea that interparty talks would be an advantage, we are available for that purpose. It is in the national interest that they should be held, and we are available to hold them.

4.45 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I welcome the opportunity to make a brief contribution. Along with my right hon. and hon. Friends, I listened to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) with total incredulity. He would have us believe, and I am prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt, that he is seriously and sincerely opposed to terrorism, but nothing that he said carries conviction, and his speech seriously undermines that declaration.

I wish to make only one main observation because it is at the kernel of the debate. I accept that the overhelming majority of Opposition Members are sincere in their opposition to terrorism and in their search for means to combat and defeat terrorism. However, they undermine their argument. There is a fundamental flaw in their argument because they have failed to analyse correctly one essential aspect of terrorism. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook spoke about the Act being an erosion of civil liberties. We have heard the debate many times on the Floor of the House and in Committee, and a sense of deja vu descends on those who have previously taken part in the debate.

It is not true that the erosion of civil liberties creates the oxygen on which terrorism can thrive. The reverse is the case—terrorism thrives on the exploitation of the hallmarks of a free and liberal society. Terrorism exploits the freedom of the press, it exploits the open society, and it exploits our judicial system. Thererfore, it is absolutely essential in resisting terrorism that temporarily and in set circumstances we take the measures outlined in the Act so that we can deny terrorism that oxygen.

With respect, when Opposition Members talk in terms of an erosion of civil liberties as promoting terrorism, they are fundamentally wrong. The reverse is the case—terrorism exploits freedom, and it is by a voluntary curtailment of freedom that terrorism can be defeated.

4.49 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Home Secretary began the debate by outlining the history of the terrorist outrages that this country has suffered during the 12 months since the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act was last debated. It is a tragic tale, and the tragedy continues. It is quite clear that terrorism has not been defeated. We must take all the measures that are necessary to support the fight against the lawless men and women who seek to intimidate the citizens of this country into accepting a certain political point of view. Those men and women must be pursued and defeated.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) suggests that there should be talks

between the official Opposition and the Government. He cannot reconcile himself to the view that measures that were initially placed on the statute book by a Labour Government should be continued. His speech today did not indicate that there is much to talk about. He is undoubtedly right in saying that the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act has not defeated terrorism, and is not sufficient to defeat terrorism. No one could quarrel with that conclusion. However, the right hon. Gentleman's conclusion that the Act is not necessary is illogical. In drawing that conclusion, he not only is wholly mistaken but has sought systematically to misrepresent the views of Lord Colville, who has on many occasions reported on the operation of the Act. Lord Colville himself has asked questions about the effectiveness of exclusion orders, but he has not put in question his view that the Act as a whole is necessary. We are being invited by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook to dispense with the Act as a whole.

During the corresponding debate last year, I asked whether the right hon. Gentleman had had discussions with the authorities—in particular, the police—who are responsible for combating terrorism in Great Britain. I listened with interest to hear whether he had some answers to the points that those authorities have made to me and, no doubt, to others who have been willing to consult them about the practical consequences of revoking the provisions under which exclusion orders are made. It is a point that has not been discussed specifically by the Home Secretary in supporting the provisions.

I believe that the police are wholly right in their view that exclusion orders are necessary if there is to be proper surveillance of people whose activities pose a major threat to the state. The manpower considerations that would be involved in continuing the surveillance of those who have been subject to exclusion orders if they were at liberty to wander the length and breadth of Great Britain, as well as the Province of Northern Ireland, simply could not be seriously contemplated by a responsible Secretary of State for the Home Department and it is Secretary of State for the Home Department that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook aspires to be. I can only conclude that the right hon. Gentleman has not discussed these questions with those who are responsible. Certainly, he has never brought forward their views in support of his case against exclusion orders.

However, this is not the main thrust of Lord Colville's examination of the working of the Act this year. Lord Colville has looked in particular at the provision for the review of detention, and I am glad that he has done so. There is no doubt that the provisions on detention have caused the greatest anxiety. They undoubtedly curtail fundamental rights and freedom, and they have been operated in a manner found to be in contravention of the European convention on human rights. In this regard, I refer to last year's judgment in the Brogan case. I am considerably reassured by Lord Colville's finding that the detention review procedures are effective. He believes that, at least so far as Great Britain is concerned, police officers who are responsible for the custody of people in detention act as something of a balance against those who conduct the interrogation. He rightly draws attention to the question whether the checks are as effective in Northern Ireland itself. So long as this legislation is on the statute book, the House of Commons must pay particular attention to that matter.

The review procedures are important, and in that context I hope that the interrogation tape recording experiments that have begun will be followed with great interest and great care and, if possible, extended. Recording an interview should not be inconsistent with obtaining the truth. Like Lord Colville, I believe that much depends on very careful examination of the results of the experiments, which, I think, are being carried out in Paddington.

As I have indicated, the operation of the detention provisions constitutes a violation of the European convention—a violation that led to the Government's derogating from the convention in respect of these matters. Last year, I expressed my regret—and I repeat that expression of regret now—that the Government are unwilling to consider altering the examining system in any way to bring this country within the ambit of the European convention. As Lord Colville has pointed out, a look at the experience within the criminal justice systems in Scotland and the Channel Islands should enable us to meet the strictures of the European Court of Human Rights by means of some alteration of procedures in England and Wales. Today, however, the Home Secretary was adamant —he set his face against any such alteration.

The disadvantage of the method of initiating these inquiries in England and Wales is that it is misunderstood abroad. If we are found to be in contravention of the European convention, that is regarded as being a serious matter. Yet, Lord Colville is right to draw attention to the fact that in other countries, including France, people have been held for substantially longer periods than that allowed under this Act without conclusions having been reached as to their guilt or innocence or as to whether they ought to be charged. A fair look at the record of this country, by comparison with the records of other countries, will show that we do not come out badly. That is why the Home Secretary ought to consider other ways of meeting the finding in the Brogan case.

On this occasion, Lord Colville's main purpose was to draw attention to the mixed, and sometimes conflicting, legislation dealing with the confiscation of the assets of those assisting the terrorist effort. The Home Secretary has given the House a fair account of what he intends to do by way of consideration of the points that Lord Colville has raised. Lord Colville indicates that the provisions of the Act lack teeth. That is a matter that must give rise to concern. Not everyone in this House is anxious to whittle away the powers under the Act. Some of us are anxious to see the legislation made more effective. I hope that, before many months, the Home Secretary will come back with proposals to deal with proceeds that are being diverted to assist terrorist organisations. There is no doubt that that has maintained terrorist activity more effectively than almost anything.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook appealed to the House and to the Government to treat this matter in a bipartisan way. As a Liberal Democrat, I am naturally attracted to the idea of cross-party agreement when there is a genuine meeting of minds, but the right hon. Gentleman's speech neither gave support to any new proposals nor suggested that he was entering upon the proposed discussions in a bipartisan spirit. It appeared to me that he was, quite simply, failing to face up to the reasons why this Act remains on the statute book, and

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

failing to recognise that all those who have had responsibility for the fight against terrorism have found that the Act has contributed materially to that fight.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook significantly misled the House about what Lord Colville said. The Home Secretary read out a passage of the report which I found persuasive. In a number of other passages, Lord Colville speaks of the effectiveness of the Act. In one passage he says, about the extension of detention in Northern Ireland, that in a number of cases admissions were made during further interrogations under extension orders. Prolonged interrogation can evidently still produce results although, in current circumstances, it is more likely that the extra period of detention is sought in order to carry out forensic, laboratory or other tests.

If such prolonged interrogation is producing results, and Lord Colville believes that it is, then that is a powerfully persuasive argument for retaining these powers.

Mr. McNamara: Lord Colville also said, in relation to Northern Ireland, that extended interrogation should be videoed. Does the hon. Gentleman support that suggestion? Does he know why the Government have rejected that part of Lord Colville's recommendations?

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Gentleman must have been out of the Chamber or not listening when I spoke about that. I said that I thought that that was a valuable recommendation but I understood Lord Colville to be saying that the experiment that was being conducted in Paddington should be studied with considerable care and that it would be desirable to extend it, if possible. I do not believe that he went as far as the hon. Gentleman suggested.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook also seriously misrepresented Lord Colville when he said that Lord Colville had felt that the move to set up a new tribunal to oversee these powers was now irresistible. Lord Colville did not say that. He put it in the interrogative form and the Home Secretary gave his answer. I am not happy with the Home Secretary's answer, for the reasons that I have given, but Lord Colville was nothing like as dogmatic about it as the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook suggested. Throughout his commentary on Lord Colville, one had the strong sense that he was seeking to find an ally who was not there. Lord Colville has been more careful in his consideration of the effectiveness of the Act than has the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. He seems to be more moved by party political considerations than consideration of the security of the realm. I greatly regret that. This stance should not be taken by the shadow Home Secretary, nor by someone who, as a member of the Cabinet, supported the Act when it was first introduced. It is not responsible to overlook the advice that was given by Lord Mason of Barnsley as recently as 1988, to which the Home Secretary sensibly and properly referred. The House will feel that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has, once again, failed to measure up to the challenge of terrorism.

5.5 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): The House has been alerted to the necessity of applying its mind to the debate by the sad happenings of the past year. The awful catalogue that it was the duty of the Home Secretary to read out should put the darkest possible shadow over the Chamber and impose solemnity as we seek to tackle this problem. What happened in the past few days in this city has brought home to the House just what terrorism is really about and what it can accomplish.

Each one of us has a pass to the House which we wear outside this Chamber. That gives our identity, but the Government have not applied themselves to the fact that all our citizens should be identified. It would aid the police in the execution of their duties if, when a terrorist attack took place, those in the immediate vicinity could be identified and eliminated from their inquiries. The House needs to apply itself to that problem. If we feel that we can defend ourselves against an attack in this way, our citizens have a right to say that they should be defended in the same way.

It may be argued that such a scheme would take away civil liberties because everyone would be asked to carry an identity card, but no reasonable person could argue that. We are all identified in various ways for different affairs. Why should we not be identified in the battle against terrorism, which is taking such a sad toll of our citizens? The Home Secretary should apply his mind to this affair.

The hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) struck an important chord when he said that, in the fight against terrorism, society has to surrender some part of its liberty. This is, of necessity, true. When a nation is at war, every citizen has to sacrifice part of his liberty. This battle with terrorism is a war. It is not fought by the rules of any Geneva convention. The soldiers who fight in it do not identify themselves. Instead, they carry on a campaign of cowardly attacks on ordinary men and women and against the forces of the Crown which seek to give law and order to, and ensure the liberties of, all citizens of this United Kingdom. We must remember what the hon. Gentleman said—we must all surrender some part of our liberty so that others may be brought to book for their offences against society.

I noticed that the Secretary of State said that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) had the will to achieve the end, but was refusing the power. It is with deep respect that I say to the Secretary of State that that is exactly what the people of Northern Ireland are saying about his Government. I am not exonerating Members on the Labour Front Bench from the charge that the Secretary of State made against them, but there are many people in Northern Ireland who would say that this Government and, indeed, Labour Governments have not had the will to win this war.

I should like to pick the Secretary of State up on what he said about Sinn Fein—indeed, I am sure that he would expect me to do so. Sinn Fein is no different from the IRA, and the IRA is no different from Sinn Fein. That is not what I say—it is what the police and the authorities say. The highlight of a Sinn Fein conference is when a masked gunman gives a report to the political party about the progress of the armed struggle.

We in Northern Ireland find it strange that Northern Ireland Office Ministers are absolutely adamant that they will not talk to Sinn Fein, because its members are IRA

men, yet they say to the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland, "You have to sit in councils and carry out the business of the affairs of this Province with IRA members."

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): The hon. Gentleman is perfectly correct to draw attention to the hypocrisy of Northern Ireland Office Ministers in that respect. Does he agree that the approach of those Ministers is also inconsistent, because, although they say that they will not talk to Sinn Fein, through intermediaries or otherwise they have dealings with Sinn Fein people?

Rev. Ian Paisley: The hon. Gentleman has made that point in the House and elsewhere. Thank God, I do not have to answer for Northern Ireland Office Ministers, but no doubt they will make their own reply to him.

Members of my party who serve on councils and whose loved ones have been murdered by the IRA are expected to take part in council business with men who, when the council suggested that its members should stand in silence for a moment in memory of the slain, opposed and objected to that motion while eulogising the gunmen and murderers. That is what we find strange. Of course, the Home Secretary is not in that position, because he does not have to serve on a council in Northern Ireland.

The right hon. Gentleman will, however, have to take some more advice about Sinn Fein's success. I also find it strange that on the one hand he is trying to distance Sinn Fein from the IRA while on the other hand he is trying to say that the IRA's standing can be seen from Sinn Fein's election results. He cannot have it both ways. The Secretary of State has said that Sinn Fein is losing in all elections, but it is not. The last two election tests have been the by-elections in Cookstown and Dungannon, in both of which Sinn Fein made big gains, averaging 10 per cent. Therefore, the Secretary of State was wrong to say that we are winning the war against the IRA and that the Sinn Fein vote is decreasing. We must face up to the fact that we are not winning the war.

That is why we are here today discussing emergency provisions. Although this is supposed to be an "emergency", it goes on and on, into permanency. That is cruel proof of the fact that we are not really winning the war. I cannot say to my constituents who have had their loved ones murdered that we are winning the war. I cannot say that we are winning the war to the people whom I shall be visiting this week because they do not believe it. They are not convinced that the war is being won.

I do not like to think that Northern Ireland is a dumping place for terrorists. That point was argued by Northern Ireland Members in the House when this legislation was first introduced, but, although it was well argued, that point was not answered. I do not like that fact, and I am sure that the Secretary of State knows that that is the attitude of Northern Ireland Members. However, I would tolerate that if we were making the headway against the terrorists that needs to be made. There are certain things that we shall be forced to do.

What worries me is the fact that the land border between the Republic and the United Kingdom is practically forgotten while the water border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom is treated as the border between the Republic and the rest of the United Kingdom. Many people from Northern Ireland resent the fact that, when they travel by aircraft and enter their own country, they may be stopped and asked to sign a card which will admit them into their own country. I have to fill in such a card when I travel through Gatwick, but not when I travel through Heathrow. I can never understand that. Gatwick must be a clearing place for republican travellers and unionists must travel via Heathrow. I understand that the same happens at Luton, Liverpool and Manchester.

If signing such a card would bring us nearer to defeating terrorism, the people of Northern Ireland would be quite prepared to put up with that. However, instead we find that the land border is open. I recently asked a friend to test how many times he could cross the border without being stopped. On just one day he crossed the border 27 times but was never stopped. I ask the Home Secretary: what is the use of having an open land border and of trying to deal with terrorism only on the water border, which cannot be policed sufficiently?

There will always be people who raise the issues of human rights and civil rights and there will always be those who object if the battle against terrorism gains ground because of legislation passed in this House. However, the Secretary of State should face up to some of the matters that I have raised. Dealing with the identity of the citizens of this land would be a major step forward in dealing realistically with what could be mounting attacks from terrorists.

In conclusion, we do not know what will be the spin-off from the Iraqi defeat in the Gulf. We do not know what terrorist groups will be released upon our country. We should have the best possible measures in legislation to deal with what could be a new and mounting threat.

5.19 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I want to preface my remarks by making one or two things very clear. The Secretary of State referred to attacks on people in Britain emanating from one of the proscribed organisations named in the legislation—the Provisional IRA. He rightly referred to the revulsion felt by people in this country at those attacks. However, no people were more revolted by those acts or more angry about them than Irish people living in Northern Ireland, in the Republic of Ireland and, above all, in England, Scotland and Wales. Those attacks create great emotion, but we should realise that that kind of perverted, twisted machismo for political reasons is abhorred by the vast majority in Northern Ireland.

I have witnessed not just physical injury, but other forms of injury at railway stations. For example, I have seen thousands of people who cannot get to work or home from work, or who have had to spend three or four hours travelling simply because a warped mind wanted to gain some pseudo-satisfaction from causing a false alert. Those alerts are organised by the Provisional IRA.

Each time IRA members set off a bomb and kill someone or carry out any act of violence, that is a gory —and sometimes very gory—but pathetic statement of their own failure. They are really admitting that the political objectives that they wish to achieve cannot be achieved through politics, rational argument and the power of persuasion. However, that does not help the people who are killed and injured. It does not help the

[Mr. Seamus Mallon]

people who are bereaved. However, as legislators we should remember that, whenever an atrocity is committed, those people are admitting that they have failed.

That failure will add up. The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) talked about winning the war. However, there are two wars to be won. The first involves the protection of society from terrorism. The other involves protecting the very highest standards of integrity and justice within this country, within Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. That is worth fighting for.

When the IRA has gone and its failure is copper-fastened and permanent, the integrity of that system will have to be rebuilt. This is not a flaky or weak issue of civil rights, human rights or civil liberties. It involves the protection of something that is essential—the integrity of the process of law and of legislation.

When we talk of winning the war, we should remember that more than one thing is at stake. People who are pursuing political objectives through violence are forcing everyone else to derogate from the highest standards. Those people, who may not be members of the IRA—and I am not making that as a point—killed four people in County Tyrone last night. They also killed a UDR soldier in my constituency at the weekend. Those people are negating the essence of what we are doing or trying to do. They are negating the essence of political progress. They demean and debase their objective, an objective which many of us in Ireland hold very dear. We become very angry when the IRA demeans it in the spurious cause that it claims to be pursuing.

The IRA has cast a vote of no confidence in itself. IRA members, through their actions, admit that they cannot come to this forum or to any other forum and, through the rationale of their argument, try to persuade others of the validity of their case. At the end of the day, that is what politics are about. They are not about numbers; they are about the strength of one's argument and the confidence and courage that one has to put that argument if that argument is not very popular.

Dr. Godman: I have been listening intently to what the hon. Gentleman has said about these very grave matters. However, will not the isolation of the terrorists—the Provisional IRA and the extreme loyalists—be made worse if it is heightened by the decision taken by the leaders of the political parties in the six counties to come to the negotiating table with those others who are so concerned to win this war?

Mr. Mallon: I am not exactly clear about the hon. Gentleman's point. However, if I understand him correctly, I can state that I would talk and negotiate with anyone if I thought that that would save one life. My susceptibilities and sensitivities would have to take a back seat if I could passionately persuade people to end that kind of killing.

The community in which I live and from which I come, the nationalist community in South Armagh, has suffered greatly as a result of the activities of the Provisional IRA. Indeed, no community has suffered more. The people I live among understand the horror of IRA terrorism. We also know the horror of so-called loyalist terrorism, because we saw it in County Tyrone last night. We know the absolute horror of giving up the highest standards of our justice and legal procedures so that those people can run amok. That is the weakness with this provision, because that is exactly what those people want us to do. The more things begin to crumble in terms of law and legislation, the better those people like it, because that is the kind of milieu in which they can succeed.

It is spurious to argue that, if one is opposed to the terms of emergency legislation or are critical of some of the provisions of such legislation, one is soft on terrorism. I can understand why such an argument is advanced in the House, but it has nothing to do with emergency legislation: it has to do with party politics. Frankly, as a member of a party with three representatives in the House, which will never be in government or be the official Opposition, I do not have to indulge in that kind of argument. However, it should be clearly understood that, because one is critical of legislation, that does not mean one is in any way soft on terrorism.

At the weekend I paid at least one visit, as the hon. Member for Antrim, North must do on many occasions, to see the consequences of a terrorist bomb, the loss of life and the damage that that does to the community. Let there be no media over-statement in that regard. We could also do without the kind of self-congratulation that we sometimes hear. I am critical of the legislation, and shall vote against it for the reasons that I have consistently given and will continue to give. That does not mean that I have any sympathy for terrorism or that I am in any way soft on terrorism. I probably have more reasons to be hard on it than most.

Is it possible to fight terrorism without measures such as internal exile, or without having to derogate not once but 38 times from European law—this time, in relation to article 15? Is it possible to fight terrorism without detention as a means of trawling for intelligence? There is a fundamental distinction between trawling for intelligence and arresting someone on suspicion of having committed a crime.

Is it possible to fight terrorism without any derogation from the higher standards of justice that we should all be trying to preserve? Is it possible to fight terrorism without a whole panoply of legislation that resembles a patchwork quilt—from the emergency provisions Acts and the prevention of terrorism Acts to the ad hoc legislation that comes before the House from time to time? That is like taking pieces of putty and sticking them on a crumbling wall, hoping that they will hold together. They will not.

That was the essence of the point made by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). He did not question the need to fight terrorism but only the means by which that should be done. He asked whether a better way could be found than derogating from article 15 or trawling for information.

Is there a need for adequate legislation that will go beyond that which currently exists? The answer must be yes, but in this country a patchwork quilt approach is taken which does not achieve what it should and which damages certain principles that we all hold dear.

The Republic of Ireland has been forced to face the same problem. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook stressed that we should look carefully at that aspect. At the end of his report, Lord Colville pointed out that terrorism not only exists in Northern Ireland but is straying into England, Scotland and Wales, as well as into the Republic. Acts of terrorism have also occurred in France, Holland and Germany. I am sure that I have omitted other

countries. Is there not some merit in the suggestion that we should consider the entire issue, in the way that we do in respect of agriculture, trade, the environment, and many other issues within the European Community? Would not that be better than sticking another piece of putty on the wall when there is an atrocity?

In the world in which we live, if the IRA's violence stops, and if loyalists' violence stops, there will still be sufficient terrorism to merit a concerted and unified approach by all the countries affected by it. I ask the Secretary of State not to dismiss that suggestion simply because it comes from the Opposition or from the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook.

Lord Colville made it clear in the last sentence of his report that

"nothing except a bold and new initiative seems likely to deflect a continuing divergence of procedures between most of the rest of Europe and ourselves."

Something that had a European basis would be free of the inter-country, inter-communal connotations which such legislation sometimes has—and which the prevention of terrorism Act has in the eyes of many Irish people. It would override and transcend such considerations. It will not be easy to achieve, but it is a challenge which must be faced, sooner or later—in international rather than domestic terms.

I can imagine the reaction that there would be in this country and in the Republic of Ireland, France, and other countries, but the prize is much too big to throw out such a concept without giving it full consideration. There is much to be gained from starting down that road, rather than having an emergency provisions Act for Northern Ireland and a prevention of terrorism Act for England, Scotland and Wales—overlapping, interlinking, and tying in with other legislation where it suits, so that if one wants to examine that legislation one needs to have five or six Acts to hand.

I want to make reference to one or two practical aspects. An interesting study of the tape recording and video recording of police interviews was conducted for the Law Reform Commission of Canada between 1985 and 1987. One paragraph is particularly relevant:

"Aside from providing a new tool for the investigative process, the police, Crown counsel and defence lawyers viewed the introduction of this technology as an improvement of the administration of justice. An accurate video tape record of police interviews largely eliminates court room conflicts over what was said and how an accused was treated. The new technology therefore helps police in gathering evidence at the same time as it adds protection to the rights of the accused."

When we go beyond the normal bounds of the law and embark on what is euphemistically called emergency legislation, we must remember to provide matching protection. I know of the practical difficulties, but there is an overriding argument for helping the police and protecting them against unfounded allegations, as well as for adding to the protection given to the accused. I ask the Secretary of State to continue apace with tape recording experiments and to move into video taping also.

I make this final, carping point simply because reference is made to it in Lord Colville's report. He clearly draws a distinction between the effectiveness of the police complaints procedure in England and Wales and that in the north of Ireland. Out of 407 "completed" investigations in 1990, 327 were incapable of being completed, 14 were withdrawn, and 66 were held to be not substantiated. No charges were brought by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland against police officers and nor did the complaints commission recommend any disciplinary charges.

I can see why those investigations would have been withdrawn; I understand why, if the essence of a case was not there, the Director of Public Prosecutions would not bring that case to court. But, given the current position in Northern Ireland, is it imaginable that not a single disciplinary charge should be possible? Does that not raise questions about police complaints procedure, and about the Police Complaints Commission?

I have complained bitterly for a long time about the composition of the commission's board and about its means of operation. Many problems could be avoided if the commission used properly the legislation made available to it by the House three years ago—one of the best and most effective pieces of legislation that we have produced. I hope that the Secretary of State will note the relevant part of Lord Colville's report and will also note the difference in tone and content between Colville's reactions to the two Police Complaints Commissions. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will get around, at some stage, to asking a very naive question: why do the police in England and Wales seem to be so much worse than those in Northern Ireland? Disciplinary charges are brought in England and Wales, but none are brought in the north of Ireland.

In the past week, I have had to deal with Army authorities informally in relation to complaints that I have made. After a time, I went back; to their credit, the authorities were able to tell me exactly what they had investigated, what they had found, what action they had taken and how they had dealt with those who had transgressed. I believe that the authorities deal fairly decently with some of the complaints that they receive, but I cannot accept that, in some circumstances, a disciplinary charge will not be brought in regard to police complaints, despite the legislation that is available.

As I have said, I shall vote against the measure. I believe that there are better ways of dealing with the problems and I must, in all honesty, suggest ways in which they could be handled more comprehensively and effectively. The kernel is in that last sentence of Lord Colville's report that I quoted. I believe that there is merit in what the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said, and I plead with the Government not to reject his proposal simply because it came from the Opposition.

5.42 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Some of the debate has been taken up in exposing the Labour party's hypocrisy in dealing with the subject of terrorism. I do not think that it is merely a matter of party politics; it is a very important subject. There ought to be a united, multi-party policy on terrorism. The result of Labour's defection from the true course is that we have a policy in this party, in this Government and in this Parliament of containing terrorism when we ought to have a policy of defeating it. The public insist on the defeat of terrorism. It is not enough to give them ritual denunciations of violence, and ritual avowals of dissociation from those who seek to achieve their political ends by violence. We have heard a great deal of that in this debate, and we have also heard people place considerable emphasis on civil liberties in this country as though they were endangered or threatened.

[Mr. Ivor Stanbrook]

Society needs to be able to defend itself by its own self-discipline, and must be given adequate weapons to do so. That is not the case yet.

The Labour party stands convicted in that regard. After all, the initial Labour legislation on the subject—which came about simply because of explosions on the mainland—is basically the same as the measures that we are debating today. The principles are the same. There have been minor amendments; I regard them as minor, because they have not achieved their true purpose. There have been small improvements, but basically the position remains the same. Now that it is in opposition, the Labour party has changed its tune and reverted to the civil liberties argument.

I do not suggest that any Opposition Member lacks patriotism or a desire to get rid of terrorism; unfortunately, however, that is the impression that is being given to the country at large. The difficulty is that, because of an inhibition or hang-up—largely because of party politics—we have not been able to present a united front to dispose of terrorism as we have—I hope—virtually disposed of Saddam Hussein and Iraqi aggression. There was a united policy on that, the success of which was due partly to all-party support for the Government's policy. Could we not adopt such a policy on terrorism? The Labour party's own principle involved the proscription of terrorist organisations. It has been in the legislation all along, but Labour wants to repeal the relevant provision.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): The hon. Gentleman is making sweeping generalisations about Labour party policy. Does he not know that all Opposition Members want all-party agreement on this matter? Is he not aware that, only last Tuesday, my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) made a speech and wrote to the Home Secretary asking for every proposal to be on the table—for nothing to be ruled out—with the objective of securing such all-party agreement? Could an Opposition be fairer or more open-minded than that?

Mr. Stanbrook: I regard that as worthless. The position has been the same all along. We are talking about Labour legislation—a Labour Act. The Conservative party simply took it over when it came into office, and has renewed it regularly. A Labour spokesman may come along now and say, "Nothing is excluded; everything is included. We are only too willing to talk." That was not Labour's attitude at the time of the Gulf war.

Mr. Sheerman: I respect many of the views that the hon. Gentleman expresses in the House, but 16 years is a long time in politics. Opposition Members agree with his opening remarks, in which he said—I hope that he remembers this—that our efforts against terrorism were not working; that terrorism was continuing unabated, and that we needed more effective means of beating it. That is what we are saying, and that is why we want a discussion.

Mr. Stanbrook: If that were the case, the Labour party would not be trying to repeal the Act. Labour Members would be saying, "The Government are absolutely right: this is not good enough. We must add more teeth to the Act. We must get together and agree extra, positive measures." I shall not pursue the point with the hon. Gentleman, because I happen to agree with something else that he said recently, and I propose to be nice and friendly to him later. There is always a chance that the truth will suddenly be clear, and wisdom will dawn. The hon. Gentleman already has an inkling. I can only encourage him to persuade his colleagues that their constant opposition to the legislative means provided by Governments of both parties does Labour no good whatever. It does the public no good either, and it hampers the fight against terrorism. If the Opposition were more intelligent about their programme, they would adopt a policy similar to their policy on the Gulf war, realising that opposing such policies would make them so unpopular in the country that they would be certain to lose the next election. Unfortunately, this legislation is taking the place of the Gulf war. If the Labour party continues to maintain its opposition to the main legislative weapon against terrorism, it will suffer the same reaction from the British electorate. It is not that it is not doing enough, but that it is trying to defeat something that has as respectable an origin as a Labour Home Secretary years ago—certainly 16 years ago. For 16 years the war against terrorism has continued, but it has certainly not been won. We need more efforts and positive measures.

It is no use the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) saying that he will vote against the measure because it infringes civil liberties and human rights. We are not talking about that. The only human rights that concern us are those of the victims. Positive measures are required, but we are not getting them.

Mr. Mallon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stanbrook: I am sorry, but I do not have time to give way.

In the spirit in which we should approach terrorism, one is bound to accept that there are strong arguments against some of these provisions which perhaps could be considered in amendments and so on. Even Lord Colville gave expression to them. The exclusion principle is one of them. It is abhorrent by Executive order not subject to judicial review to cause a British citizen to stay away from part of the country. It is one of the restrictions on the liberty of the individual which the police and the Government contend is necessary for the defeat of terrorism. It is argued that the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 has not been effective. Those who claim that do not know because the evidence is obtained through its operation, which is secret and cannot be revealed.

Mr. Mallon *rose*——

Mr. Stanbrook: I see the hon. Gentleman pregnant with desire to intervene, but I do not want to give him an excuse to do so. I accept that it is not nice for a British citizen to be told, "You cannot stay in this part of the country. You must go back home."

On Thursday 21 February, Thames Television produced an absurd "This Week" programme. After considering the great costs of providing personal security, the programme identified one particular person who without a doubt had connections with the IRA. He was an Ulster man who had been working in Devon and was required to return to Ulster. That must be an injustice and I suppose that he is now unemployed, as the programme said, whereas previously he had had a job. The police made

that decision and an exclusion order was applied. The programme presented the case as though it were a great injustice, compared with all the money that we spend on security against terrorists and concluded that somehow it was not right: it interfered with civil liberties. If the best example of injustice that the programme could produce was one unemployed person from Northern Ireland with relatives in the IRA—which may well have been the reason why such action was taken—who was sent home, one is bound to lose faith in the balance and understanding of those who make such television programmes.

There is a point here. One hopes that such a provision is not necessary, but I am prepared to accept that if the security authorities say that it is and if behind the scenes there is ample intelligence obtained through the operation of the Act—let us not say that, because we do not know what that information is, we should not allow fishing expeditions—there is a basis for examination of these cases. No doubt a great deal of intelligence is obtained that cannot be revealed. The measure must be justified. It stands to reason that it is.

One's great complaint must be that of the general public, especially after the dreadful incidents of wholesale attack on civilians and ordinary people, including my constituents, on the concourse of Victoria station. The general public ask us to fight back against the IRA. So far they have not been satisfied with the Government's response.

I said that I agreed heartily with some recent remarks by the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman). Surely now is the time for us to adopt the same response to and positive measures against the IRA as the German Government used against the Baader-Meinhof. Germany had a national intelligence-gathering agency, supplied with the best men and technical equipment. It drew on sources from all over Germany and Europe and all the information was fed into a central system. It had mobile and effective teams which acted on the information thus gathered. If that is what the hon. Gentleman was advocating, I certainly agree. I hope that the Government will welcome the initiative with open arms. Of the seven ideas from the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), that is the only positive one. We need a national agency.

The trouble with all our defences against criminals is that so far we have been hampered by a ramshackle police structure. We have more than 50 separate, operational, autonomous police forces. Some are co-ordinated at some level, but never nationally. Some subjects are co-ordinated, but not overall. In some cases the computer systems are incompatible with those of other forces. The Home Secretary talks about the efforts to fight all violent crime, especially terrorism, but I do not understand how he can be so complacent when our weapons are so inadequate and rooted in a 19th century structure. It is the hesitation to upset chief police officers and others which bedevils us and prevents us from getting the matter under control.

We must take criminal investigation, detection and the defeat of terrorism in hand. We must not talk about it in terms of co-ordination, as the Home Secretary did in his opening speech. It is not the co-ordination of intelligence gathering that is needed; it is the co-ordination of action. That is what was so effective in West Germany and we must learn that lesson.

We have been hampered too much because we have paid too little regard to the dangers which terrorism poses for a civilised society. We have paid too little regard to the demands of the public to get to grips with the problem. We have paid too little regard to the niceties of personal and civil liberties. Opposition spokesmen stand back from the problem for party political purposes. Society demands that we get ahead with this. We are not doing enough now.

5.58 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I wish to criticise some points in the legislation, but I shall support it in the Lobby this evening because its principle is more important than its defects. Others have discussed the measure—I will not on this occasion—in the context of whether or not it is effective. The Opposition and Government Front-Bench spokesmen debated that point. On this topic I find table 8 in Lord Colville's report interesting. It sets out the number of occasions when charges, exclusion orders, removal or deportation have occurred as a percentage of the number of detentions under the prevention of terrorism Act. It is remarkable to note the consistency among the various categories: the total of effectiveness for the United Kingdom as judged in this way is about 22 per cent.; the effectiveness in dealing with international terrorism is 21 per cent.; and the effectiveness of dealing with republican terrorism is about 22 per cent. That provides a clue to the usefulness of the legislation, and it reinforces the need to retain it.

It cannot be argued that the legislation has been wholly effective. The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) pointed out that we still have a serious terrorism problem. It is clear that the Act in itself is not sufficient, and I agree with the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) that we should look at ways of strengthening it.

The legislation is inextricably linked with the circumstances of its introduction—as a response to the Birmingham pub bombings in 1974. I do not wish to refer directly to the cases before the courts, except to make the general point that they and other court proceedings underline the need for coolness in responding to terrorism. Because terrorism is an attack on the entire community, there will be an emotional reaction to it right across the community. That is why we need coolness when dealing with it. I noticed a letter in *The Times* last Saturday from Sir Frederick Lawton in which he indignantly made the point that the convictions complained about were decisions not of judges but of juries. That underlines the point that I have just made: because of the nature of terrorism and the emotional response to it, the response of the man in the street cannot be trusted.

A good case can be made for replacing juries in terrorist cases by judges. That is not to give the judges a blank cheque. Even they can err. In Northern Ireland we well know a case in which they did err; the case is currently before the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who I hope will give the go-ahead for an early re-trial. Mistakes were made because of political pressure. My comments about a cool response apply as much to politicians as to jurors. I hope that ultimately there will be an inquiry which will reveal that what we believe to be false convictions arose as a result of political interference with the course of justice and with decisions to arrest and detain people.

[Mr. David Trimble]

Eventually I hope that there will be a full judicial inquiry, although I am perhaps straying a little beyond the matter in hand.

This is a United Kingdom Act, and that is good. Its application throughout the United Kingdom should be followed in other matters. Hon. Members have already mentioned the number of different Acts dealing with terrorism in Northern Ireland—the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 and the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989, to name but two. It is sometimes difficult to know the full extent of the panoply of powers in dealing with terrorism, and that is wrong. It would be far better to bring all anti-terrorism legislation together in one Act, to be applied throughout the United Kingdom.

This Act contains certain provisions which it is hoped will cut off funds for terrorism. That is good, but they have not been effective so far. Some remedies have been proposed, and we shall debate them on Wednesday—but only in a Northern Ireland context. I was appalled to hear the Home Secretary say that the Government intend to experiment in Northern Ireland to see whether the proposals will work before extending them to the rest of the country. That is a silly way to proceed, and it will not work. Everyone knows that the proposals come from the Home Office, not from the Northern Ireland Office, so it is not likely that the Government will commit themselves to providing enough resources to implement the provisions in Northern Ireland.

We should proceed on a United Kingdom basis. If the provisions to deal with funds for terrorism need strengthening, they should be strengthened for the whole United Kingdom, not by way of an experiment in Northern Ireland that is likely to produce an uncertain response.

As we have said in other contexts, it is illogical to proscribe some organisations in Northern Ireland but not in Great Britain. People travel between the two countries, and organisations that are proscribed should be proscribed throughout the United Kingdom. There is an argument for considering the shortlist in this Act beside the longer list in the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act, under which eight organisations are proscribed. It goes without saying that I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Antrim, North about Sinn Fein. It makes no sense to proscribe the IRA yet not to proscribe one part of it, which is what Sinn Fein is, as everyone knows. The pretence that there is a difference is made only for political purposes, and that qualifies and casts doubt on the Government's commitment to anti-terrorist measures.

The Home Secretary will know that we are critical of exclusion orders. It is not right that people should be dumped in Northern Ireland. The orders are wrong in principle. What the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said about them was inaccurate. There is no danger under the legislation of persons born and bred in Birmingham being dumped in Northern Ireland. If the right hon. Gentleman casts his eye over section 5(4), he will no doubt be happy to correct his comments.

We should like exclusion orders to go, but only if the frontier is dealt with seriously. Controls should be moved from the Irish sea to the frontier. The hon. Member for Antrim, North identified the idiocy of having an open frontier between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, and of trying to control the frontier at another point further down the sea. This is due in part to laziness on the part of the Government and officials. They think it easier to carry out checks at ports and airports than to make the comparatively small effort to treat the frontier seriously. The Government should realise that their laziness sends the wrong message to the terrorists. That message is that the Government do not really think that Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, and that their commitment to the defeat of terrorism and the maintenance of the Union is contingent and half-hearted. That only encourages terrorism.

The paradox is that the exclusion order procedure only makes matters worse. I am sorry that the Home Secretary is not present to hear me say that the terminology that he used can only encourage terrorism. I was appalled to hear him say that the law-abiding citizens of this country were appalled by a number of terrorist incidents, all of which had happened in England. It was perfectly clear from the context that in his mind "this country" means England and nothing beyond it. In other parts of his speech he referred to Great Britain and Ireland, to the Irish people, to Ireland north and south. It is clear that in his mind there is a mental blind drawn down the Irish sea. That, too, is an encouragement to terrorism and it sends out a signal to the IRA to continue its offensive because the Home Secretary is not committed to the Union and he will give way to them at some point in the future. That is how his speech will be read.

The Home Secretary should reflect carefully on this matter, but I am not surprised at his attitude when I recall that, with his literary pretensions, he savagely censored "The Boyne Water" in his anthology.

Mr. John Patten: I have not read the literary savagery to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but I shall look at it with some interest later. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman does my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary an injustice. I have checked the text and found that one of the first sentences uttered by my right hon. Friend in his speech refers to the appalling incidents that the Province suffered over the weekend. As I think the hon. Gentleman knows, I know the Province well and I feel strongly that it is wrong for people in the Province not to recognise the major contribution that everyone in the United Kingdom is trying to make to keep the peace in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Trimble: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his comments, but I am sorry to say that they do not meet the point. I acknowledge that in his speech the Home Secretary spoke about terrorist incidents in Northern Ireland. However, in part of his speech he spoke about "this country" in terms which did not include Northern Ireland and he was therefore sending the wrong message. Perhaps the Home Secretary's mistake is unconscious, in which case I hope that he will think about it and correct it and will not again encourage terrorism in that way.

Detention and its extension have given rise to some legal difficulty in terms of the European convention. The ability to extend the period of detention to seven days is important, and that is substantiated on page 3 of Lord Colville's report, which refers to detentions in Northern Ireland. Lord Colville says that 166, or 37 per cent., of

those subject to extensions were charged. If one looks elsewhere at the number of people charged out of the total detained, one notes a significant increase—more than double—in the number of charges of persons for whom the period of detention was extended. That statistic alone shows the need to have the ability to extend the period up to seven days.

The problem arises because of the European convention and the way in which it is drafted. It operates on a Europe-wide basis. While there was a significant British input to its drafting, it was largely drafted by and interpreted by civil lawyers rather than common law lawyers. The civil law system is significantly different from the common law system. Some form of judicial involvement in detention and the building of a case against an accused is common in civil law but not in common law. That is our difficulty.

The Home Secretary was right to refer to cases in France where people are effectively detained for much longer than here, but there is no problem there because in France the juge d'instruction is involved in the proceedings. However, he does not play what we would regard as a wholly judicial role, although he is to some extent involved in the interrogation process and in the gathering of evidence. To some extent, he carries out what we—by "we", of course, I mean people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland—would regard as a police function. The position in Scotland is different because the procurator fiscal is based on the concept of civil law and, to a certain extent, he is involved in what might otherwise be regarded as police work.

Dr. Godman: The hon. Gentleman is right to emphasise the important role of the procurator fiscal, who is in every sense of the word concerned with criminal investigations. That fine experience has been followed in England through recent legislation.

Mr. Trimble: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his elucidation. This is a complex matter and the difficulty is in finding a way to graft on to the common law accusatorial system the inquisitorial procedures of civil law. There is a way out which we have suggested in other circumstances, and it would solve the problem in Northern Ireland. It is that after an appropriate period of two, three or four days, or whatever it might be, an application could be made in chambers to a resident magistrate. Provided the resident magistrate did not treat that as full judicial proceedings and took account of the nature of the information and intelligence available to the investigating authorities, he would provide the necessary "judicial" input to satisfy the European convention.

That solution is not available generally in England and Wales, which retain lay magistrates and, of course, it would be impossible to involve them in such a system. That might be an argument for dispensing with lay magistrates and having what we call resident magistrates, the term for which here is stipendiary magistrates. The Government may want to consider that.

It may be necessary to consider extending the Scottish procurator fiscal system, or something analogous, to the rest of the United Kingdom. That option was examined in Northern Ireland in the early 1970s in the MacDermott report into the prosecution of offenders. I am sorry to say that it was turned down solely on fiscal grounds, when it was said that it would cost too much to introduce examining magistrates. The proposal was supported by a range of people and may be worth looking at again because that could be the way to solve the problem. There is no easy way to solve it, and those who understand the situation in the United Kingdom and in Europe should not be impatient if it takes some time to work out a solution. A certain amount of heat is generated about detention by people who do not fully appreciate the intricacies of the problem.

Reference has been made to the videoing of interviews. We should do what Lord Colville has reported elsewhere and allow experiments to be conducted by the police to see whether it is feasible. Lord Colville's reports on that and on associated legislation are useful. They provide a valuable way to make information available to the public and are clearly a valuable test of the efficacy of the legislation. One has only to look at the way in which hon. Members have appealed to Lord Colville's report and the eagerness with which he has been prayed in aid, sometimes not altogether properly, to show how much the reports are appreciated.

Lord Colville's useful work is a substitute for a proper way of looking at the legislation, which I hope can be done eventually. A debate once a year on the prevention of terrorism Act and an associated debate later this week on the emergency provisions legislation are no substitute for proper parliamentary supervision and control of such exceptional legislation. The powers are properly exceptional. It is right that they should exist, but there should be some effective means of supervision. Because of the nature of the powers, I do not think that we can have effective judicial supervision of them, and an attempt to over-judicialise this procedure is wrong.

We should look at the prospect of having a special procedure, perhaps a Select Committee of Privy Councillors and senior hon. Members charged with carrying out the function carried out by Lord Colville. It would also investigate annually or perhaps more often than that. That might be more useful than the constant pursuit of toughening-up powers for complaints bodies and so on. It would certainly have the advantage of requiring hon. Members seriously to address the detail of the legislation.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) gave an eloquent denunciation of recent terrorist incidents in England and Wales. He said that by their acts those terrorists are saying that their objects cannot be achieved politically. He is quite right. Those objects cannot be achieved by contesting elections and obtaining majorities. However, the terrorists expect to succeed politically, but through the weakness of Governments and particularly of English Ministers. In that respect the Government have repeatedly encouraged terrorism, not just by the casual and careless use of language that I criticised earlier, but in the way in which they have allowed terrorism to set the political agenda. I refer here to certain ill-judged initiatives that have been taken over the years. That is not only my criticism. An editorial in *The Times* on Saturday week made exactly the same criticism.

The frequency with which the Government have given in to terrorism has in turn created a lack of confidence in some sections of the community in Northern Ireland. That lack of confidence has led some people wrongly to resort to what they call counter terrorism. That, of course, is wrong. The Unionist community has effectively repudiated or rejected such people and such action by joining or

[Mr. Trimble]

supporting the security forces and by providing them with the necessary information. The high success rate of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in dealing with such terrorism —some 90 per cent. plus—is evidence of that. When dealing with Republican terrorism, the success rate is only 13 to 15 per cent. That points to the difference in the political response.

The party of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh, the Social Democratic and Labour party, is extremely good at the verbal condemnation of terrorism. Unfortunately, that is not followed through by appropriate action to support and assist the security forces. The role of the hon. Gentleman's party in these matters is often that of a channel by which political concessions extorted by IRA terrorism are made available to Irish nationalism. That role is wrong, as are the actions of Government in making such concessions. None of these matters, however important though they are, will prevent us from supporting the proposed legislation, flawed though it may be, if the House divides this evening.

6.21 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Members of the public who listen to the debate will do so with complete amazement. They will have heard the Labour party's spokesman in this matter, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), make a speech which I consider almost incredible.

The right hon Gentleman, having said that no sensible person can doubt that the Opposition are against terrorism, then sought to dismantle the legislation that is designed to combat terrorism. It is true that the Opposition speak against terrorism, but speech is not enough. We are dealing with matters where there has to be action—

"By their fruits ye shall know them."

The Opposition want to dismantle the Government's action in protecting the nation from terrorism, and their position is entirely untenable. A Labour Government thought that action was necessary. In 1974, and again in 1976, they brought forward the current legislation, or legislation that was almost identical. They took against the relevant legislation only when they went into opposition and the Conservative Government took over the reins of power and introduced the current legislation. Since then, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has described the legislation to which he was a party in introducing as draconian. That word is intended to diminish the legislation's importance.

Had the position changed—had there been no terrorism since the Labour Government left office—there would be justification for the Opposition's stand. Unfortunately, since 1982 when the Opposition changed their mind, the need for this sort of legislation has grown, not diminished. We have had the Brighton bombing and the murders occasioned there. We have had the avoidance of the summer bombing campaign in British holiday resorts. In the past year we have had the Deal slaughter, the Victoria station bomb, the Downing street bombs, the St. Albans bomb, the killing in West Germany, the bomb in Colchester, the bomb in Kensington, the shooting of Sir Peter Terry, the assassination of Ian Gow, the shooting of the soldier at Lichfield station, the bomb at Derby and the bombs at Leicester and Halifax. In the past year, terrorist activity has killed 80 in the United Kingdom, with a further 1,000 being injured. Most of the deaths and injuries have taken place in Northern Ireland. How can it be said that the time has come to go against what the then Labour Government thought was important in 1974 and 1976? Why action then but no action now?

The speech of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was pathetic. He struggled to find reasons why the legislation should not be renewed. He was flailing for something on which to cling to avoid the accusation of total absurdity. He claimed that Lord Colville had reservations about the Act, even though Lord Colville had no criticism of extended detention or of exclusion. Lord Colville never once suggested that the legislation should not be renewed. How can it be that an intelligent political party—one of the two great political parties in the land —allows its spokesman on home affairs to say, "My position is justified by Lord Colville", even when Lord Colville does not support him?

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said that the General Council of the Bar has reservations. That may be so, but the General Council does not say that the powers should not be renewed. How is that a justification for doing what the Labour party is seeking to do tonight, which is to defeat the renewal order?

The only friends whom the Opposition will have in their attempts to stop the renewal of the current legislation are the terrorists and those who say that normal security procedures should exist even if that means more terrorism.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook spoke of the erosion of liberties. What about the erosion of the lives of slaughtered people? What about the people who die because of terrorism? The right hon. Gentleman cited the Brogan case, during which it was said that suspects should be brought more promptly before a judicial authority. The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) put his finger on the difference between the judicial authority in European legal systems and our judicial authority. In our process, that authority comes on to the scene much later and yet our system is supposed to be much better than many of the systems that prevail elsewhere in Europe. Apart from that, European judges have not experienced terrorism on the scale that we have in Britain. We resent it when they decide that changes should be made according to their lights when they have not had to experience the misery that we have suffered here, and especially in Northern Ireland.

Why does not the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook choose to rely upon, to be inspired by and to be supported instead by the words of his predecessor, Lord Mason of Barnsley, if he really wants common ground? Lord Mason said:

". . . some liberty must be sacrificed in the defence of liberty, insiduous though that may be. It is the price that must be paid in defence of our democracy . . . Nothing gives the IRA more joy and some encouragement than to see a divided House, and especially the image created by some within Parliament of seeming to be too protective of the terrorists and their political allies, rather than wishing their destruction."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 13 February 1989; Vol. 504, c. 33-4.]

That is the sort of guidance that Opposition Members should give. If they chose to adopt that approach, we would have common cause.

It is clear that if we dismantle our defences against terrorism the chances of catching the Victoria station

bombers will be less, so will our chances of catching the Downing street bombers, those who tried to assassinate Sir Peter Terry, those who killed the Lichfield soldier, those who planted bombs in Derby, Leicester and Halifax and those who slaughtered in Deal. That is why those who are watching our proceedings on television or hearing them on the radio will be utterly amazed.

What does the Opposition spokesman, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, say? I expect that his words will be repeated by the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), who will reply from the Opposition Front Bench. The Opposition are saying, in effect, "Let us talk. Let us make common ground against terrorism." Yet they have nothing to talk about. They have been saying, "Let us talk" for years. They have been advocating the making of common ground for years. We have been listening for their ideas for alternative action—not alternative words—but what have they brought forward? What practical policies are they putting forward for beating the terrorists?

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook gave a list and seems to think that that is positive action. He asked us to accept the European Court's view that the judicial process should engage sooner than it does. He asked us to scrap exclusion orders. He suggested a review of the financial provisions and asked us to consider a national agency to deal with terrorism. He suggested that we have tape-recorded interviews and an independent complaints procedure. Those may or may not be very sound and sensible ideas. It may be worth while to introduce such provisions in the future, but they are not reasons for dismantling present legislation. They would water it down, make it easier for the terrorist and not more difficult. That is why the British people will listen to this debate with utter and complete amazement.

There is no alternative to the Act. That is because it has been reasonably effective and why the Opposition cannot suggest an alternative. The Act is the only common cause against terrorism and the Opposition should support it.

After the Carlton club bombing on 26 June last year the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said:

> "In a free society it is never possible to provide complete protection against indiscriminate terrorism, but clearly we must do all that we can to reduce the chances of such criminal lunacy killing and maiming innocent men and women."—[*Official Report*, 26 June 1990; Vol 175, c. 186.]

Is failing to renew this order, as the Opposition will seek to do by voting against it tonight, doing all that they can to defeat terrorism?

Until they support this legislation, the Opposition will have placed themselves in an absurd and impossible position. The country will punish them for it, and rightly so, because it proves that they are totally irresponsible and unready for power.

6.31 pm

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): Opposition Members do not have to prove to anyone that we are firmly committed to beating terrorism and that we also mourn the deaths of those killed at the hands of terrorists: Ian Gow, who was a respected Member of this House; and David Corner, who was a loved and valued member of his community and who was tragically killed at Victoria station. The tragic list of deaths, near-deaths and mutilations in recent years and the recent intensification of terrorism have led us to the conclusion, after objective consideration of the facts and not on a party-political basis, that the House and successive Governments have failed to beat terrorists.

The reason why my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) made an offer, which would be judged by most fair-minded commentators as honest and positive, in his speech last Tuesday and in his letter to the Home Secretary was that we believe that the Act has been a failure. People in this country know that we have failed to beat terrorists. Waving the prevention of terrorism Act around has not beaten terrorism. We introduced the prevention of terrorism Act, but, on mature reflection after 16 years of its operation, we have come to the conclusion that we owe it to the people of this country and to their protection to reconsider an Act which gives the semblance of prevention of terrorism rather than the reality.

It gives us no pride to say that terrorists are not being beaten. Opposition Members want them to be beaten. In one part of his speech the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) agreed that we need more effective action and that very often the prevention of terrorism Act is an excuse for not acting more positively on an all-party basis. Anyone who tries to argue that we do not oppose terrorism because we vote against the Act tonight is simply making mischief and trying to score cheap political points.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sheerman: No, I shall not give way. During the speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook the Conservative Benches were full of hon. Members who disappeared after it. Instead of a silence, which would have paid respect to those who died at the hands of terrorist bombs, Conservative Members have treated this as a cheap political debate and so I shall not give way to any cheap politicians on the Conservative side of the House.

Mr. Tracey: This is a serious point.

Mr. Sheerman: I shall not give way to any hon. Member on the Conservative side of the House this afternoon.

It is crucial that the fight against terrorism is not politicised. On this issue, more than on any other, it is important for us to find common ground on which we can build a consensus and a determination which will see the terrorist off.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sheerman: No, I have said that I shall not.

We shall vote against the prevention of terrorism Act not merely because it does not work and because it undermines the quality of justice in this country—justice which we have always been proud of—but because it feeds terrorism and gives terrorists ammunition with which to win support at home and abroad—support which we must cut off.

How must it look to Irish Americans who are asked to support Noraid and the like when they are told that Britain has legislation that breaks the European convention on human rights and enables people to be banished from one part of the country to another without any explanation and which denies the suspect access to legal advice not merely for 48 hours but for up to seven days?

[Mr. Sheerman]

The unjust appearance of the Act is compounded by its operation. Since the first prevention of terrorism Act came into force in 1974, more than 80 per cent. of those arrested have been released without charge and the percentage of those convicted under the Act is even less than 20 per cent. In 1990, out of 193 people held under the Act, only eight were convicted: seven were fined for non co-operation at a port or airport and one for a broken exclusion order. I cannot believe that their arrests and convictions helped in any major way to prevent a planned terrorist attack in this country.

What has happened to people who have been arrested and held for some considerable time before being released? What effect does it have on them, their families and on the reputation of the British administration of justice?

Opposition Members have tried to argue that we do not object to parts of the prevention of terrorism Act. Indeed, when I was Opposition spokesman on the Bill in Committee two years ago we gave our wholehearted support to cutting off the natural support for terrorists. Other parts of the Bill were discussed. We know that we need legislation—perhaps special legislation—but not this legislation, because it does not work.

There could not have been a fairer offer than that made by the Opposition this week when we said that we do not have all the answers and we do not know how to defeat terrorists on our own, but that we do not think that the Government know how to do it on their own, and so we offered the hand of co-operation. We said that we wished to study some parts of the Act, other parts are positive and some parts are objectionable. Only a schoolboy would say, "We won't discuss it with you because you don't like the prevention of terrorism Act."

The Opposition object to serious flaws in the prevention of terrorism Act and we have no alternative but to vote against it tonight.

Mr. Tracey: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sheerman: I shall not.

Mr. Tracey: It is on that point.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Member has made it clear that he is not giving way; the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) should not persist in that case.

Mr. Sheerman I am not frit, but I shall not give way. I want to—*[Interruption.]* I am missing out a part of my speech because Conservative Members made such long-winded speeches.

Misuse of the criminal justice system in our country does enormous damage to the reputation of British justice. The Home Secretary skated over any reference to our objections to the Act on that basis. The fight against terrorism will never be won if we do not win the trust and support of the community. We cannot hope to win their trust if we treat them with such flagrant disregard for civil liberties. We are not making a spurious case, but a serious one. In Northern Ireland, the situation is exacerbated by the parallel Prevention of Terrorism (Emergency Provisions) Act and sections of the community, sadly, appear to have lost all faith in the administration of justice. That cannot be right.

It must be remembered that not only the arrested individuals' confidence is shattered by their experience, but there is a knock-on effect on their families, friends and everyone who hears of the treatment that they have received. The existence of draconian powers also serves to give terrorists a special status that we all wish to deny them. The successful criminalising of terrorists means that they must be dealt with under ordinary criminal law. They are rotten criminals, not politicians. If we design special legislation for them, we give them a special identity and therefore play into their hands by giving them treatment that they do not deserve.

We are grateful for Lord Colville's informative report about his investigation into the operation of the Act in 1990. My right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook argued convincingly——

Mr. Lawrence: The right hon. Gentleman said that Lord Colville wanted to scrap the legislation.

Mr. Sheerman: My right hon. Friend did not say that. He said that particular parts of Lord Colville's recommendations lead us to agree with Lord Colville that it is now irresistible that a new tribunal be set up to oversee those powers. If the independent arbiter who is brought in by—*[Interruption.]* We gave the Government a fair hearing and I should like to finish my speech. As we said in Committee two years ago, Lord Colville made many important and fundamental criticisms of the working of the Act. The Government have ignored those criticisms. What sort of Government can conceive an Act that does not defeat terrorism—their record on terrorism is appalling—and, every time the independent arbiter makes suggestions to improve the Act, they refuse to implement them? They are then surprised when a helpful, constructive Opposition say that there should be fundamental changes made to the Act. They are surprised that, ultimately, we are forced to vote against the Act in its entirety to force the Government, who are deaf on the subject, to listen.

Lord Colville again turns his attention to the problem that the detention powers under the Act contravene the European convention on human rights. He suggests that a tribunal could be set up to judge whether a suspect's detention should be extended rather than the responsibi lity remaining solely with the Home Secretary. I asked the Home Secretary about that and have been advised that such a tribunal may be acceptable to the European Court. Will the junior Minister say whether that is so? If the European Court were independent so that it could make decisions, not merely recommendations to the Home Secretary, would that be acceptable? Would it also be acceptable if the court provided that the suspect should appear before it with his or her legal representative and if the suspect was given the opportunity to make representations on his or her behalf? We understand that those three changes would be acceptable to the European Court. Will the Minister comment on that? Such a measure would allow the Government to remove Britain's derogation and enable us, once again, to fulfil our obligations under the European convention on human rights. Simply repealing the provisions would ensure an easier compliance with the court's decision. The Labour party believes that we should not have derogated in the first place, but the court's decision should have been accepted and implemented without delay. We urge the Government to do so as soon as possible.

Lord Colville also said that the offence of withholding information should be removed. We have asked the Government time and again for their response to that. Virtually no provision in the Act has escaped intensive criticism by the Government's own reviewers and the European Court of Human Rights. One wonders whether any credibility for the Act remains. The time has come to accept that the Act has no future as a serious tool in the fight against terrorism. We need fresh thinking and a new approach to the problem.

Mr. Lawrence: What is the Labour party's alternative for action?

Mr. Sheerman: If the hon. and learned Gentleman will wait, I shall tell him.

Last Tuesday, the Opposition made a serious proposal to introduce two measures that the British public want. We want an all-party approach to the defeat of terrorism, but also an effective approach—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] I shall not give way.

The Opposition are offering to participate in all-party discussions. We shall come with a blank sheet of paper. We have no prejudices except those against terrorists—*[Interruption.]* The Home Secretary is mumbling as usual.

On Saturday evening, I made a speech in my constituency. The meeting was packed out.

Mr. Bowis: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I seek clarification of the term "packed out". Does it mean that, when more minor party representatives——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with the Chair. Let us continue the debate as we have very little time.

Mr. Sheerman: In my speech to my constituents I said that there was an agreed anti-terrorism policing policy which we believe makes sense. It would give the police a national intelligence unit and the ability to tackle terrorism seriously. We made such a positive suggestion in our discussions with the Government. We would discuss anything to defeat terrorism, but the Government will put nothing on the table because, ultimately, they secretly want to use this issue as a political stick to beat the Opposition. The great British public will not be fooled. They want action against terrorism, not fancy words.

6.47 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) spoke about sticks to beat the Opposition. We have just heard an example of self-flagellation. It was uncharacteristic and unparliamentary of him not to give way during his speech, but I shall follow his example. I shall not respond to any of the issues that he raised. If he is not prepared to debate, I am not prepared to debate with him.

In general, the debate has been good. It has ebbed and flowed from both sides of the water, and there have been some excellent speeches from my hon. Friends. My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) presented some robust arguments; and my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) was right to say that we need to protect the civil rights of his constituents who risked being injured by the bomb on the track in Hertfordshire. The civil rights of everyone in the United Kingdom must be protected and we shall ensure that we protect them.

Mr. Tracey: I heard what my right hon. Friend said about not giving way, but I was trying to make an important point to the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman). If the Opposition were successful in voting down the motion tonight, the measure would no longer exist. They say that they would then go into talks. Would not the public be unprotected until an alternative was put forward? Our priority must be to protect our people.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) is absolutely right. Should Labour win tonight and the order be defeated, the Act would lapse in a few days and the public on both sides of the water would lack the protection given by the Act—my hon. Friend was, characteristically, spot on. My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), who wants the defeat of terrorism, was also right. He and I agree that the role of the prevention of terrorism Act is vital. Last, but by no means least, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) was right to treat the House to a chilling litany of death and destruction, and I am grateful to him.

I do not for one moment doubt the detestation of terrorism of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). However, when we compare his words with what he undoubtedly feels, his speech seems odd and unhappy. Its very first sentence was to the effect that he would lead his party to vote against the prevention of terrorism Act. He then went on to make a number of suggestions. If he were really interested in serious discussions with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and had a list of things he wanted to discuss, rather than issuing a press statement last week and condemning the prevention of terrorism Act in the first breath of his speech today, surely he should have gone to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, perhaps on Privy Councillor terms, to talk to him about the sort of changes he wanted. Instead, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook turned to opposition by press release—a speech, a quick letter and then into the Chamber tonight with a few suggestions that I genuinely believe were hastily and inadequately cobbled together.

I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's qualified support for EPA and his suggestion that we should look hard at financial provisions to chase up terrorists and track down terrorists' funds in the three separate Acts—Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1989—that constitute the most significant and fiercest package of anti-terrorist measures in any western European country. If it can be made better, clearly we must do so.

The right hon. Gentleman spoke of bold new initiatives. He promised five, but later extended the list to seven. I admired the facility with which he produced them, although not the production.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Patten: As I said, I shall not give way. I do not mean the right hon. Gentleman any disrespect, but he

[Mr. Patten]

should talk to his junior spokesman when they get outside the Chamber about how one conducts oneself in a proper, grown-up debating Chamber.

The approach of the right hon. Gentleman was counter-productive. I shall not condemn him; unfortunately, he was not in the Chamber when the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) spoke. I do not intend to do down the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, who, as we all recognise, is one of the fairest minded Members. He said that the speech of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook contained nothing new, and I agree with him. He also said that he did not think that the right hon. Gentleman's speech took a genuinely bipartisan approach, and I agree with him. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland is not a Conservative or a Unionist, but speaks as a professional observer and seeker after consensus. That is the Liberal Democrats' position.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland also said—this was most telling—that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook had significantly misled the House over Lord Colville's approach—savage words from the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, who was absolutely right. He finished his speech with a splendid phrase. He said that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook had simply failed to measure up to the threat of terrorism. We all say "Hear, hear" to that.

When the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was kind enough to allow me to intervene—something that I shall not allow him to do—he demonstrated that he failed to understand the differences between the workings of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and the prevention of terrorism Act. I was not seeking to be rude to the right hon. Gentleman, but it surprised me that, after so many years as shadow Home Secretary, he still did not understand the fundamental difference. The speech of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made it queer—*[Laughter.]*—clear, and I can quote from my right hon. Friend's wonderfully clear speech. He rightly said that there were many circumstances in which the police might have information that a person was involved in terrorism but have no information as to the specific offence in which he may have been involved. He said:

"Without the prevention of terrorism Act, there would be no power to arrest such a person. Those who would not continue with that Act in force would allow known terrorists to walk our streets—with the police powerless to intervene."

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is under a basic misapprehension about the nature and purpose of the Act. Apart from the provisions of general law, we also need to be able to go further and use it for preventive purposes. That is why we have the power, under the prevention of terrorism Act, to take into detention, and then examine, for the purposes of determining whether a person appears to be someone who is or has been concerned with the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism. That is why we have the Act. That apart, the police must always act on reasonable suspicion, a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington.

Therefore, under section 14 of the Act, the power of arrest and detention is governed by reasonable suspicion. That is the rule.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): On the issue of rules, will my right hon. Friend comment on reports that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was kept from the final stages of the Criminal Justice Bill last week because he was attending a £1,000 a head dinner——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is totally irrelevant to the debate.

Mr. Patten: I am tempted to take up the intervention, but I am afraid that the dining habits of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook are not matters for Her Majesty's Government.

The European Court of Human Rights has found against my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary only on his power of extension of detention. We should also have listened with respect to what the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland said about the differences in judicial practice and detention between this country and other countries. In Belgium, the police can detain for only 24 hours, but thereafter they can detain indefinitely before charges are laid. There is a qualitative difference. If the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook had been in the Chamber to listen to the speech of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, he would understand that.

We accept in good faith that the Labour party's desire to do something about the scourge of terrorism is reflected in its call for talks—it would be wrong to do anything else. We also believe that its commitment to combat terrorism would be much better reflected in its support for the prevention of terrorism Act, as has been said by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and other hon. Friends. Comfortable condemnation from the Green Benches is not enough. The Labour party cannot merely weave words, but must will the means, and the best way to do that is through the extension of the prevention of terrorism Act. To ignore the Act and, instead, to engage in talks would be to leave a vacuum for terrorists to exploit, as my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton said.

We must have a policy in place to deal with terrorism; we cannot rely on talks as a substitute for immediate action. We cannot legally disarm ourselves in this country and leave our people without the anti-terrorist legislation that they need and other countries—the United States, Germany and Italy—see that they need. That is why a new prevention of terrorism measure is now before the Greek Parliament, demonstrating the Greek Government's intention to deal with the problem with special legislation.

I do not doubt the personal integrity of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and his hon. Friends, or their dislike of terrorism, but if their views were put into effect, that would lead to the growth of terrorism in this country. Therefore, I commend to the House the order that will ensure that that does not happen.

Question put:—

The House divided:—Ayes 303, Noes 138.

Division No. 85] **[7 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Ashby, David
Aitken, Jonathan	Aspinwall, Jack
Alexander, Richard	Atkins, Robert
Allison, Rt Hon Michael	Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Allason, Rupert	Baldry, Tony
Alton, David	Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Amess, David	Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Amos, Alan	Batiste, Spencer
Arbuthnot, James	Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Beith, A. J.
Arnold, Sir Thomas	Bellingham, Henry

Bendall, Vivian
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trimble, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Adams, Mrs. Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob

Cummings, John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Thomas McAvoy and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 21st February, be approved.

Orders of the Day

Census (Confidentiality) Bill *[Lords]*

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered. Order for Third Reading read.

7.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

This is a short Bill of a technical nature and it has received the support of the official Opposition, for which I am grateful. The Bill has served to draw attention to detailed aspects of census confidentiality, on which we had a useful discussion in Committee. I hope that I was able to reassure Committee members of the importance that the Government attach to the confidentiality provisions of the census legislation.

It is important to be able to give an assurance to every citizen filling in his census form that the information given will be the subject of complete confidentiality. The need for the Bill arose because the repeal of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 left two gaps in the confidentiality provisions which the Bill plugs. The Bill now allows us to say, as we should properly be able to say, that the information given in the course of completing the census form will be treated with absolute confidentiality.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Can the Minister assure me that the people taken on as temporary employees for the purpose of gathering census information will have impressed on them during their training programmes the need for such confidentiality?

Mr. Dorrell: Yes, the importance of confidentiality will be stressed to short-term employees in the census office taken on for the purpose of collecting census information. They will be governed by the same statutory duty of confidentiality as everyone else who is, under the terms of the Bill, under the control of the registrar-general.

I believe that the Bill represents a small but important step in securing that absolute duty of confidentiality. I commend it to the House.

7.15 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): The Minister has said that this is a short, technical Bill, but it deals with an important matter.

More than a year ago the House agreed that the census should take place on 21 April. As the Minister said, the Bill remedies a defect in the legislation that arose as a result of the reform of the Official Secrets Act 1911.

There is no doubt in the mind of the official Opposition that the Bill has been scrutinised and that, as a result of the Bill, the personal information given by fellow citizens in the census will be more closely guarded and protected than in any previous census.

The census is a vital instrument of social policy and the information in it is as useful to the Opposition as it is to the Government. The census is used more by health authorities and local authorities than by anyone else because they are in closer contact with our fellow citizens.

We want to reassure fellow citizens that there is no connection whatever between the census and the poll tax.

Anyone who seeks to give the misguided advice that the census should not be complied with because of the poll tax is making a fundamental error. There can be no connection between the two. The Opposition are satisfied about that and, therefore, we give the Bill our full support.

7.17 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I do not want to detain the House for long, but I want to discuss an issue that I have pursued for the past 18 months—my concern that the protection of the confidentiality of census information does not go far enough.

I am certain that my constituents welcome the idea of the census, as it provides the basic raw material to provide better education and health services and to improve the general government of the country. My constituents are concerned, however, about the further possibility—one that the Government seem keen to develop—of selling census material to commercial organisations that will use it for their own profit.

Census material has been sold in the past and I do not believe that that caused many problems. This time round, however, that material will be sold on the basis of postal codes. Since the previous census, methods of handling data by computer have developed greatly. People are concerned that after the next census has been completed, census material will be available within 18 months on the basis of postal codes.

It will be relatively simple to run that census material through a computer and to match it to information on the electoral register and on poll tax returns. Commercial organisations, having done that, will use the lists generated, based on names on the electoral register and the census information, for mail shots.

My constituents, in common with many others, already receive far too much junk mail. It would be of considerable concern to them if, having completed census forms to improve good government in this country, they found that their letter boxes were stuffed with more items of junk mail. When we discussed the census order, the Minister said that my constituents should not complain if junk mail is more accurately directed rather than inaccurately directed as it is now. Many of my constituents do not want mail shots at all.

If I am concerned about mail shots, I am even more concerned about the present practice of insurance companies refusing insurance cover to certain areas of towns because of their postal codes and, in some cases, dramatically increasing premiums. If that policy is based on crime statistics for an area, together with census material, my constituents and others have reason to be concerned.

Even at this late stage the Minister should think again about allowing census information to be made available on the basis of relatively small postal code areas of about 2,200 households because of the way in which it can be used for commercial purposes. We have had more than 100 years of almost universal co-operation with the census on the basis that it is to provide information for the good government of this country, and it would be very sad if people reduced their co-operation because they were unhappy about some of the uses to which census material was to be put.

It might be better to forgo income from the sale of such information to commercial organisations so that we could continue to receive the goodwill of the general public rather than to risk that general goodwill by making information available on the basis of relatively small postal code areas. Although I shall not vote against the Bill, I still hope that the Government will reconsider their decision to sell census information on the basis of postal codes.

7.21 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I promose to be very brief. I wish to voice my concern about confidentiality and to seek an assurance from the Minister. Am I to take it that those who are employed temporarily or otherwise by the registrar in Scotland in the collection of highly confidential information will not collect such information from the neighbourhoods in which they live?

7.22 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) that the census is important, and that is why I shall not vote against the Bill. However, the census depends on public co-operation. Therefore, there should be no fear about how census data will be used or people would be likely to give wrong information.

The Minister should comment on a letter in last Saturday's issue of *The Guardian* from Mr. David Northmore of Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd. He drew attention to the longitudinal survey that the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys conducts, which traces the activities of 1 per cent. of the population—about 600,000 people—through their entire lifetimes. He said that following the 17th national census—this is the 19th—the National Council for Civil Liberties

"revealed that OPCS had undertaken a follow-up survey of ex-nurses whose names and addresses had been taken from the individual census returns—although no warning that this might happen was given on the forms."

Mr. Northmore hopes that that will not happen with this census, and particularly in respect of the longitudinal survey. He went on to ask an important question about whether OPCS computers will be registered under the Data Protection Act 1984

"for the transfer of such information".

Those are two very good points and they warrant a response by the Minister.

I made it clear in Committee and on Second Reading that there was poor planning by the Government in relation to the census which is to take place on 21 April. They were slow to get the report on confidentiality from the British Computer Society. They said that it would not be ready until after the census began, but they have since hurried because pressure was applied by hon. Members on the Committee, and they have published Command Paper 1447. The BCS said that the plans are okay and that all that it can do is to look at plans and intentions but that it could not give

"a definitive view of actual adherence in practice".

That point is repeated throughout the report. The report goes on to state that:

"not all procedures had been defined, not all aspects of systems had been designed, not all equipment had been procured or installed, nor had all accommodation been completed."

The census has been poorly organised by the Government.

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

There is a serious question about information technology. Much new technology has been introduced since the previous census. In Committee I referred to optical discs. British Telecom can put virtually all its telephone directories on optical discs. Presumably census officers will also be able to put information on optical discs in the near future. We had some assurance——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I dislike stopping the hon. Gentleman, but I draw his attention to the fact that the Bill is only a three-clause Bill—it is narrow. This is the Third Reading debate. The hon. Gentleman can debate only what is in the Bill, not what he would like to be in the Bill, or what might have been or should have been in the Bill.

Mr. Cohen: I am confining myself to the Bill because it is the interpretation of confidentiality—

Madam Deputy Speaker: In that case, perhaps the hon. Gentleman would refer me to the section of the Bill to which he is referring. That would be extremely helpful.

Mr. Cohen: I am referring to confidentiality, which is in the short title of the Bill and in the long title. If confidentiality is not assured, the census will fail in its essential purposes. I am trying to restrict my remarks. I made speeches on Second Reading and in Committee and I do not wish to repeat them.

The Government are not allowing subject access, and that is a mistake. People should be able to see their own personal data to check that they are not misused. That is how the Bill is relevant to the data protection legislation. The OPCS seems to be saying, "We are keeping your information confidential, but you cannot look at it to check that we are doing that." That is not a good aspect.

I echo the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish about information being provided for commercial purposes. It was a mistake for the Government to open just a window for that to be done on the basis of postal codes. The minimum of 16 households and 50 individuals to which the Minister referred is too small. The Minister should have increased that minimum to protect confidentiality. Good assurances about the poll tax were given in Committee. I even put out press releases relating to those assurances so that people would fill in their forms properly. However, there is an abiding fear among many people, including some of my constituents, that the information might yet be used for poll tax purposes. In view of the assurances that we were given in Committee, I do not think that it will be. However, if the Government want to make sure that this is not a problem, they should scrap the poll tax. We are told that that tax is still under consideration. I suggest that the Minister who is responsible for census returns should put in his tuppence worth towards scrapping it.

7.30 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I know that the Minister is disappointed when I make short speeches. Well, I am afraid that I shall have to disappoint him on this occasion, as I want to make only a few brief points. Indeed, my points will be developments of those made by my hon. Friends the Members for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), who talked about the problems of confidentiality.

My hon. Friends referred in particular to information that could be derived by way of postal districts. If people feel that there is not full confidentiality, it is difficult to secure their co-operation and good will. Despite the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton, the Bill does provide protection with regard to information given to poll tax registrars. Such information cannot be used for census purposes.

However, I argue that the Government ought to be consistent. The issue of confidentiality affects many aspects of British politics and the British constitution. The census is a key element of constitutional law. Written in this measure, or perhaps into a separate measure, should be a provision that information supplied for electoral purposes must be kept separate from information supplied for poll tax purposes. It is my intention to seek to introduce a measure entitled the Electoral Registration (Confidentiality) Bill, which will be entirely consistent with this measure. Thus, I hope, the Minister will have an opportunity to support the protection that I seek.

7.33 pm

Mr. Dorrell: Once again, I am grateful for the expressions of support from all parts of the House for the principle on which the Bill is based, which is that it is important to establish beyond peradventure that information given in the course of a census is the subject of a statutory duty of confidentiality that is complete and unquestioned. I am grateful for the support of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and his hon. Friends for that important principle. I agree entirely with the hon. Member for Perry Barr that the 10-year series censuses in this country provide valuable information. Certainly, the information is valuable for the management of the health service. It is also valuable to the Opposition, because it enables them to support their prejudices with the occasional smattering of facts when they advance their case against us. *[Interruption.]* It is a tactic which has been used by successive Oppositions down the years.

Obviously, the information provided through a census is an important basis of political debate. As the hon. Member for Perry Barr has stressed, there is no connection —indeed, there can be no connection—between the information provided in the course of a census and information associated with the community charge. First, the information collected in the course of a census is the subject of a statutory duty of confidentiality and cannot, therefore, be passed to those responsible for the community charge register. Secondly, by the time census information was published, it would be out of date for the purposes of compiling a community charge register.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) continues to be concerned about the possible commercial exploitation of the information provided through a census. I do not see how, in a free society, one could prevent information published by census offices from being used by commercial organisations as a basis for market research. I think that that is neither possible nor desirable.

The hon. Gentleman, seeing that information is to be published by the census offices on the basis of postcode

sectors, makes the link between those sectors and junk mail. Apart from the fact that both have at least an indirect connection with the Post Office, I do not think that there is an important link between them. The hon. Gentleman's argument rests on the assumption that the publication of information on the basis of postcode sectors involves a greater risk to confidentiality than does the publication of information on another local basis. As I reminded the members of the Standing Committee, the average postcode sector is roughly 10 times the size of the average enumeration district. So far as I know, the hon. Gentleman does not challenge the suggestion that we should publish information on the basis of enumeration districts. The average postcode sector contains 2,300 households, whereas the average enumeration district contains 200 households.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: In the past, the enumeration district was drawn up for convenience in the collection of information, and could not be easily matched with anything else. It would have been extremely difficult to run information through a computer and quickly match it with names on the electoral list. But, once the postal code is included, it will be extremely easy to match on a national basis.

Mr. Dorrell: The possibilities about which the hon. Gentleman expressed concern were that there could be breaches of confidentiality and that information derived from a census could be used commercially. The point that I am making is that the enumeration district is a building block for the creation of a postcode sector—not the other way round. Of course, the boundaries will not always be precisely the same. Anyone seeking to discover the social make-up of a postcode sector would not find it very difficult—give or take the odd relatively small margin of error—to build up a reasonable picture, simply by taking the information published on the basis of enumeration districts. I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman has shown that there is either a threat to confidentiality or a breach of privacy that could be exploited commercially in an undesirable way by providing information on the basis of postcode sectors.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) asked me for an assurance that temporary employees would not be asked to collect information in the locality in which they lived. I can give him an absolute assurance to that effect.

The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) expressed concern abut the contents of a letter in last Saturday's *Guardian* concerning the collection of information in a longitudinal study. I refer the hon. Gentleman to a written answer that I gave to his hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran), in which I set out the basis of the continuing longitudinal study that the OPCS conducts:

"The OPCS has no plans to conduct, commission or participate in a longitudinal survey based on the 1991 census. Such a survey would entail repeated interviewing of a sample of the population over a period of time. However, the OPCS administers a longitudinal study which can be used to link together, when required, data for a 1 per cent. sample of the population of England and Wales to produce statistical tables. The study includes the information from the various records of events held by the OPCS. The events include the 1971 and 1981 censuses, births and deaths. The study provides additional insights in the process of changes over time and increase the usefulness of information collected by the OPCS. As announced in the winter 1989 issue of 'Population Trends', a copy of which is in the Library, the OPCS plans to include the appropriate sample of records from the 1991 census in the study."—[*Official Report*, 26 February 1991; Vol. 186, c. *467*.]

As regards the hon. Gentleman's case that the British Computer Society study was published too late, I am bound to say that it could also have been published too early. The purpose of the study was to examine the procedures that were being put in place for the census that is to take place in April. That requires the BCS to see those procedures being put into place and it would have been absurd to advance that ahead of the time when that information would have been available to it.

The Bill is a small but significant step in completing the statutory guarantee of confidentiality surrounding the census, and I hope that the House will give it a Third Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Oversea Superannuation Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

7.40 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I start by declaring a pecuniary interest in that I am a beneficiary of the provisions of the Overseas Pensions Act 1973 by virtue of having served in colonial Nigeria. The Bill covers comparatively narrow ground, but I shall make one or two points that are of importance to the people concerned and to others who may be indirectly concerned, or who may be concerned in the future.

I refer first to Hong Kong pensioners. As the House knows, the position there is completely different from that in the rest of the former colonial empire. On transition to independence, arrangements for the pensions of the expatriate staff of the British colonial service or the British overseas civil service were made, and pensions were guaranteed and paid by Britain in the shape of the Overseas Pensions Act, which provides for enhancement and index linking. That is wholly beneficial and, to the extent that the Bill tidies up little problems of that kind for members of the overseas civil service, one is grateful.

However, Hong Kong will not become independent. It is not envisaged that the same arrangements will apply to those who have retired or who will retire from colonial service there as apply to people who have served in countries that have become independent and whose pensions are fully protected. For one thing, such people get credit for war service included with their final pension. Half of their war service is added on for pension purposes. That is a generous and proper addition. However, Hong Kong does not, and will not, do that. The Hong Kong Government are dragging their feet under cover of the excuse that it has a problem with the People's Republic. Although this is a colonial territory and should obey the orders of the British Government, the British Government are not willing to enforce their authority and tell these unelected administrators, most of whom are British, where their duty lies. Their duty is to ensure that pensioners who served in the colonial service in Hong Kong are treated in the same way as pensioners who have retired from service in other parts of the colonial empire.

Secondly, the arrangements for Hong Kong pensioners are special in that the value of the pension awarded at the end of service, whether or not the person has been in service elsewhere, is calculated in terms of the Hong Kong dollar, which is linked to the American dollar. Such pensions have been subject to fluctuation. I am talking about those drawing their pensions now, who may or may not be covered by the Bill, but whose pensions may have declined in value by 30 per cent. Such a deterioration in the value of the pension of someone who has given service to the Crown with honour, honesty and responsibility and now is living in Britain is wrong. These people should be treated in the same way as all other pensioners who have served in the colonial service.

The remedy is for the British Government to agree, under the provisions of the Overseas Pensions Act, to bring the Hong Kong system into line with that for other services, including those covered by the Bill. We must avoid that discrepancy which is emerging in the treatment of pensioners. From whatever part of the colonial service these people have retired, the amount payable should be calculated in sterling from the date of retirement and not from some future date. I know that that means the British Government having to take over in the way proposed in the Bill so as to ensure equality of treatment, but it must be done. We cannot leave an injustice like this when Hong Kong ceases to be part of the colonial empire.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. It is not clear from the Bill, but I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman could confirm that the provisions of the Bill apply to Hong Kong pensioners.

Mr. Stanbrook: That is part of the point that has to be made. A number of people covered by the Bill come under the provisions of the Overseas Pensions Act and the question is whether they will get the same treatment as everyone else. The Minister may say that they will, and I shall be happy about that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I asked the hon. Gentleman about this because on Third Reading we must discuss what is in the Bill, not how we think the Bill should be extended.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am not talking about extending the Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I am asking questions. Who come under the Overseas Pensions Act 1973? From what territories do they come? Are they restricted to those who come from one territory, or are they part of the general movement of tidying up pensions legislation, which applies to all former colonial service officers? There is not much in it, it may be a quibble, but it is important that such a grievance should be ventilated if it can be done within the confines of the Bill. I think that it can because of the overriding benefit that Parliament gives to the colonial service generally by bringing all these cases within the Overseas Pensions Act.

We should ensure that included in this benefit are all those who come from different circumstances—for example, those who served in Hong Kong, which is not a traditional colony that is about to get independence. Another example is Zimbabwe, which, although it received independance, had a civil service that was locally recruited rather than being recruited by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Therefore, those who served in it do not have the same pension rights as others in the colonial service. Those people stayed at their posts and many served the British empire in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

These are difficult problems, but they have to be addressed and I believe that I was right to raise them in this debate.

7.48 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I had not intended to say anything, but, having heard the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), I feel that I must say a few words. I do not intend to go down the road that he opened up, because, like you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot see its direct relevance to the Bill. The hon. Gentleman said that he was a beneficiary of the Bill, but the Opposition maintain their support for the Bill, shown on Second Reading and in Committee.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) on the eloquent and efficient way in which he dealt with the Bill in Committee. I congratulate the Minister for Overseas Development,

who unfortunately is not with us today, on the excellent way in which she dealt with the Bill in Committee. Perhaps I may be permitted the rare privilege of congratulating the Minister with us today on the eloquent way in which he moved the Third Reading.

7.49 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): In view of the normal exchanges between the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and myself, I am grateful for his gracious compliment, which was so different from our last exchange.

With regard to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), perhaps it would be helpful if I stated the purpose of the Bill concisely. It seeks to bring the overseas superannuation scheme within the scope of the Overseas Pensions Act 1973, thereby giving the Overseas Development Administration the authority to defund the scheme—if I may use the jargon—which means to convert the scheme into a pay-as-you-go system.

The overseas superannuation scheme was an extra statutory pension fund that was set up in 1951 by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to provide superannuation cover for research and scientific staff who were working overseas. It was closed to new members in 1961, and there are no active contributors. It was always a small fund. It now pays 134 officers' pensions and makes 17 dependants' awards. One of its essential problems is its administrative cost. It consumes abut £25,000 per year.

There has been wide consultation on the desirability of this Bill. There was discussion with the advisory board, on which beneficiaries are represented. The beneficiaries were written to and asked whether they wished to petition against the Bill, but no petition has been lodged.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington referred specifically to Hong Kong. No decisions have yet been taken on the arrangements that will be made for overseas civil service officers following the transfer of sovereignty. My hon. Friend also referred to Zimbabwe. I am afraid that there is no prospect of the Government taking over responsibility for the payment of pensions that are now the responsibility of the Government of Zimbabwe.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

7.51 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 10880/90+COR1 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memoranda submitted by H.M. Treasury on 22nd February, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 26th February relating to extension of food assistance to the Soviet Union, Romania and Bulgaria and a credit facility for the Soviet Union and 4120/91 relating to revision of the financial perspective to finance technical assistance for the Soviet Union; and agrees with the Government that food aid to Romania and Bulgaria should be considered a priority; that any Community food aid given to the Soviet Union should be provided for humanitarian purposes; and that consideration of any other forms of Community help should take full account of developments in the Soviet Union and the Baltic States.

Tonight the House is debating matters that have considerable implications for us all—developments in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, and the way in which the European Community is responding and should respond to those events. First, I should like to put the debate in context—*[Laughter.]* I am being laughed at, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I must advise Opposition Members that I was simply setting my stop watch so that I do not go on for too long. I hope that that provides some reassurance——

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Was the Minister setting his watch to Moscow time?

Mr. Hogg: I assure the hon. Gentleman that this is House of Commons stop-watch time.

First, I should like to put the debate into its proper historical context. Worried as we are by recent shifts of policy in the Soviet Union, we should also acknowledge the profound and, we hope, irreversible changes that have taken place there. The countries that until recently were the satellite countries of the Soviet Union are now free of Soviet control. Most have introduced or are introducing accountable systems of government, and their economies are the subject of urgent and fundamental restructuring. Great changes have occurred within the Soviet Union itself since Mr. Gorbachev began the process of reform. The Soviet Union is a much more liberal and open society than it was six years ago. Ordinary people there have tasted freedom and can see the world more clearly and as it is. The distorting prism of Marxist theology lies shattered on the ground. The old style of Soviet government has failed the Soviet people and, for that reason, is finished.

Above all, we should recognise that the cold war has come to an end. The liberation of Kuwait—a triumph that we rightly celebrate—would not have been possible if the Soviet Union had not lent its support to the resolutions of the Security Council.

However, while the Government recognise the extent of the change that has taken place in eastern Europe and the critical role that President Gorbachev has played in that process of change—without him I do not believe that such change would have occurred—our support for President Gorbachev is not uncritical or unqualified. We support not Gorbachev the man, but Gorbachev the reformer.

This debate concerns the European Community's policy as set out in the documents that we are considering. Our policy is to encourage, to stimulate and, where we can,

[Mr. Hogg]

to reward political and economic reform in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe. All of us recognise the great difficulties that stand in the way of that process, and the length of time that the change will take. The nature of those changes is for the peoples of the Soviet Union to determine. We have no right—indeed, we lack the capacity—to influence the way in which the Soviet peoples will ultimately determine their future. It is not for us to seek the dissolution of the Soviet Union or to determine the shape of the constitutional arrangements that may be devised. Our interest—it is also the interest of the Soviet Union itself—lies in seeing the republics agreeing with the Soviet Government on new methods of working together harmoniously and with mutual consent. Our motives are simple. We believe that political and economic reform in eastern Europe and especially in the Soviet Union is desirable both for those who live in those countries and for all of us who inhabit the continent of Europe. By assisting the process whereby individuals within the Soviet Union gain greater economic and political freedom, we hope to see that country develop its great potential. Moreover, and as a general rule, democratic states do not fight aggressive wars.

That was the background to the decisions that were taken by the European Council on 14 and 15 December 1990. The Community wanted to reinforce the movement of reform within the Soviet Union by sending a clear signal of support. That is why the Community decided on four specific measures: food aid, worth £175 million; a guarantee for credits to purchase food, worth £350 million; technical assistance to the value of £280 million, and the negotiation of a new and wide-ranging agreement for our mutual relations. The Government supported all those decisions. However, we believe that there should be a close connection between the delivery of support and the fact of reform. Furthermore, we were and we are concerned that food aid should be targeted at the genuinely needy, and that it should be closely monitored to ensure that it reaches those people.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I have been closely following what the Minister is saying. Democratic groupings in the Soviet Union, Romania and Bulgaria have stressed the importance not only of monitoring to whom the food goes, but the method of distribution. In other words, will the ancien regime get the credit for distribution through its own tentacles of apparatus, or will we ensure that the distribution of food does not become a political instrument for propping up the old and discredited administrations?

Mr. Hogg: The right hon. Gentleman has made a serious and important point. We will endeavour to ensure that the method of distribution is not that described by the right hon. Gentleman and that it does not have the effect that he fears.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): With regard to the question that the Minister has just answered and with respect to the food aid for humanitarian purposes, which non-governmental agencies within the European Community will monitor that distribution in the way requested by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel)?

Mr. Hogg: Management committees will be set up on which officials will be represented. They will have an overall and over-arching duty to monitor. I cannot at this moment tell the hon. Gentleman whether any non-governmental organisations will be involved in that process. However, I will make inquiries about that during the debate and if I have an opportunity at its conclusion, I will try to deal with that specific point then, if the hon. Gentleman will permit me.

As I was saying, it is important that we ensure that the humanitarian aid reaches those to whom it is directed. It is also very important not to disrupt the Soviet Union's agricultural market. It is also important that we do not stand in the way of much-needed improvements in the existing food distribution system.

We must recognise that within the Soviet Union the greatest shortage is not of food, but of expertise and that is precisely what we have to offer. We can offer knowledge to develop an entrepreneurial system; training and advice to those engaged in new projects and market-oriented enterprises; and assistance to those engaged in constructing the legal framework for a market economy. That approach is the objective of the United Kingdom's know-how fund for the Soviet Union and it was also the purpose of the Community's technical assistance programme.

As I have already said, we believe that there should be a close connection between the delivery of support and the fact of reform. The tragic events in the Baltic states have brought into question the Soviet commitment to reform and those events have caused real damage to east-west relations.

The British Government have never recognised the forcible incorporation of the three Baltic states into the Soviet Union. We have repeatedly emphasised our belief that the peoples of the three Baltic republics have the right to determine their own futures. We wholly condemn the way in which the Soviet forces behaved in the early days of this year. The loss of life in Lithuania and Latvia was tragic and deplorable.

Following those killings, we and our partners within the Community took urgent steps to emphasise to the Soviet Union that our measures of support were not unconditional and would not survive continued repression. We therefore suspended the bulk of the measures previously agreed at the Rome European Council. However, since that suspension, there have developed modest grounds for optimism. For example, the Soviet Government have appointed delegations to begin discussions with the three Baltic states.

Moreover, the Soviet Government have distanced themselves from the bogus salvation councils that were brought into existence earlier this year. However, we must recognise that we are still some way from seeing proper and serious negotiations between the Baltic republics and the Soviet Government.

It is against that background of modest improvement that we should consider how the west in general and the European Community in particular should proceed. Should we turn our backs on the Soviet Union? Should we withhold all the support and encouragement that I have described?

I cannot believe that such a course would be right. The benefits of co-operation are obvious and mutual. The west has vital interests at stake. We therefore believe that, provided the response is positive, we should continue to

encourage and assist those working for reform within the Soviet Union. That is the message that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is delivering this week in Moscow. He will emphasise that very substantial help is available. He will say that the benefit that will flow from integration into the international economic system is great. However, all that depends upon the Soviet Union continuing with political and economic reform.

The motion refers to Bulgaria and Romania to which the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale and the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow referred.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): While we are considering economic aid, does my hon. and learned Friend agree that there is sympathy with the Soviet Union's position particularly when it has told the Baltic states that economic arrangements must be made? It is very difficult for any state to lose suddenly a vital part of its economy when its economy is in such difficulties.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend has made an important point. However, we must go back to first principles. In this case the first principles are that we did not recognise forcible incorporation of the three Baltic republics into the Soviet Union. That was achieved in a deplorable and unlawful way. That is the foundation on which the debate must stand. I understand my hon. Friend's point about the loss to the Soviet Union. However, at the same time my hon. Friend would be the first to concede that the peoples of the three Baltic republics have a right to determine their own futures.

I am sure that the right approach for the House and for the Government is to say that we recognise the right of self-determination within the three Baltic republics and very much hope that there will be serious negotiations between the Soviet Government and those republics from which will emerge a solution that is acceptable to both parties. That may take the form of complete independence, but it may take a different form that falls short of complete independence. However, that is a matter for the parties to that negotiation.

Romania and Bulgaria have a great need for food and medical aid. That is why the Government supported last December's decision of the European Council to provide £70 million of food and medical aid to both those countries. We are now pressing for the rapid disbursement of that aid.

I am glad to say that the Bulgarian Government are actively pursuing a programme of economic and political reform. The United Kingdom Government recognise that and therefore two weeks ago, during the visit to this country of President Zhelev, we extended the know-how fund to Bulgaria.

There is evidence that Romania is also pressing ahead with reform. Right hon. and hon. Members will have noted last Tuesday's speech by the Romanian Prime Minister, Mr Roman, in which he emphasised his Government's intention to restructure his country's economy along free market lines. We believe that the Community must encourage and assist that process, and we welcome the decision taken last January to include Romania in the PHARE programme. That decision was reached only after the European Community had carefully monitored events in Romania over the preceding six months. I assure the House that the Community will continue to monitor events in Romania to ensure that reforms happen.

Sir David Steel: Political as well as economic reforms?

Mr. Hogg: The right hon. Gentleman makes a sound point. I agree that political and economic reforms are linked.

Our policy towards Romania provides a good example of the Community policy of conditionality. By making support conditional upon democracy and economic liberalisation—taking the point that the two stand together—the Community encourages reforms in those areas. By delivering a programme of support, we help the reformers to honour their undertakings.

I hope that the Soviet Government have drawn the right conclusion from the delay in implementing the European Council package, and we believe that the time has come to move forward. Discussions on food aid and on credit guarantees have continued, and that work is more or less complete. The United Kingdom has insisted that food aid be properly targeted and monitored. Both food aid and credit guarantees will be under the supervision of management committees, which will permit strict member state control.

Adverting to the intervention by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow when he asked about the extent to which non-governmental organisations will be involved in monitoring distribution, I confirm that we have pressed for a role for NGOs, and that the Commission's proposal includes provision for such help. The Red Cross is an obvious candidate in that respect, and the Crown Agents are another. No decisions have been taken as to which NGOs will be involved, but that NGOs should be involved is accepted.

Discussions were resumed at today's Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels, where our approach was endorsed by other member states. Financial aspects remain to be resolved with the European Parliament. The European Commission has yet to table a proposal on technical assistance, but we believe that it should continue its preparations. That view is endorsed by the Council.

However, we believe that we should hold something in reserve, so a decision on the Commission's expected proposal on technical assistance will be taken in the light of the political and economic situation then prevailing. Only then will it be right to decide whether the financial perspectives should be amended to permit the release of the funds necessary to support the programme.

Mr. Anderson: The Minister mentioned the Red Cross in relation to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) about NGOs. May one take it that, in addition to working through those agencies, the British Government and the Community will work through the republic Governments, as well as through the central Government? There is clearly a power struggle under way between the Kremlin and individual constituent republics.

Mr. Hogg: Yes, for the reasons suggested by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, and by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale. It is important not to support by the provision of aid simply

[Mr. Hogg]

the status quo or the Governments that are too closely associated with the ancien regime. It is often important to deliver aid at the lowest effective level.

It is the British Government's earnest wish that conditions within the Soviet Union will permit early Council agreement to an extensive Community programme of technical assistance and, in due course, to a broader framework for our respective relations.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): The Government keep talking about the Soviet Union, perhaps quite rightly, but what is the Soviet Union today? Only yesterday, we heard that 70 or 80 per cent. of the population of Estonia and Latvia do not want their countries to remain part of the USSR. Will we not have to give serious consideration to helping countries such as Romania and Bulgaria individually? To put it bluntly, the USSR no longer really exists as a power bloc that is able to assist all the countries that are going through what we in Brum call a hell of a time.

Mr. Hogg: I cannot entirely follow my hon. Friend in that. There is a distinction to be drawn between, on the one hand, Romania and Bulgaria, which are sovereign states, and, on the other, the three Baltic republics that are currently within the union; and on the third hand—if one can have three hands——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): That must be why the hon. and learned Gentleman's watch has stopped.

Mr. Hogg: —the other republics in the union.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: But they do not want it.

Mr. Hogg: So far as the three Baltic republics are concerned, we did not accept their forceful incorporation into the Soviet Union in 1941, and we hope that they can negotiate with the USSR a relationship that is acceptable to them both. As to the remainder of the Soviet Union, I remind my hon. Friend of my earlier remarks.

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) was not in the Chamber at the time.

Mr. Hogg: I believe that my hon. Friend had a pressing engagement elsewhere, but it is always nice to see him.

It is not in our interests to seek to bring about the dissolution of the Soviet Union. That is not the purpose of our policy. We are not in the business of doing that. Europe has much to gain from co-operation and closer links with the Soviet Union, but co-operation can continue only as long as we are confident of the Russian Government's commitment to the principles of reform. Our support for President Gorbachev is not unqualified or uncritical. We support not Mr. Gorbachev the man, but Mr. Gorbachev the reformer.

8.17 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Last year, I attended the European socialist parties congress in Berlin, just after everything started to happen in that part of the world, and was privileged to address that great assembly. However, I came rather low down in the pecking order after the Kinnocks, Craxis, Mitterrands and Brandts had departed, so I addressed what was left of the audience.

I was able to tell the delegates from central and eastern Europe in particular that one of the great things that the British parliamentary system teaches is how to speak to empty halls. I advised them to prepare for the day when the crowds will have left Wenceslas square, when they will also find themselves addressing empty halls. That lesson is useful, too, when contributing to foreign affairs debates in the House.

This is a timely debate, as the Prime Minister arrives in Moscow this evening, and as European Community Foreign Ministers meet in Brussels today to discuss the same subject. I am grateful to the Government for arranging this debate so soon after we requested it. I also pay tribute to the Select Committee on European Legislation, which singled out these documents as being especially important.

The debate gives us a chance to review not only the Community's programmes of immediate and longer-term aid, but the prevailing circumstances in the countries of central and eastern Europe, as well as the Soviet Union itself. Understandably and inevitably, our recent preoccupation has been with the middle east rather than with the eastern part of our own continent. That preoccupation may well continue for some time, but we must never allow it to drive from our minds the dangerous fragility of the newly democratised nations in Europe. Nor should we forget the forces that are changing and, in some respects, destabilising the Soviet Union—still a military super-power with more than 20,000 nuclear weapons, and still a vitally important player in the modelling of the new international order, whenever that will take place.

There is an apparent lack of control in the Soviet Union at present—the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) perhaps took it to extremes—which must perturb all of us. I was reminded of a story told by Sir David McNee, a former Metropolitan police commissioner, about his days as a police constable in Scotland. Having stopped a car that had been weaving along the highway, he went to the car window and asked the driver to wind it down. It became glaringly obvious what was wrong. He bent down and said to the driver, "Sir, you are drunk." The driver turned on him with a grin and said, "Thank God; I thought that my steering had gone."

There is a feeling that eminent men are sitting in the Kremlin wondering whether they are drunk or whether the steering has gone. But, of course, the Soviet Union is still crucially important in world affairs, which is precisely why our Prime Minister is in Moscow this evening, and why his discussions there are so important.

This may not be the place in which to say this, but, when we consider providing aid for our own continent, we must constantly remember the fate of the millions who, as we speak, are dying in the African famines. We must never allow our proper concern for the stability of Europe and the long-term democratic base of our neighbours to divert attention or resources from the pressing and urgent demands for the feeding of the millions who now face starvation.

The documents that we are considering allow us both to examine the programme of food aid to the Soviet Union —which, latterly, has turned out to be somewhat controversial—and to hear the Minister confirm that

humanitarian aid has, indeed, reached the Soviet citizens for whom it was primarily intended. I am sure that I am not alone in welcoming the fact that the Government are considering establishing that by means of non-governmental organisations such as the Red Cross and the excellent Crown Agents.

There is no shortage of food in the Soviet Union, which can cope easily with the food demands of its own population. The problem, which has created a crisis for, especially, those living in the cities, is the collapse of the distribution network in that huge country. While we may criticise a system that provides for shortages, we cannot get over the fact that it is the people themselves who are suffering.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: My hon. Friend said, rather woundingly, that I had been extreme. That is not in my nature.

The problems faced by those in the Soviet Union are very much of their own making. They gave thousands of millions of dollars of aid to Cuba, and still do so; they gave thousands of millions of dollars to support the fighting in Afghanistan, and thousands of millions of dollars to Iraq, all of whose weapons turned out to be like the weapons of toy soldiers.

The idea that someone is extreme, or is exposing himself in public, if he draws attention to such matters does not hold water. Russia must be told, "Your days are over." It is no good the hon. Gentlemen saying that it is extreme to say such things; by one means or another, we want a peaceful entente.

Mr. Robertson: First, let me apologise to the hon. Gentleman for calling him extreme. His moderation is highlighted by the fact that he calls me his hon. Friend.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): His steering has gone.

Mr. Robertson: I assure my hon. Friend that the hon. Gentleman's steering has not gone. I took exception, however, to his implication that the Soviet Union no longer existed as a nation. Of course it has major problems, and considerable difficulties face its administration; but it is still there, and still represents a significant force in the world today. None of the facts adduced by the hon. Gentleman diminish that truth, but I accept his apologies for calling me a friend.

The debate also allows us to examine the mechanics of the European Community, and some of the more substantial programmes of technical assistance in which it has been involved, including the PHARE programme—Poland and Hungary assistance for economic restructuring. Perhaps the Minister will tell us how much of that programme will emanate from this country. As he will know better than I, PHARE programmes are initiated by individual Community countries. Accusations have been made, I hope unfairly, that we are not getting our fair share of the programmes set up under this admirable scheme. I am sure that the Minister will want to correct that impression before it is too widely accepted.

Last month, in an excellent article in the *Financial Times*, Mr. David Buchan—who provides an enormous amount of information for all of us—called the European Community the

"World leader of the 'salvation army'".

Given the obligations that it has taken on under the G24 programmes, that is what it increasingly resembles.

The importance of our assistance to these countries should never be underestimated, and it would be helpful if the Community, as well as others, stopped calling it aid. Not only is that not a fair or accurate description of the technical and economic co-operation in which we are involved; it has the doubly harmful effect of legitimising an apparent competition with the third world. Assistance with the setting up of a stock market in Budapest, or a school for auditors in Prague, is radically different from the provision of food and medicine for starving babies in Ethiopia and Sudan. They must never be seen to be in competition for the same finite resources, and it is a matter of shame that some countries and individuals have raided one to pay for the other.

None the less, it may be prudent to remind ourselves why we are involved in the provision of assistance for central and eastern Europe. It has only a little to do with altruism and moral obligation and a good deal to do with self-interest. There is nothing unwise or reprehensible in that, of course, as self-interest has motivated international relationships down the centuries. It was, indeed, self-interest—interest in our own survival—that drove us for 45 years to invest vast, almost limitless, funds to defend ourselves from a threat from the military machine of the eastern bloc. It must be in that same self-interest to ensure that instability and economic self-destruction do not become the hallmark of the newly liberated nations of eastern Europe.

We must welcome, as I am sure the Minister does, the moves by the Community to construct new association agreements, fashioned as European agreements to distinguish them from the others, which I hope will lead in the foreseeable future to full Community membership for those countries. It is also sensible that we restrict the countries, for the moment at least, to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, but in the long term and even in the medium term we must not be seen to exclude Bulgaria and Romania.

More than anything else, it was a tide of unsatisfied consumer pressure—people materially denied by corrupt and unworkable economic systems—which finally swept away the communist states. How ironic it would be if a disillusionment with the alternative systems were to bring other nastier alternatives back to power.

Only two weeks ago Mr. Miklos Nemeth, the former Prime Minister of Hungary who is now, admirably, vice-president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, said:

"The democracy of poverty is dictatorship. Real democracy can only be achieved against a background of economic security."

He concluded:

"The future—not only the future of Central Europe but the safety of the whole of Europe, largely depends on how the former West and the former East are able to make this recognition a reality in practical economic co-operation."

Those were wise words to which we should listen with great care, as we should listen to the views of the Bank for International Settlements whose recent quarterly report made it clear that:

"official aid is critical to the success of the economic reform in the region."

All that is self-evident, but it needs constant repetition to get the business and financial world to listen. I know that the Government have made great strides through the know-how funds, on the advisory board of which I serve with the Minister, and through the instruments that we are

[Mr. Robertson]

extremely fortunate to have. In particular, I think of the British Council with its network already in place to ensure that our assistance gets right to the grassroots quickly. We should also pay tribute to the Confederation of British Industry, whose scheme for training managers has been a great success and, I understand, is to be expanded.

Mr. Foulkes: The co-operative movement, too.

Mr. Robertson: Indeed, I also pay tribute to the co-operative movement. It has acted as an example in setting up co-operatives and a form of a co-operative bank. Such matters cannot be left to luck and good fortune. Public stimulus will continue to be required if the private sector is to be encouraged to move into these regions.

In addition to the shock to the eastern economies brought about by having to pay new higher prices for Soviet oil and in hard currency at that, is the shock of the Gulf impact on overall oil prices and supply. Where it was difficult and dangerous to restructure economies, the task has been made even more dangerous and risky—all at a point where access to international lending has been severely restricted. Unemployment, a previously unknown experience, is rising in all the countries and it may well provide a breaking-point strain for the shaky, democratic institutions.

The practice of government is not strange to any of those countries, even if it is now much more difficult than when all dissent was suppressed. What is crucially missing is the practice of opposition—that patient, frustrating mixture of criticism of Government and the assembly of a palatable alternative. We have built up that expertise over 12 years and I am sure that the Minister will enjoy it before the year is out. That careful mixture of responsible, loyal opposition will be crucial for the long-term, political stability of those nations and is essential in providing a secure environment for economic investment.

Last week we received a prescient warning from two senior citizens of the central and east European environment. President Havel of Czechoslovakia said of his country:

"The danger lies in permanent instability and chaos, which would affect not only neighbouring countries but also Europe and the entire world."

Then, in the words of Mr. Adam Michnik, the prominent Polish opposition figure and editor of the Solidarity daily newspaper, *Gaseta Wyborcza*—I turn to my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) for help in pronunciation because he trained in the diplomatic service and his language skills are much greater than mine:

"the cult of the central plan has been replaced across Eastern Europe by the cult of the free market."

He also warned that these societies were psychologically unprepared to deal with the effects of that—unemployment and bankruptcies—at a time of rising consumerist expectations. Those are serious signals from serious, responsible, distinguished politicians in central Europe. They point to the problems which face them and which we must face.

The Minister was right to point out the qualitative and quantitative difference in the Soviet Union from that of the new democracies. It is right that we should treat carefully the type of assistance and its targeting that we give to the Soviet Union. I, too, believe that President Gorbachev deserves and should continue to receive our support. After all, his experiment is a mere six years old and it has changed the face both of the USSR and the world. However, there are forces abroad in the Soviet Union—anti-western, right-wing and isolationist. That is a tide that we cannot encourage. It means that the assistance, both humanitarian food aid and technical, offered by the Community and Britain must be selectively directed and conditional on the maintenance of the improved human rights and reform record that we have seen since President Gorbachev came to power.

We cannot overstate the influence that we shall have. We must not be over-moralistic, because the size of the Soviet Union and its problems is so vast that its salvation can eventually come only from inside. We can make our views known and hope that they will help to keep the right pressure in the right direction.

There are major dangers ahead for the countries of east and central Europe, but we face some of those dangers ourselves. Just as the unification of Germany gained its impetus from the pressure to emigrate west if nothing was done, so if our assistance falters or if we fail to deliver what is necessary to underpin the democratic experiment that is going on, the fall-out may not stay easily confined at home and will certainly not be confined to the Oder-Neisse line. Sometimes I fear that it could become one of the biggest problems that we may face in the late 1990s. I believe in being optimistic and that there is a case for optimism, but that prospect is, indeed, a spectre that is realistically before us. That, alone, should be enough to motivate us for the better.

8.38 pm

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): I am glad to have the opportunity to follow the two Front-Bench spokesmen. It is important in these matters that, as far as possible, a common voice should come from this House, and I believe that it has. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister put the matter into perspective persuasively and helpfully and the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), reflecting his work on the advisory body for the know-how funds and the Great Britain-East Europe Centre, brought breadth of visiqn to the subject. I welcome this debate, and I want to concentrate on Bulgaria for reasons which I shall explain.

I was glad to see the relatively late addition to the proposals of medical assistance, which has been added to food assistance in the cases of Romania and Bulgaria. I shall not repeat the arguments about the Soviet Union except to say that one of the best ways of helping the democratic and economic development that we all want in the Soviet Union is to help its former satellite countries to become successful in their own right. In a limited way they can show economic and democratic developments going hand in hand and working, and that may help the Soviet Union.

I wish to discuss Bulgaria partly because I am chairman of the British-Bulgarian parliamentary group and partly because Bulgaria has not featured as largely in these debates as it should have—partly because of its small size compared with that of the Soviet Union and also because countries such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland tend to have their natural constituencies of interest. They draw in private investment in a way that is more difficult for Romania and Bulgaria to achieve. Whatever one says

about Ceausescu's regime, it had at least the one great advantage of leaving his country with virtually no foreign debt, which gives Romania a certain amount of elbow room. Moreover, in the strange way in which these things happen on our country, media interest in Romania, for reasons on which I need not expand, has been great. In my constituency—this may be mirrored throughout the country—there is enormous interest in the voluntary sector in supporting Romania, especially its AIDS-infected babies. Every month a lorry with food and medical supplies leaves my constituency for Romania.

Against that background, I want to discuss Bulgaria's problems, which have gone largely unknown hitherto. I was glad to hear the Minister talking about the economic and political reforms which were recognised in the announcement of the know-how fund. The visit by President Zhelev was timely in that regard. There are grounds for optimism about a growing interest in Bulgaria given the number of exhanges between, for instance, this House and that country. There was a recent Inter-Parliamentary Union visit, and the CBI is looking into the possibility of joint ventures. The Great Britain-East Europe Centre, on which my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) and certain Opposition Members serve, will also help to redress the balance and meet the need for greater understanding of the great humanitarian needs of Bulgaria.

I visited Bulgaria in 1988 for the first time since becoming a Member of this House, but I was there before, in the 1960s. There has been a sad progression in that country. It became almost helpless following the break-up of the traditional Soviet and east European trading patterns. Bulgaria is a small country with only 9 million people. In some ways it used to be the fruit basket of the communist bloc; suddenly it found itself in an exposed position. Its relationship with the Soviet Union broke down and the break-down of its barter trade with oil was also a factor.

Bulgaria produces oil but has to blend it with imports of oil, as does Britain, so it has experienced great difficulty because of rising oil prices and because—this brings us nearer to home—it is owed large sums of money by Iraq. Iraq's unwillingness to pay its debts of recent years has caused great difficulties for many countries, including Bulgaria.

Bulgaria is heavily dependent on electricity—hence the importance once again of oil. Almost everyone in Sofia cooks with electricity; vast numbers of people must sit hungry in the cold and dark. And there are chronic shortages of medicine.

The food shortages have not been as bad as they might have been because this winter has been relatively mild, but I am advised of extreme shortages of meat, eggs, butter, sugar, cheese and cooking oils. Prices are 10 times what they were a year ago. People can buy food, at uncontrolled prices, because of the slaughter of milk cows and of poultry that should really be used for egg production.

The motion this evening suggests a way of beginning to help to get a free market working in countries such as Bulgaria. The present price distortions are leading to hoarding and black marketeering. The urgent provision of food from Community surpluses gives us a chance to get prices back into balance and to make hoarding a less attractive proposition. I welcome the proposals in that direction in the motion.

I should like the Minister to put the food and medical aid that we are discussing in a wider context. What estimate has been made of the effect of this aid? How far will it meet the need and complement other aid of which we are aware? Over what period will it take effect? In what sense is it related to other relevant aid—for instance, for food production? Bulgaria used to be a natural food producer and processor; tourism was also important, and there was some light industry. It is of the utmost importance that the country's food production be restored. It is said that next year's harvest may be doomed for lack of the necessary agro-chemicals and investment.

Last December the state monopolies in tobacco, fruit, vegetables and poultry were all disbanded. They were closed down, and their component parts are now small companies in a free market economy. Naturally, I welcome that, but the process urgently requires certain skills and inward investment. The latter is arriving only slowly and Bulgaria has had to attract British companies in competition with other countries in central and eastern Europe. There are ways of helping the country internally —in management training, in finance and in marketing. I hope that the Minister will say a word or two about how the know-how fund is related to what we are discussing, and about how we shall bridge the gap between Bulgaria's needs and what it is receiving. I welcome the extension of the know-how funds to Bulgaria. It is clear that it is directly related to the process of trying to develop a free market.

How far does what we are currently doing help to forward the attempt by Bulgaria to establish a more free-standing and logical structure for its food and food processing industries? How far is that seen not just by the Government but by the Community as a continuing process of aid? There is a real fear of deaths this winter in Bulgaria and those who will suffer are the most vulnerable —the old and the very young. There are real problems of malnutrition and hypothermia and a shortage of medical supplies.

The hon. Member for Hamiliton was right to remind us that we cannot divorce the subject of the debate from the overwhelming problems in Africa and Asia which suffer from famine. However, in Bulgaria there are fears of famine. I am told that for some time there has been no insulin or none of the equipment that is necessary to test blood for the presence of hepatitis or AIDS. Drugs sold on prescription and even everyday drugs such as aspirin are not available.

Helping Bulgaria cannot be a matter just for the Government or our partners in the Community. Every hon. Member has a role. Widespread recognition has been accorded to Romania, and it is reasonable to suggest that it should extend to Bulgaria. It has many similar problems, but it has not received the level of media interest that can help to bring forward voluntary help. However, such interest can lead to unfair discrepancies of the type that I have sought to outline. I hope that all hon. Members agree that it would be reasonable and appropriate to urge people to extend to Bulgaria the voluntary activity that was harnessed to help Romania.

The Minister and the hon. Member for Hamilton said that there was a need to ensure that supplies get through. They will both be aware of the new and dynamic ambassador, Mr. Ivan Stancioff, at the Bulgarian embassy. That shows that Bulgaria is addressing the problem, and I am advised that there is a depot in Reading

[Sir Michael Marshall]

to which those who want to send voluntary supplies of food and medicine can apply. Such people can be assured that the supplies will be supervised and directed to the proper outlets. To make the point plain, the ambassador has said that those who wish to travel with such supplies or to take them under their own steam may do so. Such openness is encouraging to the voluntary sector.

I detect some scope for joint ventures and the like, and there is some dialogue about economic progress. However, the Bulgarian Parliament and Government still have a long way to go in making their legislation more attractive and relevant to inward investors. I know that they seek such investment.

The aid that we are debating is important in the wider sense in helping to create successful economic and political conditions in the small countries of central and eastern Europe. Such aid is relevant not only to their needs, but to the wider challenges in the Soviet Union. The proposals meet a genuine humanitarian need and it is appropriate that the House should direct itself to the problem because, as I have said, all hon. Members have a part to play.

8.54 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): This interesting debate touches on issues that of late we have not had the time to discuss. It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall). He did not mention it in his speech, but he is the past chairman of the British group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Over the past 18 months that group has been greatly involved in helping the countries of central and eastern Europe. My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) and I were officers in the IPU under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Arundel, and I am sure that my hon. Friend would join me in paying a warm tribute to the hon. Gentleman's work to improve our relationships with other European countries.

I and my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), who are members of the Council of Europe, have over the past 18 months seen very great changes. Many of the central and eastern European countries have delegates and delegations at our meetings and at committees in the Council of Europe. We are now starting to hear first-hand accounts of the problems that those countries face and they are beginning to tell us about their hopes and aspirations.

For 40 years the countries of western Europe were calling for freedom and democracy in eastern Europe. Now that the process has started, we have a responsibility to help those countries. We have the skills, the knowledge and the wealth, and we must share them. One now meets many representatives from eastern Europe at conferences and meetings. Many of them thought that the changes would be based on western economic systems and that the benefits that flow from such systems would soon start to appear for them. That has not happened and it will not happen for a long time. Such benefits will emerge in those countries, but we must pay attention to the problems that are beginning to appear there now.

It is all very well to debate these matters and to provide technical assistance, but if we do not start to help these countries face the social problems that are involved in the changes that are taking place, we shall be letting them down. Such is the extent of unemployment in central and eastern European countries that a meeting of the social and health committee of the Council of Europe which I shall attend in Paris on Friday will have that issue on its agenda. The meeting has been arranged basically to discuss the unemployment and social unrest that are starting to develop in the countries of central and eastern Europe. These developments are of crucial importance to the United Kingdom and other western European countries that have knowledge of the problems and an understanding of how to deal with them. We and other western European countries must share our knowledge with the countries of central and eastern Europe.

Associated with the problem of unemployment are women's employment rights and employment opportunities, which are not always fully considered. We must give consideration to the provision of social assistance for the very poor. We know that there are many hundreds of thousands, if not millions, in central and eastern Europe who are extremely poor. They need help. We must bear in mind also the needs of the elderly and the disabled. We must accept these responsibilities and offer practical assistance.

Over the past 18 months, vast sums have been given by way of grants to central and eastern Europe. There are many examples, but I shall quote only two or three. The International Monetary Fund gave US $710 million to Poland. A similar programme for Hungary amounted to US $210 million. There is a World bank credit of US $5,000 million to central and eastern European countries that will be spread over three years. There was a Japanese aid package of US $1,200 million for Hungary and Poland. These are substantial sums. Whatever countries the financial aid may come from, the moneys come from taxpayers. We have a right to discuss economic systems with the beneficiaries as we have a right also to encourage them to follow certain systems.

Many of the countries that are receiving aid have great potential. We are discussing the provision of agricultural assistance to three countries and certainly two of them —the Soviet Union and Romania—and possibly the third, Bulgaria, have the most enormous potential for development. Sadly, such development has not taken place for year after year. Surely we have a right to ask what is happening in these countries. We have a right to seek to modernise and develop their agriculture systems. Any of us who have even a limited knowledge of the way in which agriculture is practised in the United Kingdom know that nowadays it is possible to make enormous strides extremely quickly.

What encouragement are we giving to central and eastern European countries? No one writes to me stating that the food surpluses within the EEC should be given to central and eastern European countries. Instead, I receive many letters in which I am told that food surpluses are yet another example of the inefficiency of the common agricultural policy. The writers of these letters are critical that we are having to give away the results of excess production.

Bearing in mind the moneys that we are talking about, we have a right to ask about distribution. How will food aid be distributed, for example? The Minister has outlined how he understands that distribution will take place, and it seems that there will be a fairly elaborate organisation to ensure that the food will go to those who need it most in the areas where it is most needed. Will this be a one-off

operation or are we talking of one of many similar food assistance programmes that will be made available to central and eastern European countries in future? If there are to be future programmes, we should be told. We are talking about sizeable sums when we consider the value of the food aid programme.

I have not heard anyone mention what type of food we are to supply to these countries and it would be interesting to be told. Also, what quantity of food will be made available?

I have no basic disagreement with giving such assistance. All hon. Members who have spoken in the debate, and certainly the Front-Bench spokesmen, have outlined the need to help countries that are facing enormous food shortages. However, I do not think that we have any right to approve such assistance without being told that the project that we are involved in is subject to close scrutiny and that discussions are taking place with the countries that we seek to help on how their agricultural systems will be developed.

The hon. Member for Arundel mentioned fertilisers and the chemicals that we all know are used in modern agricultural production. If countries in central and eastern Europe are to develop modern agricultural systems they will need such items. How will they pay for them? We know that all those countries have problems getting hard currency which will allow them to buy the sorts of commodities to ensure that their markets can produce goods that will sell to the rest of the world.

I welcome this debate as it has allowed us to touch on many of the arguments that interest hon. Members who seek to involve themselves in central and eastern Europe —whatever their background. However, questions need to be asked because my constituents will ask me about their pensions, the health service and the education system and, although we may be talking about a relatively small sum of money, it is still taxpayers' money. Therefore, as I have outlined, we have a right to know how it will be spent and what we are seeking to do to encourage these countries to develop agricultural systems which would allow them to produce food to feed the needs of their countrymen and women.

9.7 pm

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): I shall confine my remarks principally to the last sentence of the motion: "that consideration of any other forms of Community help should take full account of developments in the Soviet Union and the Baltic States".

It is far better to support the reforms that President Gorbachev has set in train, however imperfect, than to risk assisting the forces that wish for a change of leader in the Soviet Union. It cannot be disputed that President Gorbachev's Russia has brought enormous benefits to the west and these must not be forgotten.

First and foremost was the ending of the cold war after 40 years, and, secondly, there was the liberation of eastern Europe. I had the unique opportunity to stand behind President Havel in Czechoslovakia on the balcony of the Civil Forum headquarters on election day—the first democratic election since the second world war—and to hear the great roar from the massive crowd in Wenceslas square when he stepped out on to the balcony. That brought home to me the tremendous strength and work of the reform movement and it would not have happened had it not been for President Gorbachev.

Thirdly, the whole of Germany is in NATO. It would have been inconceivable a couple of years ago that the former Soviet front line would be within NATO. The fourth benefit is the United Nations co-operation which the Soviet Union is now engaged in.

Had it not been for the new climate that President Gorbachev and, to a certain extent, President Bush have brought about, I suggest that it would have been unthinkable for the Soviet Union not to have supported Saddam Hussein. We must be grateful that President Gorbachev's enlightened policies have made the sea change in Soviet foreign policy possible.

I welcome the food aid, the guarantee credits, the technical assistance and the wide range of agreements for improving relations that the motion calls for. I understand and do not object to the need for conditions, but hope that we will show a great understanding for the Soviet Union's attempts to make monumental political and economic changes. I accept that the reforms have not progressed fast enough but suggest that we cast our minds back and remember that it took a long time—nearly 100 years—for the House to become democratic. The first Reform Act was in 1832, the second in 1869, but full universal franchise did not take place until 1918. We must consider the position of other European countries. Switzerland does not offer the vote to women. When we consider how long the reforms in the Soviet Union are taking, perhaps we should compare them with the time that democratic reforms took in this country.

We should also remember that we support other non-democratic regimes. Some of our Arab allies in the Gulf are not democratic. In a sense, therefore, our restrictions on aid to the Soviet Union are selective. In considering the problems that the Soviet Union faces, I should mention the strategic concerns that influence their attitude to reform and aid packages. The Soviet Union faces, through the possible loss of the Baltic states, the loss of Riga, its main Baltic port for the Russian navy. It also faces the problem of that old part of east Prussia and the city of Kaliningrad, which can be accessed only through Lithuania. Those are major problems for the Soviet Union.

I agree that it is reasonable to provide conditional aid to the Soviet Union. The deaths of citizens in the Baltic states have been worrying and are to be regretted, but we must not forget that President Gorbachev responded to western concerns by withdrawing troops from the Baltics. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) mentioned that matter and said that he was worried about the economic effect of the loss of the Baltics, which play a key part in the Soviet Union's economy.

I therefore caution against pressing President Gorbachev too far. I believe that a successor would be much worse for the west. We could have a Ligachev-type conservative and the KGB could gain greater control. Marshall Yasov and the Soviet army might be in a much more powerful position. It is a time of great heart searching for the Soviet army, which has lost Afghanistan, the front line in eastern Europe and, recently, an important client—Iraq.

I have argued that we may be stopping reforms by restricting aid to the USSR, so let us not lose sight of the fact that President Gorbachev has moved away from confrontation. It is better to support him now, because otherwise we may lose the ratification of the arms treaties

[Mr. David Tredinnick]

and face the tremendous resistance of the Soviet army to moving out of eastern Europe. It cannot have been easy to sell the problem of moving half a million troops out of east Germany and there have already been problems with the timetable of the Soviet withdrawal from Poland. There are additional domestic problems facing the Soviet Union, especially its President. The Soviet Union is trying to embrace western economics. It suffers from a lack of skills and resources. Could we imagine embracing, countrywide, a completely different, communist economy, and working that through down the line managers to the factory floor? The Russians are trying to import our system. That does not happen overnight, but needs time to settle down.

The unemployment problems have also been mentioned. I support the conditions referred to by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister because they give us influence over the reform process and enable us, in a small way, to shape it. They encourage the USSR to look west and outward, and prevent it from turning inward.

On Sunday, I shall lead an eight-member delegation from the House to the Soviet Union under the auspices of the British Atlantic group of young politicians, of which I am fortunate to be chairman. It is a return for the visit we organised for the Russians to come to Lancaster house for our conference in the spring of last year. The newly elected members who came were open to embracing our ideas and looked for help from the west. In my recent discussions with the Soviets prior to making our visit to the Soviet Union next week I found them open. They wanted to hear our views on how to solve their problems and have asked us to offer advice when we go there.

We should show the understanding to which I referred and continue to offer aid. We should not be afraid to support Mikhail Gorbachev, without whom the seismic changes in east-west relations, the arms reductions and the brave domestic reforms would not have been possible.

9.17 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): None of us can but approve of the Government's decision to give humanitarian aid to the Soviet Union and the countries of eastern Europe. But—and I am sorry that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) is not present to hear me say this—it is in the interests of the United Kingdom and the peoples of western Europe as well as those of eastern Europe to give that aid. In fact, Britain has been laggardly in giving assistance in comparison with its European Community partners.

Some months ago, in the late summer of last year, Helmut Kohl warned of the dangers of a Russian invasion —not of the Red army but of Russian people—who, this year, will be free to travel where they will under a law being passed by the Supreme Soviet. There is a great danger of many of those people coming to western Europe. They will not go simply to Germany; many of them will find their way to Britain and will, possibly, become a problem.

The Soviet Union's need for aid is not directed by dire poverty such as exists in some south-east Asian or African countries, on the scale that I saw in the Philippines—not even Romania—only last August. The Soviet Union's problem is its close proximity to western Europe and its highly commercialised economies ruled by consumer societies. One has only to go to Berlin to see Russian soldiers selling uniforms and giving up various goods in exchange for hard currency to know that what I am saying is absolutely true.

Many important points have been made about aid to eastern Europe, particularly that made by my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) in respect of the social problems. I have spoken to people in eastern Germany who now face—even under the advanced western economy of West Germany—severe problems of unemployment and price rises.

I wish to deal mainly with the problems facing Romania. About an hour ago, the former leader of the Liberal party, who is not here now, talked about not allowing the ancien regimes to claim credit. However, I counsel caution because that may lead people to think that because the National Salvation Front won the election in Romania in May 1990, and because of some of its Government's actions since then, there is reason to withhold aid from Romania. It is important that we give humanitarian aid to the Romanian people.

I went to Romania with the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) to witness the elections. We must bear it in mind that Romania has never known democracy and has been ruled by dictatorships for the past 120 years since independence—fascist dictatorships such as that of Antonescu before and during the second world war and the Stalinist dictatorships since then.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South agreed with me that the election fought in May 1990 was, as far as we could see, carried out with tremendous energy by all the political parties in Bucharest, Timisoara, Ligova and small villages in Transylvania to ensure that they got it right and that it was a completely free election.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wareing: I shall give way in a moment.

The people to whom we spoke said that they felt completely free either to support the National Salvation Front or to vote against it.

Mr. Dunn: I apologise for intervening as I have not been here for most of the debate. I was interested in a point made by the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing). Is not it a fact that in the elections to which he referred more people voted than were entitled to do so? When directing humanitarian aid to a country that does not know or has any experience of the freedoms that we take for granted, is not it important to ensure that we monitor aid so that it reaches the people who need it and does not go to officials who sell it on the black market?

Mr. Wareing: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's latter point. There is no real evidence to suggest that in the elections the figures did not tally with the number of people entitled to vote. Certainly, in the areas in which we witnessed the elections, they were carried out scrupulously fairly. One of the precautions taken in Romania—which we do not even take in this country—was that everybody had to show an identity card which, of course, we do not have. Even the ballot papers were not numbered, whereas they are here and there is a perfectly good reason for that. The elections were carried out fairly.

The problem in Romania, which should not be lost on us, is that a free election is not the sole criterion for

democracy. There is also the matter of give and take and of tolerance. The Opposition and the Government tolerate each other. After June or October, or whenever, we shall be on the other side of the House and I know that the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) will tolerate the decision of the British electorate. Nevertheless, that is not the case in Romania where we must consider not only the Government who won the election but the Opposition. The Opposition in Romania have a few lessons to learn. We should support them in order to stimulate democratic discussion and to promote democracy. We could do that because there was great hope during the elections of May 1990. There is no doubt about that.

Romania should be given food aid. The Minister referred to technical assistance, but we must remember that, in the past, Romania was the granary for south-eastern Europe. The Danube basin was extremely prosperous in the past and Romania was responsible for the export of wheat and other foodstuffs. As the hon. Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) said, Romania was the only country in eastern Europe that did not have an overseas debt, but that was achieved by sacrificing the lives of Romanians. If Romania is to trade rather than just receive aid in the future, it must have the means to obtain hard currency.

Until December of last year Romania was still exporting food and it sold processed food products to this country—many of them were sold under famous brand names in our supermarkets. We should help Romania to feed its people by re-establishing some of the industries that existed under Ceausescu so that it can export to the rest of the world to receive the hard currency that would be of vital assistance now.

When the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South and I were in Romania, we witnessed the conditions in the children's hospital at Timisoara. We saw dedicated nurses and surgeons and other assistants carrying out their work in difficult conditions. The hospital building was extremely old—that is not unusual, as we have many similar buildings in this country—but the equipment in the operating theatres was also extremely old.

If we intend to provide food for Romanian children, it is as well that we consider the conditions in which that food will be processed. The kitchens in the hospital were old and the equipment was near derelict. The floors were full of crevices and those crevices were full of germ-ridden water. Such were the conditions in a children's hospital, the children were crowded almost one on top of the other because of the cramped conditions. It is not just a matter of providing food; we must provide the technical assistance to improve the Romanian health service. I am a little diffident about asking the Government to do anything to assist a national health service as they have been deficient in providing help for our own, but there is a real need in that part of the world.

To assist Romania, we must work with the existing Romanian Government. Obviously we want to stimulate reform, but we must not hold back from assisting the children in the hospitals, the old and those in poverty simply because we do not like the colour of the National Salvation Front Government.

The liberty of western Europe can suvive only if our brethren in the east are similarly liberated. We must bear with them because they have not known democratic government as long as we have. The history of Romania is different from our own. It only emerged from the Ottoman empire in the 1860s and, until now, it has never known democracy. We must try to get alongside the Romanian Government to give all the assistance that we can.

I hope that the Government will be much more to the fore in the European Community. As I said, I welcome the efforts of the European Community, but I should like the Minister to say something about the scale of our assistance within the programme of the European Community as compared with that of Germany, France and our other European partners. No statistics have been given by the Minister on the documents other than the global sums. What will Britain's contribution be, and what form will it take?

9.30 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): We are discussing European documents. I wish to press my hon. and learned Friend the Minister a little on the European dimension of this matter and the European approach to it. We recently experienced a lack of cohesion in the European approach to matters in the Gulf. There has been a reawakening of concern in this country—perhaps a slight diminishing of the euphoria about Europe—and a realisation that, in respect of foreign policy at least, the EC still has much to learn. My hon. and learned Friend has said that the Government support Gorbachev the reformer, not Gorbachev the man, that the delivery of support will be related directly to the fact of reform and that that support is not in any way intended to be unconditional. That is the United Kingdom approach, and that is why the Prime Minister will meet first with Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian representatives on his arrival in Moscow tonight.

However, we are discussing European documents and European Community aid. Is it to be made plain in the Council of Ministers that the delivery of support rests upon the fact of reform? Will the Commission hold something in reserve? Will EC technical assistance depend upon economic and political change, or will EC sectarian commercial interests dictate the pace of aid? I should like to know from my hon. and learned Friend the answers to those questions and how he regards the attitude of the Council of Ministers towards the conditions upon which aid is given—the conditions that the Government understand.

Like many other hon. Members, I refer briefly to the situation in Romania. I have a personal interest because my wife is a trustee of the Romanian orphans trust. In recent weeks there have been rather sad and damaging allegations that charity aid, having arrived in Romania, has been misappropriated, that goods have been stolen and sold on the black market, and that assistance that was ostensibly destined for those in terrifying need has been directed elsewhere. Those allegations have been extremely damaging to the cause of those who have been seeking to provide aid from this country. That is why the Romanian orphans trust has concentrated its aid programme upon aid in the form of personnel—for example, doctors, nurses, and paediatricians in child care assistance—upon training Romanians who, at some point, will need to take over the care of the literally thousands of orphans who are still in need in that country, and upon medicines and other essential goods that have been ordered by Romanian orphans trust personnel so that they are targeted and delivered directly to aid teams. Those involved with the Romanian orphans trust are confident that the aid that is

[Mr. Roger Gale]

so generously given by people in this country reaches the people for whom it is intended and the children towards whom it is directed.

In his reply to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), my hon. and learned Friend said that Government aid was targeted at the genuinely needy. Is the method of distributing European Community aid genuinely secure? Can the European Community ensure that goods that it sends to Romania will not be sold on the black market or used to prop up the old guard? The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) said that our constituents, including pensioners, as well as children who donate pocket money, have a right to know where their money is going. They want to know that it is being well spent—that it is not being used to prop up regimes of which they do not approve, or otherwise misappropriated.

I hope that my hon. and learned Friend can assure the House that the European Community and its Council of Ministers will take as much care to safeguard the direction of aid to Romania as is taken by charities like the Romanian orphans trust. I hope, too, that the Council of Ministers will seek to increase the pace of change in Romania. There, as elsewhere in the eastern bloc, aid must be dependent upon economic and political improvements. At the moment, the pace of those improvements is very slow.

Finally, I wish to refer briefly to the situation in the Baltic states. A few weeks ago, I was very privileged to be asked to address a rally in Trafalgar square. On Nelson's column, behind me, were the names of the Lithuanians who had been murdered a few days earlier. In those circumstances, it is not surprising that feeling among the Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians at that rally was running very high indeed. Those people made one thing very plain to me, and I, in turn, should like to offer it to the House. They believe that support should be for reform —as was said earlier, not for Gorbachev the reformer or Gorbachev the man, but simply for reform. If President Gorbachev is able to maintain the pace of reform in the eastern bloc, he will deserve support. However, if he is unable to do so, this country and Europe must transfer support and allegiance to those who are prepared to carry the banner of reform.

There have been signs of recognition on the part of the Soviets that the murders in Lithuania were a tremendous mistake, and that they have had very severe and damaging political repercussions. But will the Soviet Government now recognise the strength of the plebiscites in the Baltic states? Can my hon. and learned Friend make plain in the Council of Ministers, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will make plain in Moscow this week, that European Community financial, food and technical aid is not, and never will be, unconditional or open-ended?

9.38 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) was right to ask some basic questions about the disbursement of aid to Romania and to stress that, as the Minister has said, we support not President Gorbachev the man but what he has represented in the past and what he may still be able to represent. We benefited from the hon. Gentleman's knowledge of Romania and from the knowledge and experience of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), who is passionately concerned about the needs of Romania. As has been said, we may give emergency food aid, but beyond that is the infrastructure, including the hospital, which still leaves children in a desperate situation.

I am pleased that a number of hon. Members were able to benefit not only from their experience of visiting these countries but from the organisations in which they have played a part. I think particularly here of the hon. Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) who, in the time that he was the chairman of the Inter-Parliamentary Union group, contributed to the tremendous upsurge in the range of contacts with eastern Europe. I believe that it was his prompting that led to two missions—his own to Bulgaria and that on which my hon. Friend the Member for West Derby went. That gave him the background knowledge that he passed on to the House earlier.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) drew on his experience of the Council of Europe and helped the House in so doing. The hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick), with his experience of young politicians, asked basic questions about the role of President Gorbachev. There are worries about the direction in which the Soviet Union is going and some point to the moves that President Gorbachev has made to please the conservatives, to the centralising power that he has given himself, to the bypassing of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and of the constituent republics, to his outright opposition to the private ownership of land, to the replacement of the Minister of the Interior by the hardliners and to the nature of the vice president whom he appointed. However, taking all that into consideration, we have to give him the credit for the path along which the Soviet Union has come, which has had such major effects both on eastern and western Europe and on matters such as the Gulf crisis, in which the Soviet Union played an important and constructive role.

Last week, I was in the Baltic republics and a number of the political leaders complained about the slow down in reforms and the slowness of the pace of advance. However, I urge them to look back over the past few years and to realise how far they have come in such a short time and to use that to put into perspective their current position.

All hon. Members who have spoken have endorsed the general proposition of linkage. As the Minister said, we are making it clear to the Soviet Union that there is a link between the readiness of the European Community to provide aid and assistance and the continuation of its reform process. The debate has been useful in setting out general principles to be followed in future. It is timely not only because of the discussion between foreign Ministers in Brussels today but because of the two advisory votes yesterday in Estonia and Latvia. If any proof was necessary, those two votes, taken with the one in January that made clear the views of Lithuania, showed the determination of the three republics to set out on the path to independence.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) was correct, using a rather magisterial and broad brush approach, to set recent developments in the context of the whole of eastern and central Europe. Last week I paid a fascinating visit to Moscow and the three Baltic republics. In Moscow I met the two key members of the Central Committee who were responsible for both

foreign relations and for national relations within the Soviet Union. I also met all the leaders of the Baltic republics who were available at the time. It is perhaps, therefore, inevitable that I shall concentrate on the USSR, but any comments that I make on food aid may be relevant to Bulgaria and Romania, the special needs of which were dealt with by the hon. Member for Arundel and my hon. Friends the Members for Tooting and for West Derby.

All of us recall the harrowing stories that we read in the press and the pictures that we saw on television at the end of last year about the food shortages in the Soviet Union and the need for food aid there. At the time, the Council of the European Community rushed to respond to the perceived needs. There were, indeed, food shortages, but some argue that a basic cause of the shortages was the struggle for power between the centralised bureaucracy and the command economy in the Kremlin, and the new power structure that is developing within the constituent republics. It was clear in Moscow last week that the Kremlin is on one side, while on the other side is the large building that houses the alternative power structure of Mr. Yeltsin in the RSFSR—the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. As the Minister conceded, any external intervention that aims to improve the food supply for the population must take into account the political realities in the Soviet Union today.

I have heard reports of a shortage of medical supplies in the Soviet Union as well as in both Bulgaria and Romania. Those shortages are now being met or at least assisted by the EC proposals. I shall be grateful if the Minister will tell us whether he accepts that there is a need for basic medical supplies in the Soviet Union, down to things such as aspirins and syringes. Why have those basic medical needs, which are humanitarian, not being included in the current package?

In terms of food aid, there appears to have been some correlation between those places in the Soviet Union that are the worst affected, including Moscow, Leningrad, the three Ural towns of Perm, Chelybinsk, and Sverdlovsk, which are the cities with the most democratic city councils, and the lack of food in, say, Kharkov, which is on the fringe of the black earth region.

Although the basic reason for the food shortages was the breakdown last year of the traditional distribution system of the command economy, we must remember that there was also a record harvest of 240 million tonnes. The breakdown of that distribution system opened the way for substantial corruption and political manipulation of the food supply. It looks as though the European Community has taken on board the fact that the various power elements in the Soviet Union, such as old regimes of the KGB and the army, have had opportunities to manipulate the supply of food.

As Mr. Yeltsin has suggested, another means of distribution could be via the constituent republics or through the various non-governmental organisations, including the International Red Cross. Each of those channels of distribution has particular political implications in terms of the present power struggle. For example, in Moscow, with its radical city council, a common explanation for the shortages was the attempt by more conservative elements to block off Moscow. Part of the evidence for that was that, on one day, nine of the 10 oblasts that were supplying milk to Moscow stopped that supply as if that was a co-ordinated act on behalf of the traditional suppliers of milk to the capital. I am glad that the Government seem to be alert to that factor and will be ready to recognise the political implications of the selected supply systems. The Minister has already referred to the attempt by the EEC to set up co-ordinating and monitoring organisations.

Will the Minister ensure, so far as he is able, that the political implications of the distribution of food are carefully monitored in the Soviet Union? He has already referred to the nature of the bodies under article 2, and I hope that he will ensure that they have proper facilities to monitor that aid.

What is the British position about the tying of the credits to EC suppliers? I understand that there is some dispute within the EC about whether the food aid should be tied specifically to EC suppliers or whether it should be open. It is said that the British Government are on the side of having as open a system as possible, and we should be in that camp.

It appears from the documents that the European Community will pay for the transport costs of the food aid and the food provided under the credits unless the recipient country takes over the supply from within the Community. Why, taking up the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting and by the hon. Member for Thanet, North who sought to defend taxpayers, should that be the case? With regard to the transport of grain to ports, even if the supply is transported in Community ships, why should the local costs of the supply be taken over thereafter by the Soviet Union? The food is provided free and I wonder whether the transport position is as inflexible as it appears from the rules.

With regard to the last part of the motion about linkage with the pace and nature of reform within the Baltic republics, last week when I met responsible leaders within the three Baltic republics, they were all most grateful for the robust response of the European Community on 22 January. They feared that the understandable concentration of western Europe on the Gulf would have distracted attention from the plight of the Baltic states. They feared that there was the precedent of the Suez adventure and Hungary. They were therefore surprised and delighted at the swift European Community response on 22 January to the killings in Vilnius on 13 January and in Riga on 20 January.

The effect of linkage on the Soviet Union has a good precedent. The Minister is probably aware of the Jackson-Vannick amendment on the linking of the emigration of Soviet Jews to American assistance to the Soviet Union and the very important effect that that had on an important internal policy within the Soviet Union.

The Minister stated that delegations have been selected by the Soviet Union to begin discussions. I raised that point with Estonia leaders, for example, and although they accept that working groups have been established, they complain that Estonia—perhaps the most cautious and realistic of the Soviet republics—finds it difficult to get any response from their interlocutors within the central Government apparatus. They claim that there is no authority or mandate, and that it is impossible to obtain answers on that or any other matter from the Kremlin, which seems paralysed in its indecision. Perhaps the establishment of the working groups is not as favourable and as much of a step forward as the hon. and learned Gentleman suggests. There is evidence of the Kremlin taking a harder line towards the republics.

[Mr. Donald Anderson]

The Community's response is proper because the linkage has been made, and the stick is available to be used if necessary. No doubt the Prime Minister is, in his best diplomatic way, making that point clear to the Soviet Union.

Obviously we must maintain our human rights credentials in relation to the republics, but we must equally acknowledge the Soviet Union's legitimate concerns about a change within the Baltic republics that is too abrupt. We must recognise the Soviet Union's needs in terms of its national security, particularly at a time when we are seeing the dissolution of the Warsaw treaty framework.

We must recognise also the minority situation within the Baltic republics, and their economic importance to the Soviet Union—the port of Riga has been mentioned already. A balance must be struck.

We are very ready to endorse the broad line taken by the Government in relation to credit guarantees and technical co-operation. We shall monitor carefully the political situation in the Soviet Union, particularly in respect of the Baltic republics, and will frame our policy accordingly.

9.57 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am grateful to right hon. and hon. Members for their considerable support of the Government's position. I thank in particular the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) for his support of Government policy, but he will forgive me if I correct one error that he made. Projects under the PHARE programme are suggested not by Community member states but by the recipient Governments.

The hon. Gentleman asked me to detail the allocation of the projects granted to United Kingdom firms. I do not have those figures, and I do not believe that they are readily available. However, I will investigate that matter to see whether I can give the hon. Gentleman any guidance.

The hon. Member for Hamilton is concerned, for reasons I well understand, that the food programmes will not result in losses to the developing world. He probably fears that money going to eastern Europe might be at the expense of third world countries. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that assistance for central and eastern Europe is kept separate from, and is additional to, that given to the developing world. I hope that that reassures him.

I entirely agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) said about the needs of smaller countries in eastern Europe. As he said, it is easy to overlook those needs, especially when the countries concerned lack a vocal pressure group. My hon. Friend has done Bulgaria a service by urging its case with such eloquence; as he will know, President Zhelev was here two weeks ago, and that visit alone will have given an increased focus to the requirements of his country.

My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that, within the European Community, substantial sums are being sent, or have been sent, to Bulgaria: under the PHARE programme, £17·2 million went in the second half of 1990 alone. Of that, £11·2 million was for a support programme for agricultural reform and the promotion of private agriculture.

Sir Michael Marshall: That summary was very helpful. Given the spirit of accord that has prevailed tonight, it is only right that I should mention Gladstone—as the Liberals cannot help us there. There is a long and honourable parliamentary tradition in this regard, and I feel encouraged by what my hon. and learned Friend the Minister has said.

Mr. Hogg: I thank my hon. Friend. He also raised Bulgaria's wider financial needs, having in mind the effects of the Gulf crisis and the reform of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance. Those important issues are being addressed by the IMF and the G24 countries. As my hon. Friend knows, the Community plays a dominant and generous role within the G24, and the Economic and Finance Council will discuss EC financial help for Bulgaria during the year.

The hon. Member for Tooting made a number of substantial points. I assure him that many hon. Members have written to me suggesting that the Community's agricultural surpluses be sent to eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. We are now trying to avoid the accumulation of food stockpiles, and the Government—along with others—have worked hard to reduce the food mountain. But, if such surpluses exist, it surely makes sense to send them to the countries that need food most.

The hon. Gentleman made a powerful case for agricultural reform, and I agree with much of what he said. That is why PHARE projects concentrate on agricultural reform, among other things. In 1990, we committed for agricultural reform £70 million to Poland, £14 million to Hungary and £11·2 million to Bulgaria. Resources will be available to Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia during 1991, if they seek those resources.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) made an important point when he stressed the importance of President Gorbachev's contribution, not only to the Soviet Union but elsewhere in Europe. I agree with his view that no other Soviet leader has so far appeared who is likely to be a more effective proponent of the cause of reform. He is also right in saying that the west has a real investment in President Gorbachev: he listed a number of instances in which that was particularly true. I hope that he will forgive me for adding that our support cannot be unqualified or uncritical. Although I agree with most of what he said, I hope that he will understand that the Government can support Mr. Gorbachev only provided that he remains a reformer.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) drew on a wealth of personal experience from his visit to Romania with my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). Clearly, that was a particularly interesting visit. I am sure that my hon. Friend played a prominent role in whatever happened there, no doubt appearing on television and radio on many an occasion. Obviously, it was an invaluable experience for them both and the House is indebted to the hon. Gentleman for sharing it with us.

The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that, in addition to the medical aid for Romania and Bulgaria, which is the aid that we are discussing tonight, there has been other aid in the past, most notably £500,000 provided by Her Majesty's Government in 1990 and more than £9 million already provided through the European Community. As he knows, our contribution to EC expenditure is about 18 per cent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) raised several important points. The Council of

Ministers is, indeed, agreed that reform within the Soviet Union should be a condition of its receiving assistance under the programmes. That is why it sought close member state involvement in the disbursement of aid through a management committee of the kind that I have already described to the House. If there is a serious deterioration in conditions within the Soviet Union or elsewhere in eastern Europe, aid would be suspended.

We have secured Council of Ministers agreement to full monitoring of the Community's assistance to Romania. That is an essential condition of the European Community providing successful aid. In answer to the question about monitoring the help provided last year to Romanian orphanages, I am pleased to say that the Crown Agents were instrumental in ensuring that Community aid reached those who needed it most and for whom the European Community had sent it.

I agree profoundly with my hon. Friend that we are supporting reform. In one sense, it matters not who provides that policy of reform. Our objective is to support reform and our assistance is conditional on the provision of that reform.

The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) asked why no medical aid was included in the package of aid for the Soviet Union. I must give the honest answer that I do not know. I have been scratching my head and asking myself, not to say my officials, and I suspect that the truthful answer is that it was never raised. That may be a partial answer to the question whether there is a serious shortfall, or at least a perceived one, which may well be different, within the Soviet Union.

It is also more difficult to distribute medical aid directly to the needy. Food aid is one thing, medical aid is another. It is rather difficult to see how as a general proposition one could distribute medical aid other than through the established institutions of society.

The hon. Gentleman asked me to confirm that when embarking on a policy of distribution we would take into account the political implications of the methods used to make distribution. I can confirm that that is the case. The Council of Ministers decided that food credits should finance food from the European Community, although we would have agreed to finance some purchases from European countries.

The modalities of supply are still being worked out. That extends also to the transport arrangements, but if the Soviet Union is in a position to pay for the transport costs it seems rather difficult to see why it should not do so.

I trust that I have responded to most of the questions that I have been asked, and I thank right hon. and hon. Members for the support that they have given to the policy outlined in the documents.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 10880/90+COR1 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memoranda submitted by H. M. Treasury on 22nd February, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 26th February relating to extension of food assistance to the Soviet Union, Romania and Bulgaria and a credit facility for the Soviet Union and 4120/91 relating to revision of the financial perspective to finance technical assistance for the Soviet Union; and agrees with the Government that food aid to Romania and Bulgaria should be considered a priority; that any Community food aid given to the Soviet Union should be provided for humanitarian purposes; and that consideration of any other forms of Community help should take full account of developments in the Soviet Union and the Baltic States.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on motions Nos. 5 to 10 on the Order Paper.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Income Tax

That the draft Income Tax (Building Societies) (Annual Payments) Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 28th January, be approved.

Rating and Valuation

That the draft Electricity Generators (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 24th January, be approved.

Rating and Valuation

That the draft Scottish Hydro-Electric plc (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 24th January, be approved.

Rating and Valuation

That the draft Scottish Nuclear Limited (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 24th January, be approved.

Rating and Valuation

That the draft Scottish Power plc (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 24th January, be approved.

Northern Ireland

That the draft Food Safety (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 24th January, be approved.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.) and the Order [18th February].

Employment Protection

That the draft revised Code of Practice on time off for trade union duties and activities, which was laid before this House on 31st January, be approved.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

Energy Efficiency

That this House takes note of the European Community Document No. 10149/90, relating to the promotion of energy efficiency in the Community (SAVE programme); and supports the Government's intention of ensuring that it results in effective and properly co-ordinated measures in those areas where they are appropriate.

Community Research and Development

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 7057/90 relating to agricultural and agro-industrial research (1990-94); and endorses the Government's view that Community support for research in these areas should be given a high priority.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Question agreed to.

PIG HUSBANDRY BILL

Ordered,

**That it be an Instruction to the Committee on the Pig Husbandry Bill that it have power to make amendments to the Bill to extend the prohibitions contained in the Bill to all pigs and to tethering by any means.—*[*Mr. David Davis.*]

Roads (Greater Manchester)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

10.10 pm

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): This debate is entitled on the Order Paper "Roads in Manchester". I am glad to have the opportunity to point out to the Minister that that is a misprint. It should have read, "Roads in Greater Manchester". The Minister will know from private conversations that roads have been the subject of a great deal of controversy in my constituency and in the constituencies of other hon. Members. I refer of course to the Greater Manchester western and northern relief road, a subject with which the Minister has been made familiar over several months.

I hope that the Minister will accept that the wrong wording of the title was unintentional on my part, and that the courtesy that I have extended to him covers the point. I want to avoid being accused of the same devious tactics that the Department of Transport has practised thus far in this sorry affair.

The Greater Manchester western and northern relief road has caused great anger, partly because of the nature of the beast and partly because of the secrecy surrounding its promotion. The Minister and others have drawn attention to so-called leaks of information about possible routes. They have accused activists of blighting property and they have tried to draw a series of red herrings across the debate. I shall try to generate more light than heat by raking over the embers of this unfortunate tale.

The relief road first appeared in the public domain as a schematic dotted line that ran through the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" in June 1989. During the following summer recess, my studies of the document got me worried about the dotted line, which dissected my constituency through its most sensitive environmental part—the village of Worsley in particular. In short, it put a line through a conservation area.

I set about tabling a long series of parliamentary questions in the hope of finding out the Department's intentions. The answers to those questions were models of civil service-speak. Although answers were given, they were, in the now hackneyed phrase, given with a degree of economy with the truth. What I found most unacceptable was the notion that, while a £300 million relief road was in prospect, the widening of the existing M62 was the principal focus for Department of Transport planners. It was only when the existence of the A556 improvements came to my attention that the scale of the problem for my constituents became apparent. This is where the major deception arises.

I have never been given a satisfactory explanation by the Minister or his predecessor of why a major motorway should be planned in three distinct phases. I cannot escape the conclusion that it was done to deceive the public. That became clearer to me when I discovered that the first section, the M6 to the M56, which was billed as an improvement to the A556, went out to public consultation as long ago as 1 November 1989. People believed that they were being consulted about a localised road improvement scheme. They were not disabused of that view and it was not until January 1990, when my parliamentary questions became public knowledge, that the Department of

Transport's real intentions were recognised. The tactic became clear and later in my speech I shall deal with its subsequent refinement.

The strategy was to prosecute the plan in three stages. The southern section was to be first, followed by the northern section. Then the middle section, which affects my constituency, was to be built. As soon as the two outer sections, dealt with months apart, were determined, the controversial middle section would have had its start and finish thoroughly circumscribed. Thankfully, with the cat well and truly out of the bag in January 1990, opposition groups sprang up all along the route and they are now conducting an intelligent and energetic campaign of opposition to the Department's intentions. My thanks and those of my constituents are due to councillors Davies and Stirling, who are leading forces in the Residents Against the Motorway group, and to Chris Gray, Ian Bailey, John Spink, David Cowpe and Bob Boyd who are working in various ways to present local opposition to the destructive intent of the Department. Their efforts deserve to be placed on the record and I am pleased to do that.

Having dealt with the secrecy and duplicity of the Department, I now turn to the question of need. My view, which is shared by many, is that the motorway that the Department is keen to promote is entirely unnecessary. If the £300 million, which will no doubt be more than doubled by the time of completion, were to be given to the local authorities to enable them to organise their own traffic management schemes, one justification would be removed at a stroke. At the same time, it would help if the Minister were to invest through local authorities and the passenger transport executive in decent 21st century public transport.

It might make more sense if the Minister's colleague further down Marsham street, the Secretary of State for the Environment, stopped the crazy building of peripheral housing schemes to be filled with city commuters. It would certainly be more sensible if sites closer to city centres were made more attractive. That would breathe life into decaying urban areas and obviate the need for millions of car journeys a year. That, in turn, would prevent the vandalism that is being proposed and which has already caused so much anguish.

I have been asked many times recently, "Why more motorways?" Why put at risk what little remaining woodland and open space we have in the north-west? What has happened to the Government's professed adherence to green policies? The Minister is better placed than I to answer those questions, but it is my view that the problem of motorway demand lies firmly in the Department of Transport which is gripped by roads mania. The Department has 12,500 road planners and only 125 public transport planners. No wonder the solutions are always to build more roads.

These new roads and the extra traffic that they are supposed to accommodate will cause serious damage to the local and global environment and they will undermine any pretence by the Government to promote environmental protection measures. The full forecast of traffic increase will be generated only if the roads are built. I reject the need for this road, as do most of my constituents. Experience of the past 20 years or more tells us that this type of motorway will significantly injure the amenity of the area.

Experience tells us also that the Department of Transport is an extremely slippery customer in its dealings with the public. I have to refer only to the confidence trick that has been played on, and added to in dealings with, residents in the Farm lane area of my constituency. In the early 1960s, a bypass was built to avoid Eccles and Swinton. It was known always as the Eccles bypass. Over time plans changed or there were additions. That happened to such an extent that a fairly insignificant piece of road became part of the M62 trans-Yorkshire motorway. My constituents in the Farm lane area were never compensated properly for that construction, which took place by attrition. A bitter taste remains that will be significant in the battle to stop the latest piece of motorway madness.

I return briefly to leaks, information and disorientation. It is sad that much of the public knowledge of the Greater Manchester western and northern relief road has had to be gained through leaks. It is my duty, however, to puncture the official secrecy that exists, on whatever pretext that may be.

I freely admit that the latest piece of information does not affect my constituency, but it bears on the way in which the opposition is engaged. It is no secret that the protest groups to which I have referred are in regular contact. It is no secret also that each of them obtains information from a variety of sources, with sometimes surprising results. The latest piece of information is no exception. It seems that the consultants have produced an alternative route in one part of the northern section of the road. I understand that it includes a bizarre proposal to cut and cover through a neighbouring town.

I am interested in the politics that has led to an alternative route. I am certain that it involves an exercise in dividing the opposition. The intention is clear. The plan is to divide communities as much as possible all along the route and so dissipate the objections. This will not work. Throughout the route every constituency and every threatened part of each constituency contains a growing protest movement. The opposition is becoming more proficient and it seeks the same success as that which was enjoyed by objectors in London. The Minister knows about that because he represents a London constituency. After 10 years of struggle, massive motorway proposals were ditched, possibly for electoral reasons.

I shall conclude by posing four questions, which I hope the Minister will do his best to answer. First, when will the promised consultation with the public take place? Secondly, will there be an environmental impact assessment study? Thirdly, will the public be given choices of routes, and a further choice of no motorway at all? Fourthly, will the Minister contemplate my suggestion of improved public transport and local traffic management investment?

10.23 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Christopher Chope): I am pleased that the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) has given me the opportunity once again of returning to the subject of transport and road infrastructure in Greater Manchester. I am disappointed that he has exemplified in his remarks his belief in the great conspiracy theory, in the dubious tactics of the Department of Transport, in secrecy, in disorientation, in duplicity and in confidence tricks. Those are all terms and

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

words that the hon. Gentleman used. They demonstrate that the hon. Gentleman is given to a certain amount of self-deception on those important issues.

I shall remind the House, including the hon. Gentleman, that the proposals for a Greater Manchester northern and western relief road are still at an early stage. The leaks that have taken place have been counter-productive in creating much unnecessary blight. The hon. Member was present on 17 December when I responded to the debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg), whom I am delighted to see in the Chamber this evening. Obviously I have to cover some of the same ground that I covered then because the two constituencies are almost adjoining and are served largely by the same road network.

The major roads within the Worsley area are the M63 and M62 motorways, which together form the western section of the Manchester outer ring road. However the M62 fulfils a dual purpose. As part of the ring road it provides a route between the major centres of population in the Greater Manchester area. In addition, it forms an important link across the Pennines, connecting the three conurbations of Merseyside, Greater Manchester and west Yorkshire. The route occupies a fundamental place in our transportation network, carrying high volumes of traffic with a significant proportion being goods vehicles. This need to satify two discrete functions—as a long distance through route and as a more local distributor—has led to poor conditions for traffic, which are continuing to deteriorate. Delays, frustration, congestion and accidents are, I regret, far too commonplace.

The hon. Member for Worsley referred to a spurious analogy with the assessment studies in London. The hon. Gentleman is wrong in assuming that I represent a London constituency—I used to have the privilege of leading a London borough. The problems of ensuring that through traffic is taken out of London were resolved by the establishment of the M25, which is the largest and most effective bypass anywhere in the country. The roads that we are discussing in this debate fulfil a similar function around Manchester, at the same time enabling vehicles to travel from the Manchester conurbation and Merseyside across the Pennines to Yorkshire.

I have much that I could say about other issues in Manchester, but it is appropriate that I come to the principal issue which the hon. Gentleman raised, which was the M62. Our major study into the trans-Pennine route and the need for further capacity to relieve the M62 is well known. We expect to receive a consultant's report in the spring and an announcement will be made as soon as we have had the chance to consider the report's findings and recommendations.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): As my hon. Friend knows well, I am strongly opposed to all these planned motorway routes and am extremely concerned at the delay taking place in this consultation process and any inquiry which may be necessary. Many of my constituents find that their homes are completely blighted as a result of the route through the Whitefield part of my constituency, and, as the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) said, another route is proposed through Radcliffe. Can my hon. Friend give me any assurance about when the consultation process will take place so that my constituents will know where they stand and also when there will be an inquiry if that is necessary? Until then my constituents cannot sell their homes and are facing the gravest possible difficulties.

Mr. Chope: We have not yet reached the stage of a consultation, because we have not yet published any proposals. Certain potential proposals which were being discussed on an informal, tentative and confidential basis with local authorities were leaked. As a result, they have been given a spurious authority which they should not properly enjoy, which has led people to think that there should be an early consultation.

My Department only consults on specific proposals, and it only brings forward proposals after the most careful consideration. It is only after such consideration that we can make clear proposals, after which I promise my hon. Friend that we shall consult on them as quickly as possible.

Mr. Lewis: Does not the Minister accept that 33 organisations—not just local authorities—were consulted? That is significant because some of us know where the leaks came from, and they did not come from local authorities. Does not the Minister also accept that as soon as "Roads for Prosperity" was understood—followed by a report on roads that gave more detail about it—whole districts became blighted? In my constituency, Worsley village became totally blighted because those two documents could be interpreted only as sending a brand new motorway through a small area that was already well and truly covered by motorways. Does not the Minister accept that proposition?

Mr. Chope: I do not accept that proposition. In "Roads for Prosperity" we stated our view that a new road was needed in the district. Consultants were then appointed to think about the proposals which, when properly considered by my Department, would, if deemed appropriate, be brought forward for public consultation. But the hon. Gentleman should recognise that many ideas for new roads are never brought forward for public consultation. If, prior to the plans being rejected without seeing the light of day, the public had seen them, that would have caused an enormous amount of unnecessary anguish for people who would have thought that their properties were threatened by them, even though the plans were never brought forward for consultation.

It is not for me to question the hon. Gentleman's motives, but he may have political motives. The consequence of premature disclosure of information put forward on a confidential basis—a system that operates effectively throughout the country—has resulted in much blight on the homes of people living in the district, which I very much regret.

The announcement on the consultant's report of the trans-Pennine route will be made as soon as we have had a chance to consider the report's findings and recommendations. Those are not expected to affect the case for undertaking improvements to the M62 or for the proposed Greater Manchester western and northern relief road. It is important to make that clear at the outset.

As the hon. Gentleman may be aware, we are just completing works on the M62 at Worsley between junctions 12 and 14. That is major resurfacing work, needed to repair a motorway that was simply worn out. I see that the hon. Gentleman is nodding in recognition of that fact. The road is worn out because it is so heavily used

by traffic. That is a sign of the pressures on the present motorway network in the Manchester district, which has some of the oldest sections of motorway in the country.

The proposed improvements to the M62 between junctions 12 and 18 are an interim measure only. They will not deal with forecast traffic growth. The relief road is designed to supplement, not replace, the M62 which, along that section, carries 130,000 vehicles a day. That amount of traffic is comparable with the busiest sections of the M25. In addition, completion of the outer ring road will not obviate the need for a new road. Constructon of the final section from Denton to Middleton will have no significant effect on flows on the M62 west of junction 18, and so will not affect the need for the relief road.

The hon. Gentleman attacked the Government for investing in new roads, but he is as aware as anybody that his hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) has been campaigning for the early completion of the circular motorway round Manchester because he knows that, by investing in that motorway, much-needed relief will be given to his constituents. That confirms the odd attitude of Opposition Members to investment in new roads.

Mr. Lewis *rose——*

Mr. Chope: No, I shall not give way.

We must look closer at the options for widening, particularly in the Worsley area, and to what extent that work may be accommodated within the general limits of the existing highway. We shall then determine what form any consultation about the widening should take. I hope to be able to make an announcement on at least part of that work later in the year.

The high levels of traffic to which I have referred are the result of increased levels of economic activity and prosperity. Traffic flows are predicted to grow by up to one third by the end of the 1990s and could well double by 2020. A responsible Government must face those forecasts and respond. Congestion reduces the efficiency and reliability of road transport for industry, and increases costs to consumers. It is also harmful to the environment, as slow-moving vehicles burn more fuel and therefore give off greater quantities of harmful emissions.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that the Government are interested in not just investment in roads, but investment in public transport and its infrastructure. In Manchester we already have good examples of that investment in practice with the metrolink and the construction of the second terminal at Manchester airport with its new rail link. The metrolink is the first, new street-running rail system for three decades and the Government are proud to be contributing more than £50 million to it. Manchester airport is Britain's third largest after Heathrow and Gatwick.

Mr. Lewis: We should be thinking about the next phase of the metrolink now. Some of us believe that that system should be brought out to places such as Worsley, as that would save a lot of unnecessary car journeys.

The M62 is worn out at the specific junctions to which the Minister referred because of the old specifications that were used. If we intend to reline and resurface motorways to new specifications, they should be adequate to deal with the existing levels of traffic.

Mr. Chope: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is already thinking ahead about further development of the metrolink. It is unrealistic to think that such investment could be a substitute for investment in the major road artery between Merseyside, the Greater Manchester conurbation and west Yorkshire. No one would be forgiving of a Government who ignored the obvious trends of increased traffic in that area and did not try to find a solution to that difficult problem. The Government recognise those problems.

We do not yet have proposals for the new road that we can submit for public consultation. Once proposals are published for consultation purposes, there will be ample opportunity for people to visit exhibitions, ask questions and give their views. I again give an assurance to the House that no firm decision on the scheme will be taken until public consultation has been held. That consultation process gives people the earliest practicable opportunity to have a say in the development of the scheme. We put great value on the views presented at this stage, which is in addition to the statutory opportunities for public input that will arise later. It is at that later stage, when orders are published, that statutory rights of objection may lead to consideration of the scheme at a local public inquiry before an independent inspector.

It is only after the Department's most careful considerations that we submit a draft route for public consultation. It is only after the most exhaustive procedures that we finally decide on a route. The hon. Member for Worsley and his constituents and my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South and his constituents will have ample opportunity to participate to the full in that detailed consultation process.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 5 March 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

STANDARD LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY BILL *[Lords]*
Read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

LONDON UNDERGROUND (NO. 2) BILL
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 7 March.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

General Practitioners

1. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health by how much the number of support staff for general practitioners has changed since 1979.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): The number of staff in England covered by the practice staff scheme has risen from 20,100 in 1979 to 44,800 at October 1990. That represents an increase of 123 per cent.

Mr. Stewart: I thank my hon. Friend for that valuable information, which belies the suggestion by Opposition Members that we are cutting services in the national health service. How many practice nurses are there in the Nottingham health authority area and how do they help patients?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is right that it gives the lie to the suggestion that we are cutting the service. It also emphasises the extent to which we are investing in primary health care. My hon. Friend will be interested to know that we now employ 164 practice nurses in Nottinghamshire and that the family health services authority that covers Ribble Valley employs 84 practice nurses—an increase of 290 per cent. since 1985.

Trade Unions

2. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has discussed policy matters relating to the NHS with trade unions over the last 12 months.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. William Waldegrave): Yes, Sir. I met the TUC health services committee earlier today.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Secretary of State confirm that pay rates for ancillary staff in the NHS are as much as £20 a week less than those paid by local authorities for very similar work? How can that be justified? Instead of squandering taxpayers' money supporting private health schemes, will the right hon. Gentleman, in the offer that he will be making on 22 March to the trade unions, direct a little of that money towards recompensing health service workers for their low pay?

Mr. Waldegrave: I should not wish to draw any conclusions about the employment practices of local authorities or the health service from that comparison, but I have made it clear that, within whatever settlement can be afforded this year, we hope to steer some resources towards the lowest paid.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the record of the NHS trade unions in not being able to negotiate sensible rates of pay for the lowest earners among their members is a sign that big national pay bargaining systems do not work in the best interests of employees and that the sooner they find more efficient trade unionists to represent them and look to local pay bargaining, the better it will be for everybody?

Mr. Waldegrave: I strongly agree with the latter part of the question. Indeed, the figures show that national pay bargains do not produce the best results for employees and that if we could move towards local deals and more flexibility, everyone would benefit, especially the low paid.

Mr. Robin Cook: May I ask the right hon. Gentleman in a bipartisan spirit whether, during his discussions on policy this morning with the trade unions, there was an opportunity for them to congratulate him on today's reports that he is resisting an extension of private medical insurance? Will he confirm that the current relief scheme for the elderly has produced a tax hand-out for those who are existing clients, but no increase in the number of pensioners who can afford it, even in the Ribble Valley? Will he now admit that the scheme is wholly irrelevant to the health needs of the elderly, so that we may both go into the next election with a commitment to scrap it?

Mr. Waldegrave: That matter did not come up in the interesting talks that I had this morning, but it is true that a large number of trade unions and unionists have sought private health care without needing any incentive to do so.

Cervical Screening

3. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of general practitioners are receiving target payments for cervical screening.

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): On 1 April 1990, 88 per cent. of general practitioners qualified for a target payment for cervical screening. I congratulate all those involved on this excellent achievement.

Mr. Conway: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that helpful reply. Obviously, the figures are encouraging. My hon. Friend will be aware that, especially in rural areas, such a degree of screening can be difficult. What are the percentage figures for the Shropshire family health service authority and what can we do to encourage it?

Mrs. Bottomley: In the Shropshire family health service authority 99 per cent. of GPs qualified for a target

payment. That was a substantial achievement. Shropshire is one of 24 family health service authorities that managed to achieve that level.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Although I welcome the reasonably high overall percentage, is it true that in inner cities there is still a low take-up? What is being done to encourage a higher take-up?

Mrs. Bottomley: Some notable inner cities have made remarkable strides. For example, all Barnsley's GPs are claiming target payments for cervical cytology and child immunisation. In recognition of the needs of inner cities, for the first time the Government have made deprivation payments to inner-city GPs. We have made it clear that we want health opportunities for those in the less-advantaged areas to be as good as those in the more-advantaged areas.

Mr. Sims: Does my hon. Friend recall the fuss made by some general practitioners and their professional bodies when the contract was proposed? Does she agree that the figures that she has given to the House suggest that their fears and objections were illfounded? Can she tell us the extent to which target figures have been met in respect of child immunisation and vaccination?

Mrs. Bottomley: I endorse my hon. Friend's point. I refer him to remarks by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who said that the figures were quite heroic. Many GPs thought that they would not be able to achieve them. We have seen remarkable progress in increased immunisation, vaccination and cervical cytology. At last the NHS is a health service rather than a disease service and is preventing illness.

Ms. Harman: Does the Minister agree that as well as getting more women to come forward for screening, it is important for the results to be conveyed to them promptly? One in three health authorities reports that it is unable to meet the target of getting the results back to the GP within a month. How does the Minister propose to ensure that health authorities can meet that target? Does she agree that it is unfair that women who are screened privately can get their results within a week, whereas women who are screened in the national health service sometimes have to wait for three months?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Lady is right that any backlog in waiting for the result of the test is unsatisfactory. We make it clear that we want the result within a month and two out of three authorities are achieving that target. The average for authorities that are not making the results known within a month is seven weeks and we want them to do better. The hon. Lady is always the first to condemn her own health authority. She will be pleased to know that the waiting time there is three weeks.

Regional Pay Bargaining

4. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to introduce regional pay bargaining to the NHS.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government's objective over recent years has been progressively to introduce greater flexibility in order to allow local managers to relate pay rates to local conditions and to reward individual performance. That process is continuing.

Mr. Evans: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that local pay bargaining is all about incentives and about giving managers the total resources to look after their workers? Local managers know exactly what local people want. Our policy is in stark contrast to that of the Labour party, which talks about care, talks about the national health service, talks about patients, talks about doctors and talks about nurses, but at the end of the day its policy is about union power and a return to beer and sandwiches at No. 10.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is right to point to the importance of pay as a key question facing national health service managers. Pay represents over 70 per cent. of NHS expenditure. It is absurd to ask a manager to use the resources within his control as effectively as possible while at the same time saying that he has no discretion over the way in which 70 per cent. of those resources are used.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The Minister has given a commitment that in areas like the highlands, which are rural and spread out, the health service will be as good as in any urban area. How does he square that with saying that we will have local pay bargaining in communities where jobs are hard to find? Does not it mean that if wages in the health service are lower in those areas, it will not attract nurses and other ancillary workers?

Mr. Dorrell: What it means is that we are committed to delivering a high-quality health care service throughout the country, investing in managers the powers necessary to allow them to deliver that in the locality for which they are responsible.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: I thank my hon. Friend for the steps that he has taken to break up national pay bargaining, which is so beloved of the trade unions which Opposition Members serve. I suggest to him that the current system of national pay bargaining, with its attempted alleviation through London allowance and the like, is very unfair to boroughs on the fringes of such allowance areas such as Gravesham. With that increased flexibility, will my hon. Friend ensure that the funding goes with it to particular areas to reflect local employment costs?

Mr. Dorrell: As my hon. Friend knows, funding will reflect the weighted capitation formula through the regional health authorities. We are talking about discretion in the hands of managers over the way in which those resources are used. We envisage an evolutionary process which involves not the overnight demolition of traditional structures but the progressive introduction of greater flexibility, to ensure that the service meets the aspirations that we all have for it.

Drugs

6. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has received any representations regarding the prescribing of high-cost drugs; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes, Sir. We have received some representations. All doctors are free to prescribe high-cost drugs. The extent to which hospital doctors do so is

governed by how they choose to spend their share of the increasing resources being made available to the NHS, in the light of local health care priorities.

Mr. Illsley: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for that reply. Is he aware that even now there are problems with the prescribing of certain drugs to children, especially child growth hormones? Is he further aware that a conference was held on Monday to try to determine the future prospects for prescribing such drugs? Children in my area are still being denied drugs which are necessary to them because of cuts in funding in the run-up to 1 April. Will he urgently consider organising a new basis for the prescription of such drugs?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am aware of the continuing pressures and I believe that there will always be such pressure in the national health service, whatever the level of funding. If by special measures the hon. Member means that all decisions should be centralised, as some of my hon. Friends have urged on me, I think that that would be wrong. It would mean that a group of doctors in the Department of Health would take away local clinical decisions and that would be wrong. This has to be a matter in which those in hospitals use their clinical judgment to make the best decision for the patient against the other competing claims which will always be made of them.

Dame Jill Knight: Is my right hon. Friend aware that pharmacists believe that there is still much over-prescribing of drugs by GPs and that positively millions of pounds worth of unused drugs lie on the shelves of British bathroom cupboards? Will he continue to fight waste in all departments of the NHS, especially this one?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Against the predictions made, the indicative drug prescribing scheme is already saving unnecessary prescribing. The newspapers this week carried a story which I must draw to the attention of hon. Members, as it is not always the latest and most expensive drugs which turn out to be the best for patients. The story concerned a rival series of heart drugs, but, as the companies involved are suing each other, I had better be careful about what I say. I agree with my hon. Friend that we must be careful to root out waste. My bathroom cupboard certainly has too many unused drugs in it.

Dr. Kim Howells: Does the Secretary of State agree that some of the most expensive drugs are those of the steroid family, which are used as preventive medicine in the treatment of asthma? He will know that 2,000 young people die of asthma each year and it has been estimated that 80 per cent. of those deaths could have been avoided, had the illness been properly diagnosed and the disease treated with the right steroid drugs. Will he ensure that proper diagnosis is made and that treatment is given not on the basis of cost but on the basis of the need to save lives, especially young lives?

Mr. Waldegrave: Of course, that is the criterion on which decisions are made. I agree that it is disturbing that asthma is one of the diseases that are currently on the increase, for reasons that are not fully understood. I also agree that early diagnosis is important: if that will help—along with the primary health care measures that we are introducing—steps can be taken that are much cheaper and much more effective than later treatment.

Mr. Michael Morris: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the success of PACT—prescription analysis and costs—has provided the major savings in GP prescribing, rather than the indicative drug budget scheme? In view of those savings, is not it time to consider prescribing specialist hospital products to meet the commitment made by my right hon. Friend's predecessor that patients will have every drug that they need and that it will not be left to consultants to make clinical judgments based on the resources available to their regional or district health authorities?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with my hon. Friend that PACT has played a large part in the current developments, although in due course he will find the indicative drug budget scheme helpful, too. I caution him that there will always be difficult clinical decisions for doctors and clinicians to make. Drugs are not of themselves in a different category from other expensive forms of treatment —for example, those that involve high capital-cost equipment.

Mr. Wareing: Have any of the representations made to the Secretary of State concerned benzodiazepines? They still seem to present a considerable problem, despite the number of circulars that have been sent out. Is not it high time that legislation was introduced to control the prescribing and re-prescribing of dangerous drugs which are addictive and are causing more havoc than cure in the health service?

Mr. Waldegrave: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we strongly sympathise with his anxiety. I am not sure that legislation is the best way forward; it would be difficult to frame. This is the sort of problem which the indicative drug prescribing scheme is aimed to deal with and we continue to press for it to be properly addressed.

Natural Medicines

7. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when his medicines review committee will report on the natural medicines licence fee system; and what increase in fees he proposes in the meantime.

Mr. Dorrell: The Medicines Control Agency is undertaking a full review of the licensing fee structure and will be issuing a consultation document shortly. We are not proposing an interim increase in fees.

Mr. Colvin: Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that the manufacturers of natural medicines tend to be small businesses with a large number of medicines to license? High fees, and the high costs involved in obtaining licences, could drive the smaller manufacturers out of business, cutting consumer choice and possibly pushing up the cost of natural medicines. I am sure that that is not my hon. Friend's intention, but can he give the House a guarantee that the new system will not have that undesirable result?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is right that it is no part of our intention to drive the small companies providing such remedies out of business. As he will know, the points that he made have been put during the review to which I referred and they will, of course, be taken into account when the report is published.

Mr. Corbett: Will the Minister reconsider the answer that he has just given and acknowledge that an increasing number of people choose to use natural alternative medicines? It would do the health service and all who make that choice no service at all to ladle unwarranted extra costs on to those who provide the alternative medicines.

Mr. Dorrell: It is precisely because I accept the force of the consumer choice argument that the hon. Gentleman advances—slightly improbably—that I told my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) that we were receptive to what he was saying.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Is my hon. Friend aware that some manufacturers of herbal and homeopathic products, such as Weleda, make no fewer than 2,000 such products, and that to impose on them a flat-rate licence system, rather than one based on turnover, would place burdens on them that could drive some products from the market?

Mr. Dorrell: We recognise the force of that argument and it is being taken into account in the review, which will shortly lead to a report.

Health Authorities

8. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the number of health authorities currently in deficit.

Mr. Waldegrave: The latest figures that I have show 59 district health authorities spending at a higher rate than their regular income. Almost all districts will have corrected this by the end of the year.

Mr. Cunliffe: Is the Secretary of State aware that there are conflicting reports about the figures that he cited? In a recent survey of community health councils, 92 per cent. agreed that nine out of every 10 district health authorities were seriously underfunded and had been forced to make cuts in essential services. They agreed that that mammoth task was being imposed on them as a result of unrealistic budgets.

Is the Secretary of State aware of the position in the north-west of England—in particular, in the Greater Manchester area, where, at the Royal Manchester children's hospital, implant ear operations for tinnitus sufferers have had to be suspended? Budgetary controls have forced that hospital not to perform the £46,000 ear operation: the district health authority has had to cut its income.

Will the Secretary of State take note of that and stop asking our health authorities to run hospital services like a chain of supermarkets——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is enough.

Mr. Cunliffe *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that this is not an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Waldegrave: I missed the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's speech, but his general drift does not entirely coincide with the figures from the Wigan district health authority area which show that waiting lists are falling and that the number of long waits has fallen markedly. The hon. Gentleman was referring to the telephone poll of some community health councils arranged by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). I do not deny that some district health authorities are under pressure to balance their budgets, but if Opposition Members think that bad management and inefficient financial management are in the interests of patients, they are wrong.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I appreciate my right hon. Friend's rational reply, but does he accept that there is a problem and that many more health authorities would be in deficit had they not closed beds and wards at a time when there are people who need to go into hospital for treatment and when hospital theatres and many excellent consultants are available for much-needed operations?

Mr. Waldegrave: Where a budget is overrun, action has to be taken to correct the deficit and sometimes the action is not the most efficient in terms of using that hospital's resources. It would be wholly unfair to the great majority of districts throughout the country which are balancing their books properly if those which overran were allowed to pre-empt resources from them.

Mr. Robin Cook: Does not the Secretary of State realise that it is not deficits that damage patient care, but the cuts that are made to avoid deficits? If he is in any doubt about that, will he accept my invitation to visit the accident department at King's College hospital where, last night, 11 patients spent the whole night on trolleys and where, this afternoon, there are 18 emergency cases on trolleys because more than 100 beds were shut at that hospital to avoid deficit? Is balancing the books really worth that indignity and that delay in patient care?

Mr. Waldegrave: Encouraging bad management is strongly against the interests of patients. There is a well-understood problem at the accident and emergency department at King's, but the latest figures show that about half the surgery being done at that hospital is non-emergency surgery—elective surgery. That shows that the hospital is not under as much pressure as the hon. Gentleman suggested.

Prescription Charges

9. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received to extend the exemption from NHS prescription charges on medical grounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has received regular correspondence on exemption from prescription charges since 1968 when prescription charges were reintroduced by the Wilson Government.

Mr. Sumberg: Is not it about time that we considered the very strict criteria that apply to those exemptions? In particular, will my hon. Friend consider exempting treatment for Parkinson's disease? Parkinson's disease is a chronic condition, the patients always deteriorate and a very high drug bill is required to treat it. It is about time that we reconsidered exemptions for Parkinson's disease and for one or two other diseases.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend has been assiduous in pressing the case for Parkinson's disease victims. However, the case that he must answer is that to take the course that he espouses would mean channelling resources to people who are, by definition, not those on the lowest incomes. At the moment, any Parkinson's disease sufferer on a low income receives free prescriptions. When discussing

prescription charges, we should remember that individual prescription charges are now paid on only one item in every five that are dispensed.

Mr. Eastham: Is it not a fact that low-income families are suffering real financial hardship because when they take their prescriptions to the chemists those prescriptions cost more than £3 each while at one time under a Labour Government the cost was 20p?

Mr. Dorrell: Low-income families are entitled to exemption. In 1979 under Labour, two items out of every five rather than one in five carried a prescription charge. In 1968 the figure was three in five. The number of prescriptions carrying charges has been falling sharply since Labour left office.

Mr. Paice: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most important facilities for people with constant demands on drugs is the ability to buy an annual prescription under which the maximum charge for anyone in any one year, however serious the problem, is about £40?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is exactly right. The season ticket system is designed to address the problem of those people who have a regular need for drugs and for whom an individual prescription charge would represent a significant burden. No one need pay more than the total cost of the season ticket for an individual drug need.

Care in the Community

10. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what fresh initiatives he plans to take to ensure that elderly and disabled people receive a high standard of care in the community.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Local authorities will be introducing the new inspection and complaints arrangements as the first part of the Government's community care policies in April.

Mr. Michael: Is that really the best that the Minister can do? Does she not realise that having promised care in the community, the Government have failed to ring-fence it, delayed its implementation for three years and now appear to be about to abandon it altogether? Does she not also realise that we want care in the community now for those people—the number of whom is increasing—who are already in the community? It is about time that the Minister made way and allowed the Secretary of State to promise us real care in the community for the people who need it now.

Mrs. Bottomley: Frankly, the soap box will get nowhere in terms of producing effective community care. The policy is on course with implementation. In April we are moving ahead with complaints, with inspection, with special help for drug and alcohol abusers, with extra care for the mentally ill and a very substantial increase in money for training. Local authorities and health authorities are working with voluntary organisations and the private sector to make a real success of this popular and important policy which now needs to be implemented with care and detail with the extra resources that we have made available.

Mrs. Currie: Does my hon. Friend realise that there are real fears in Derbyshire about the funding for care in the community being switched from the central Government to Derbyshire county council, which has already declared its opposition to placing any money with the private sector, particularly in relation to private residential homes? Does she also accept that it might not be a good idea to make that switch when we are seriously considering abolishing the county council altogether? Would it not be better, if the money is to be shifted from central Government, to give it to the health authorities which we know and trust to do a good job?

Mrs. Bottomley: Derbyshire county council could well take to heart the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister speaking at the local government conference on Saturday. He said that in local government we need

"less paper and more action. Less empire-building and more innovation; less government and more service."

A local authority like Derbyshire, which believes that there is great virtue in providing a home help for one in three people aged over 75 and not charging any of them for that, must think again. We are committed to the implementation of care in the community. It is important to achieve value for money and to consult users and carers. It is good policy which makes sense and it will bring an end to the warehousing of those with disadvantages and it will treat them with dignity and privacy in their own homes. We shall certainly ensure that all local authorities understand the realities of the policy and exercise the disciplines that are necessary in taking that care forward.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister recall that when the Government decided not to implement in full the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, the reason given was that they were pressing ahead with care in the community legislation? Now that that has been delayed for up to another two years before any benefit comes through, surely the Government should implement now—and in full—the 1986 Act?

Mrs. Bottomley: It would be a travesty for the hon. Gentleman to think that no action has been taken on care in the community for two years. A great deal of work has been carried out by local authorities and health authorities to improve their assessment procedures, to ensure that they bring forward their community care plans—and, especially, in keeping with the spirit of the Act to which the hon. Gentleman referred—to ensure that the users and carers are given the consideration that they require. Part VII of the Act deals with the policy being introduced by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the mental illness care programme for proper procedures for those discharged from hospital.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my hon. Friend agree that the most disadvantaged in society—the elderly, the disabled and the sick—suffer most from waste and inefficiency? Does she also agree that high standards in community care require good management, not the practices of loony left Labour councils?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is right. I am sure that he is well aware that in his speech on Saturday, the Prime Minister said that the Opposition often think that the answer to every problem is to appoint an officer, whereas we believe that often the answer is to dis-appoint an officer.

We want to achieve value for money, to introduce good community care policies of the type toward which many health and local authorities are already making excellent progress. I pay a warm tribute to all of them and to the way in which they have collaborated with our draft guidance and have taken part in consultations to ensure that they have the practical tools to undertake their new responsibilities.

Mr. Rooker: Does the Minister accept that if the policy was as good as she claims it is, it would have received overwhelming support from both sides of the House if it had not been abandoned but had been implemented? Does not she also accept that there is now abundant independent evidence that the cost of delaying the implementation of care in the community far outweighs the benefits in both financial and human terms and puts a continuing strain on the carers and the cared for? The Secretary of State himself expressed that view to the Select Committee on Health only a few days ago. All parties have wanted to end the uncertainty surrounding the policy since the Audit Commission's report of December 1986. We shall expect full support from both sides of the House when we announce implementation in April 1992 after the summer election.

Mrs. Bottomley: I very much hope that no local authority or health authority is under the misapprehension peddled by the hon. Gentleman. A great deal of work is already under way. Implementation begins on 1 April this year. With that in mind, we have increased the training available to local authorities by 20 per cent. this year to enable them to spend £35 million on training. We have increased the standard spending assessment for local authorities by 23·5 per cent., which is the largest increase in social service spending for 15 years.

Mr. Rowe: Does my hon. Friend accept that one of the great inhibitions to giving good community care to the elderly and the disabled is the accommodation in which they frequently have to live? Will she speak to her hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning to add her weight and that of her Department to the efforts of those who are trying to get builders to build new houses with level access and many other features which are beneficial to the elderly and the disabled?

Mrs. Bottomley: I appreciate, as ever, my hon. Friend's constructive remarks. We are now at the stage in the development of care in the community at which practical and innovative schemes must be arranged, often between departments of local government and between local government and health authorities, with the voluntary and private sectors. My hon. Friend will be aware that in Committee, our hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), the Minister for Housing and Planning, constantly referred to the need to collaborate with housing authorities. He joined me only the other day for a discussion about the way to carry forward collaboration between social services departments, health authorities and housing departments. We have met a number of local authorities to talk precisely through the practical ways in which they can ensure that schemes such as that to which my hon. Friend refers can make progress.

Newham District General Hospital

11. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will visit Newham in order to discuss the delay in constructing phase three of the Newham district general hospital.

Mr. Dorrell: I have no immediate plans to visit Newham.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Minister recall that last October, a deputation from Newham district health authority came to see him and that he said that he would write? Does he also recall that, after a reminder last month, he wrote a letter of one and a half pages which did not even mention Newham hospital? Does he agree that funding urgently required medical facilities by the assumed value of land—if it is not sold—is not sensible? In view of the fact that there was a £12 billion budget surplus last year, is not such an approach at worst morally indefensible and at best politically inept?

Mr. Dorrell: I well understand the disappointment felt by the hon. Gentleman's constituents as a result of the cancellation of phase three of Newham hospital. The purpose of my letter to him was to try to discourage him from falling into a slough of despond and to remind him that all is not lost with the national health service in his district. The number of patients waiting for over a year, for example, has decreased by 10 per cent. over the last 12 months for which figures are available. The number of day cases has increased by 8 per cent. and the number of completed hospital stays has increased by 6 per cent. We have announced the approval of an initial practice allowance for two general practices in his area and we have encouraged the health authorities to work with the private sector and with the London Docklands development corporation to provide primary health care facilities in his constituency. All is not lost.

GP Target Payments

12. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of general practitioners are receiving the higher target payments for cervical screening in the south-west region.

14. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of general practitioners are receiving the higher target payments for childhood immunisation and vaccination in the south-west region.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As at 1 April 1990, 79 per cent. of general practitioners in the south western region qualified for higher target payments for cervical screening, and for childhood immunisation and vaccination. I congratulate all those involved on this excellent achievement.

Mr. Sayeed: Does my hon. Friend agree that although cost-benefit analysis shows that not all preventive medicine is worth the resources spent on it, cervical screening is an area in which money is well spent? That shows clearly one of the benefits to patients of the new general practitioner contract.

Mrs. Bottomley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is exactly right. About 2,000 deaths a year occur as a result of cervical cancer. It is estimated that 80 per cent. of those

could be saved by regular cervical cancer screening. It is a practical example of the success of the general practitioner contract, which is providing not only more services to women, such as well-woman clinics and health promotion clinics, and more services for all the family, such as child surveillance and minor surgery, but improved availability of and accessibility to general practitioners.

Mr. Knapman: Does my hon. Friend accept that she has given another clear example of the steps that the Government are taking towards improving the health of young children?

Mrs. Bottomley: I do, indeed, on a number of fronts. Children are now saved from avoidable diseases from which there was no redress in days gone by. The number of mothers dying in childbirth has halved and the number of children surviving at birth has never been higher. I can inform my hon. Friend that the safest place to be born now is Huntingdon, where there is a record figure of 5·8 per 1,000 perinatal mortality.

Waiting Lists

13. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to bring about a reduction in hospital waiting lists.

Mr. Waldegrave: The NHS management executive is agreeing tough targets for the reduction of long waits with all 14 regional health authorities. We are also continuing the special waiting list fund in 1991-92 with an extra £35 million to help health authorities reduce the number of patients who wait excessively.

Mr. Bidwell: What kind of national health service are the Government running when patients waiting for surgical treatment, such as hip replacements, are told that they may have to wait for years in some parts of the country but that if they come to London, they can get the job done in a matter of weeks if they are prepared to pay for it? That is forcing poor people to have a whip round among their families to afford the necessary treatment. We are returning to the days before the existence of the national health service, which some of us can still remember setting out to change.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has raised that subject, as the waiting lists in his health authority have been tumbling. The total waiting lists in Ealing health authority have fallen by 43 per cent. according to the most recent figures available, and Ealing has almost entirely abolished, by an 86 per cent. drop, its long-term waiting lists. That is one example among many of the progress that is being made and the care that we are taking not to slip back to the days when the Labour party was running the health service.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday, 5 March.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is in Moscow having bilateral discussions with President Gorbachev.

Mr. Michie: Will the Lord President admit that, if the Ribble Valley borough council had been given the £1,192 per poll tax payer that was received in Wandsworth—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about Lambeth? Start again."] I shall start again. Will the Lord President admit that, if Ribble Valley borough council had been given the same £1,192 per poll tax payer, Ribble Valley constituents would have saved £225 per head?

Mr. MacGregor: Ribble Valley is a district council so cannot be compared with the borough that the hon. Gentleman has in mind. Ribble Valley received much less than the adjoining Preston borough council and its community charge is 70p per week compared with £1·40 in Preston. Moreover, Ribble Valley community charge payers will benefit in many other ways. If the hon. Gentleman is trying to compare Ribble Valley's community charge with the minimum community charge in London, I must point out that the London borough of Wandsworth has an external support grant per adult of £1,192, compared with Lambeth's £1,557. He will know that there is a phenomenal difference in the community charge between boroughs.

Sir John Stokes: In view of the large and growing number of hoax bomb calls, does my right hon. Friend think that the present maximum penalty of three months' imprisonment is sufficient for such a serious and dangerous offence?

Mr. MacGregor: I believe that the matter is being looked at not only by the Government but British Telecom. I agree about the importance of dealing with hoax phone calls.

Mr. Hattersley: Did yesterday's statement on the poll tax in Clitheroe by the Secretary of State for Health represent Government policy?

Mr. MacGregor: The position on the community charge is clear. The right hon. Gentleman mentions Clitheroe and I think that I know what he has in mind. He will know that the community charge reduction scheme, which we introduced recently, will benefit eight out of 10 households in Ribble Valley next year and that, of those, the average reduction will be about £200. That is a clear position on the community charge, from which many people in Ribble Valley will benefit.

Mr. Hattersley: I think that the Lord President has blocked his colleague's statement from his mind. Let me remind him what the Secretary of State for Health said, succinctly and precisely, about the poll tax. He said that the Government's policy was "No regrets, no apology." Does the Lord President endorse that view?

Mr. MacGregor: I am not surprised that the right hon. Gentleman did not like my answer on the community charge reduction scheme, which will clearly benefit a great number of people in Ribble Valley. He will know that we are reviewing all aspects of the community charge scheme—that has been made clear many times.

Mr. Hattersley: As the Lord President has twice singularly refused to answer my question about what his

colleague said, may I suggest that what his colleague really meant was, "No apologies, no regrets about the poll tax and no idea what to do next"?

Mr. MacGregor: Might I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman should not pay so much attention to everything in the newspapers, because my right hon. Friend said no such thing.

Mr. Favell: Now that it looks as though the community charge, in its present form, is going to go, will the Cabinet consider abolishing the right of town halls to raise money and give them 100 per cent., based on a formula of what they need to spend? That would save more than £1·5 billion in collection costs and do away with transitional relief and community charge relief.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend has made his view known, and will know that the Cabinet is looking at all options in relation to the community charge review.

Q2. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 5 March.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Fyfe: Does the right hon. Gentleman know that last year no fewer than 1,390 operations were cancelled in the Ribble Valley health authority district? Does he also know that, in Ayrshire senior medical staff were balloted twice about opting out of health board controls and voted overwhelmingly against doing so, but that that decision is still to be imposed on the people of that district? What way is that to run a health service?

Mr. MacGregor: I do know that in Ribble Valley the number of in-patients treated has gone up by 36 per cent., the waiting lists have come down by 65 per cent. over 12 months and £36 million worth of capital has been invested since 1979. That is a clear sign of the priority given to health in that district.

Mr. Squire: Has my right hon. Friend noticed that the consistent attempts of Conservative Wandsworth and Westminster to reduce their community charge to the lowest possible level were described as a "silly battle" by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould)? Does my right hon. Friend agree that many thousands, if not millions, of people in this country would welcome other councils joining that battle? The real silly battle is between Labour Lambeth and Haringey to see who will have the highest charge.

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend. When I am in London I have to live in the London borough of Haringey and have watched its record of mismanagement over many years. It simply cannot be claimed that Haringey receives a small amount of external support in terms of pounds per adult—the amount is high. As Secretary of State for Education and Science, I watched as Haringey spent much more money on central administration for education than any other local education authority in the country. But it is still not able to give the accounts for its education spending later than 1986. Such mismanagement has produced the high community charge in Haringey, Lambeth and other boroughs.

Q4. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 5 March.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Trimble: I should like to refer the Leader of the House to the explosion that occurred this morning in the design engineering works of Shorts in Belfast. Does he agree that this was an attack upon jobs and fair employment? Will the Government support Shorts and other firms in efforts to screen out from lists of potential employees those who would actively assist terrorism in this way?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that the whole House deeply regrets the incidents in Northern Ireland in the last few days, and would want to extend sympathy to all those who have been affected. The Government's stance on terrorism is well known. We are determined, as always, to use every effort to stamp it out.

Mr. Adley: Is my right hon. Friend aware that tomorrow is the 25th anniversary of the running of the final train on the Somerset and Dorset joint railway? After that event, in a fit of corporate vandalism, the track was rendered unusable. Is my right hon. Friend aware that tomorrow I shall present for its First Reading the Railway Re-openings (Tribunal) Bill? The supporters of this Bill include Labour Front-Bench Members, the leader of the Liberal Democrats and the leader of the Scottish National party, as well as many other Members in all parts of the House. Will my right hon. Friend please do his best to ensure that his Cabinet colleagues recognise that ripping up a temporarily redundant railway track is an unacceptable act of national vandalism?

Mr. MacGregor: I was not aware of the anniversary to which my hon. Friend has referred, but, knowing his very great knowledge of these matters, I shall take his word for it. Until now, his Bill had not been drawn to my attention. I am grateful to him for letting me know about it, and I am certainly willing to look at it.

Q5. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 5 March.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Leader of the House aware that the present squalid Tory Government, in their first 10 years of office, handed out £26·2 billion to the wealthiest 1 per cent. of taxpayers? Does he know that that kind of money would give a cold weather payment and a free television licence to every pensioner, slash the national health service waiting list, get rid of cardboard city and stop the education cuts? Why do not the Government, instead of rabbiting on about the classless society, practise what they preach? Why do not they stop redistributing wealth to the rich and give some to the poor and needy?

Mr. MacGregor: I am also very well aware of the much more substantial reductions in income tax for the majority of households in this country. I am well aware, too, of the result of the pursuit of successful economic policies, including the 42 per cent. real-terms increase in expenditure on the health service and the big increases in

expenditure in so many other areas. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that he wants to return to the regime that we inherited in 1979, is he saying also that his Front-Bench colleagues support a top tax rate of 98p in the pound?

Q6. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 5 March.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Irvine: Does my right hon. Friend agree that local management of schools is proving to be immensely popular and that many head teachers, who previously had significant reservations about it, are now included among its supporters? Does he agree that the reason for its popularity is the greater flexibility and the improved decision-making powers that it gives to individual schools?

Mr. MacGregor: As my hon. Friend will know, I have always been a most enthusiastic supporter of the grant maintained schools. That being so, I strongly agree with what he has said. He has drawn attention to two of the virtues of grant maintained status. It is because of such virtues that grant maintained schools are becoming more and more popular and more and more likely to spread throughout the country. My hon. Friend's point about headmasters is very relevant. I should like to quote one headmaster, who, in the first instance, was opposed to his school becoming grant maintained. After a series of commendations he said, "I wouldn't miss what is happening here for anything. It is the most professionally fulfilling period of my entire experience as a head."

Q7. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 5 March.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Lord President aware that thousands of people have extreme difficulty in paying the poll tax for the current financial year and that within three to four weeks they will be receiving bills which will be even greater in many areas? Does he realise that for them a promise of legislation in two years' time to overcome the poll tax is not sufficient? They need an answer now—this April. Can he give an undertaking that the Government will bring in radical provision for those people to help save those on low incomes, pensioners and disabled people from the full impact of the poll tax in the next financial year?

Mr. MacGregor: The answer is twofold. First, the community charge reduction scheme, in addition to the other reduction and benefit schemes, will benefit large numbers of those people. As the hon. Gentleman knows, over half of community charge payers will benefit from that scheme. That will be immediate from the start of April this year. The second answer is for them to vote out at the first available opportunity the high-spending authorities which have caused so much of the increase.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Will my right hon. Friend remind Her Majesty's Opposition that because of the new initiatives on the community charge and on the back of the excellent service that the Leader of the other place has offered to Ribble Valley, come this Thursday the Conservative candidate will be returned triumphantly and the Liberal and Labour candidates will return to the oblivion from which they came?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that that will mean an excellent new Member for the House in succession to my noble Friend, Lord Waddington, who performed such sterling services for Ribble Valley over the years.

Q8. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 5 March.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Williams: Does the Leader of the House know that Mr. Nigel Evans, the Conservative party candidate in the Ribble Valley by-election, said yesterday in a press conference that he favoured the principle of everyone making a contribution towards the community charge—that is, he favoured the retention of the poll tax? Was he expressing a personal view or has someone leaked to him the results of the Government's review: that the Government intend to keep the poll tax?

Mr. MacGregor: I find that large numbers of people throughout the country, as well as in the House, think that one of the important features of the community charge is that everyone makes some contribution to the local services from which all benefit.

Telecommunications Policy

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Peter Lilley): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the Government's telecommunications policy for the 1990s.

On 13 November I presented to Parliament a consultative document setting out the proposals of the Government and the Director General of Telecommunications for liberalising the United Kingdom telecommunications market. We wanted to see greater competition and to let private enterprise flourish. We wanted lower prices. We wanted people to have a wider choice of service and of who provides the service. In short, we wanted a better deal for the customer. I am now glad to tell the House that we have achieved all those aims.

Those who responded to the consultative document strongly supported the Government's goals. We have therefore decided to implement our key proposals, and because of the strong support we can now achieve even more than promised in the consultative document.

In order to promote competition, the Government have decided to bring the duopoly policy to an end. Until now, only British Telecom and Mercury have been licensed to carry telephony services over fixed links. In future, the Government will consider all licence applications on their merits; and we will grant licences unless there are specific reasons to the contrary.

We said that we wanted to see lower prices. We are now going to have lower prices. British Telecom has agreed to reduce its prices by 6¼ per cent. per annum in real terms. International calls will also be included within this new limit. British Telecom intends to start by cutting the price of international calls by 10 per cent. in cash terms as soon as possible.

A new scheme is to be put in place to help the 2 million or so residential customers who are low users of the telephone. Low users will pay only half the standard rental and they will get 30 free call units every quarter. This scheme will be of particular benefit to those such as the elderly and infirm who rely on the telephone as a lifeline.

Virtually everyone will now benefit from cheaper telephone calls. Since privatisation in 1984, call charges and rentals have come down by over 20 per cent. in real terms. My announcement today means they will have fallen by over a third when the price cap is renewed in mid-1993.

Business costs will also be reduced by these changes. All firms will benefit from the tighter price cap and lower prices for international calls. Those businesses that use the telephone most can expect to benefit from the volume discounts that BT will offer in the future. Although BT will be allowed to raise rental and connection charges for businesses slightly faster than previously, this will apply only to those firms with more than one line. Moreover, BT must use the extra rental income to reduce call charges even more rapidly.

We said that we wanted customers to have a wider choice both of service and of who provides the service. They will now have this wider choice. The cable television companies are well placed to provide telephone services to the home to compete with BT's local network. They are proposing to invest over £3 billion in new networks during the next five years and to cover two thirds of the country.

To help the cable companies realise their full potential, we have decided to let them provide telephony services in their own right rather than as an agent of BT or Mercury. They will now be able to provide a complete package of entertainment and telephony services to the customer.

BT and Mercury have, of course, been allowed to apply for cable television franchises through associate companies. We do not think they should be able to bypass these arrangements since this would be unfair to the cable companies which had to compete for their franchises. We have therefore decided that telephone companies should not be granted a national broadcasting licence for at least 10 years. Their associate companies will, however, continue to be able to apply for individual franchises. In addition, BT will be able to apply directly to provide TV services in any or all unfranchised areas from April 1994. Mobile operators will be allowed to offer new services over their radio networks.

Our policies of encouraging competition have given Britain the world's most dynamic mobile communications market and the two largest cellular networks in the world. My announcement today will give our companies still further opportunities.

A further important means of providing customers with more choice is equal access. We want to make it as easy as possible for customers to choose the cheaper or better long distance phone service. They should not have to buy a special phone or use an identification code or dial extra numbers to access BT's competitors. We received strong support for that proposal. We have decided that equal access should be introduced as soon as possible. It will start to be introduced in the next year or two, and I expect it to be available to the majority of telephone users within the next five years.

The Government and the director general have also taken steps to make it easier for new companies to enter the market and to offer additional services to customers. The director general will streamline and strengthen the arrangements under which companies interconnect so that customers on different networks can communicate with each other. He will become directly responsible for allocating numbers to different operators. The director general will be able to introduce number portability so that people can move from one network to another without changing their telephone number.

The policies are set out in a White Paper, "Competition and Choice: Telecommunications Policy for the 1990s", copies of which are available in the Vote Office and will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Over the past seven years we have shown that competition works, that privatisation works and that strong independent regulation works. The decisions I am announcing today will build on this. They will stimulate competition, extend choice, cut prices, help to bring down inflation and give us the most dynamic telecommunications market in the world. I commend these decisions to the House.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Will the Secretary of State confirm that crucial decisions designed to determine the future of the telecommunications industry for an entire generation are being made after only two short months of hurried consultation—*[Interruption.]*

—after only a few rushed weeks of study of the consultation? Will he now tell us which other country in western Europe would publish a statement entitled "Telecommunications Policy for the 1990s" without saying anything about research, development and investment in the new technology or about improved regulation and accountability for the consumer? Is he not making decisions about restructuring telecommunications for the long term without even concluding a long-term agreement on prices for the ordinary consumer beyond the middle of 1993?

Does the Secretary of State agree that the pricing formula will be the retail prices index minus 6·25 per cent. because the basket now includes international calls as well as domestic calls, and when that is taken into account domestic callers will be no better off? Will he confirm that, despite all he says, British Telecom can this year still raise the typical domestic phone bill by 6 per cent. on top of last year's 9 per cent., that rental and installation charges can be pushed up by 8 per cent. on top of last year's 11 per cent. and that the effect of the new formula is that, in return for a possible 80p a year reduction in international call charges, for the typical domestic household there is still the prospect of an £8 rise in its phone bill?

Is it not the case that, although telephone bills should be falling when BT is making £3 billion a year in profit, bills will still be rising in the coming year and installation and rental charges will be rising even faster than inflation?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that installation charges are £21 in France and £24 in Germany, but up to £129 in Britain, and that there is not one proposal in his review to bring them down? Does he agree that rental charges are £40 in France and £45 in Italy, but £68 in Britain, and not only is there not one proposal to bring them down, but the main long-term effect on ordinary customer's bills will be a sustained increase in the basic rental charge—in effect, a flat rate levy on 19 million households, even when telephone standing charges are already twice those of gas and almost twice those of electricity?

Can the Secretary of State now justify to the public the prospect of even higher rental charges in the coming years when BT made £2·8 billion profit last year and this year is making more than £10 million a day? Is it not an irony that the main long-term result of this policy, which is intended to increase competition, is the prospect of remorseless increases in the universal levy for almost every household?

Is it not a disgrace that the Secretary of State's document clearly concedes that his rental proposal—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members should listen to what the document says—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Brown: Is it not a disgrace that the document says that the rental proposals

"may prevent some people from having a telephone, particularly those such as the elderly or disabled who need the telephone as a lifeline."?

Is it not the case that the proposals that the Secretary of State puts forward to remedy that mean that even the poorest and the most disadvantaged pensioner will still pay £34 a year standing charge and, in return, will be entitled to only one three-minute local call every 10 days? That is a shabby travesty of any proper scheme for pensioners and the disabled.

The Opposition support an extension of competition when it is in the public interest, but when cable companies can send telephone and television pictures on an integrated network while British Telecom is to be restricted, when foreign companies can enter the British market unconditionally and unilaterally, while British companies are still prevented from entering many foreign markets, when the universal service obligation applies to BT but not to anyone else, far from pursuing a consistent policy of extending competition in the public interest to the benefit of us all, the policy that the right hon. Gentleman has announced today is selective and inconsistent and will serve to benefit the interests of mainly foreign cable companies moving into Britain.

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the difference between us is that, while he supports competition with reduced regulation, we believe that the real issue is that competition should be accompanied by proper regulation in the interests of the whole public? Will the Secretary of State now discharge his duties, first, to establish clear performance targets for telephone companies; secondly, to improve investment in research and development; and, thirdly, to increase telephone connections so that by the year 2000 Britain can at least reach the levels achieved by comparable societies? By so doing, will he ensure that telecommunications benefit not just a few competing companies but the country as a whole?

Mr. Lilley: I can reassure the House that the hon. Gentleman is wrong on almost every point. Far from holding only two months' consultation, we held four months' consultation, preceded by seven years' notice. Some 200 companies were able to submit proposals, which we considered, although I notice that the Labour party did not do so.

The hon. Gentleman said that there was nothing in the way of improved regulations for consumers. To describe a tighter price cap which will mean a reduction of 6·25 per cent. in real prices every year as no improvement for consumers shows an extraordinarily short-sighted view, particularly in a party which, when it had a nationalised telecommunications industry, had no regulator at all and allowed the industry to regulate itself.

The hon. Gentleman said that the cap ended in 1993. Of course, it will be revised in 1993. I remind him that on the last occasion it was increased so that the reduction in real prices increased from 3 per cent. to 4·5 per cent. It is now 6·25 per cent. The hon. Gentleman said that the basket included international calls so that domestic and other users would be no better off. He is wrong. The reduction in international calls, although included in the basket, will leave plenty of scope for even greater reductions in domestic tariffs than would otherwise have been the case.

The hon. Gentleman said that a typical household would face an increase of 6 per cent. In fact, the regulator has introduced a cap on the bill of the medium sized household which will mean that there can be no real increase in the tariffs for such a household.

The hon. Gentleman said that rental charges abroad were lower. The Director General of Telecommunications carries out a detailed study every year of our tariffs on a basket of aspects of telecommunications charges and compares them with those abroad. He finds that they are very much in line with charges abroad.

[Mr. Lilley]

The hon. Gentleman said that the proposals would prevent the poorest from signing up. He ignores the new scheme being introduced by BT to spread the cost of signing up and, therefore, make it easier for people to do so.

The hon. Gentleman said that BT would be restricted and would not be allowed to provide entertainment services over its network while cable television companies would be able to do so. In fact, BT obtained franchises and provided entertainment and television services over its network in those franchise areas to the extent that that was technically feasible. It has decided to withdraw by and large from those franchises. As I said, none the less, from April 1994 it will be allowed to apply for all unfranchised areas on a national basis if it so wishes.

The hon. Gentleman said that we should establish performance targets. He was content with the performance of British Telecom when it was a nationalised industry and, indeed, he wishes to return it to the nationalised sector, but since British Telecom was privatised, its performance on every measure of quality and performance has improved and is up to international standards. The hon. Gentleman said nothing about his party's commitment, reaffirmed last week, to renationalise British Telecom. I am not surprised.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): My right hon. Friend's statement should be widely welcomed on both sides of the House. He has recognised that Mercury and British Telecom are marketing their services on a world stage and that that is most welcome to the British telecommunications industry. However, may I remind my right hon. Friend of a question which I addressed to him when he announced his review, which I fear slipped his ear at the time: will he go on please to examine the workings and efficiency of the regulator, Oftel?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome and for his recognition of the fact that this strengthens the international position of both British Telecom and Mercury. As for his question about Oftel, I am pleased with its performance. It has achieved effective regulation and lower prices for British Telecom users. I pay tribute to Oftel's work and to the response of the television companies. I thank also my officials for the good work that they have done in producing the review.

Mr. David Bellotti (Eastbourne): Is the Secretary of State aware that there are Opposition Members who welcome the greater competition, the end of duopoly and the lower prices that have been announced today? However, there is still very much more work to do. Is the Secretary of State also aware that the greatest hindrance to the delivery of the Lifeline service is the installation cost and the deposit requested by British Telecom from elderly people who are often unable to meet that cost? Will he look into that matter?

Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that in rural areas and in developing towns the greatest need is for the installation of public call boxes? Very often their installation does not match up to the development of those areas.

Lastly, is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the deep resentment that was caused on Christmas Day 1990 by the inability of people throughout the country to obtain numbers from directory inquiries? Will he ensure that directory inquiries is made readily and freely available to those who wish to use that telecommunications service?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's welcome of the proposals. I agree that there could be an improvement in the provision of Lifeline services. BT proposes to spread the cost of connection for newly connected individuals. That, I believe, will provide the help that the hon. Gentleman seeks.

As for call boxes, when BT was privatised there were 77,000 of them in this country, of which on any one day a quarter were not working. There are now 100,000 call boxes, including Mercury's, of which on any day 96 per cent. are working. I shall certainly take back to BT the hon. Gentleman's point about directory inquiries on Christmas day.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on providing more choice and competition. Will he confirm that British Telecom has paid the Treasury more money in corporation tax and dividends since it was privatised than ever it did from profits when it was nationalised? When my right hon. Friend considers the granting of licences to overseas companies, will he look carefully at opportunities for reciprocity? We want the advantages of privatisation to be spread among all public communication networks throughout the world.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is correct when he says that BT pays much more each year in corporation tax than it used to pay in dividends when it was 100 per cent. owned by the Treasury. We do not intend to deprive our consumers of investments that may be made by overseas companies, but we shall certainly seek to ensure that their Governments open up their markets, both within the context of GATT and by means of direct representation, so that our companies can invest in those countries. We shall support any of our companies that seek waivers—for example, in the United States from the limitation on the ownership of more than 25 per cent. of an American telecommunications company. Morover, if it is treated as a dominant supplier under the Federal Communications Commission's rules, it will have our full backing when seeking entry into those markets.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Is the Secretary of State aware that his statement will come as a great disappointment to the many people who work in BT and Mecury, particularly to those who at this moment are to lose their jobs? Is he further aware that his commitment to back British companies by attempting to achieve reciprocity will be completely unsuccessful? His announcement fails to recognise the imminence of 1992 and the fact that our major European competitors will have the benefit of an integrated broad band network by the end of the century. His announcement has sounded the death knell of that happening here.

Does the Secretary of State also accept that the very many Conservative Members who represent rural constituencies will find that their constituents never benefit from any of the limited opportunities that he has put on offer today? Is he further aware that his statement is unacceptable and that his claim that it was welcomed by all who had made representations is misleading?

Mr. Lilley: BT said in its recent announcement about jobs that it hoped to achieve the greater level of efficiency through retirement and turnover on a natural basis. The key result of the changes that we have introduced, in this review and earlier, is a dynamic market which is generating jobs in a variety of firms and businesses. That will create new opportunities for people from BT.

In terms of broad band and optical fibre, we are ahead of the rest of the world. We have more mileage in trunk cabling than France or Germany. When BT was privatised there were only 13,000 km of optical fibres; there are now over 1·1 million km. BT is forging ahead and has a technical advantage over much of the rest of the world. Mercury is doing likewise.

It is a myth to suppose that it is always more expensive to supply rural users. Often it is just as low cost and the cost can be met by ways that we have opened up to BT, if need be using radio links instead of fixed links. So we believe that the rural user will benefit as much as anyone else from the changes that we have announced.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): In replying to a question that I asked some time ago, my right hon. Friend gave an assurance that in the duopoly review he would put the user first. I congratulate him on doing far more than I think any user would have expected him to do at this stage in terms of keeping down prices. In response to the tirade of socialism and nationalisation that seems to be coming from Labour Members, will he say what happened when Germany decided to go the way of state monopoly in its mobile network, while the United Kingdom decided to have two private enterprise operators? Did the Germans increase their mobile network at the same rate as we have?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. We have indeed put the user first. The users will benefit enormously, as will the suppliers. He is right to mention the difference between the performance of this country and that of Germany, since at exactly the same time we decided to follow the competitive route in licensing two suppliers of cellular radio while the Germans had one monopolistic supplier. We now have a market five times larger than theirs and larger than any other country in the world.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the British Telecom of which he speaks is not the BT with which I can identify in my constituency? Dialling a telephone number in Clydesdale is almost a lottery in terms of whether one gets the right number. Is he aware that telephone kiosks have been closed in the rural community of Clydesdale and that, after two years of calling for their replacement, they have still not been replaced?

Mr. Lilley: I am not surprised that the hon. Gentleman cannot identify with BT: it is no longer nationalised.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the excellent creative package that he has announced today. Does he agree that, in terms of telecommunications, the Conservatives have an absolutely marvellous story to tell? Since BT was denationalised, prices have fallen by 20 per cent. in real terms and where there is greater competitive pressure—for example, in trunk calls—prices have fallen by as much as 30 per cent.

Mr. Lilley: I thank my hon. Friend for those remarks, and he is absolutely right. Wherever competition is effective, prices have fallen even more. We believe that over the lifetime of the cap, which ends in 1993, the average price of calls since privatisation will have fallen by more than a third in real terms.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Will the Secretary of State confirm that his statement means further feather-bedding of the cable industry, much of which is in United States ownership? Will he also confirm that he has had many representations from many parts of the country, including my own, against that? How can he possibly justify the protection of the cable industry in the way that he is doing, and how on earth does that offer more competition? Will he undertake to publish as an addendum to the document that he intends to place in the Vote Office a full list of his right hon. and hon. Friends who have financial interests in British Telecom and the cable industry? Will he clearly advise them that if there are any votes on these matters they should not vote?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman is talking absolute nonsense. Of course the cable companies are not being feather-bedded. They will compete with BT for the provision of telephone services and BT has had the same opportunities to seek franchises as the cable companies and will have slightly better opportunities in future.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend accept that most people, apart from the Opposition, will welcome this increase in competition? Competition is the friend of the consumer, and that point has been well made and understood. The consumer gains from competition, and deregulation, as my right hon. Friend has said, has been brought about by the Government. We now have two major players on the international scene, BT and Mercury, both of which are world-winning companies. Also, many thousands of small and medium-sized firms would never have been allowed to get into the business if liberalisation had not taken place.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Many small businesses have grown up on the back of liberalisation. That is one reason why so many countries are beginning to emulate the changes that we have made.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The statement will be generally welcomed throughout the country. I should like further clarification on one or two matters. I am sure that some people who are not well acquainted with new maths will wonder when the 6·25 per cent. reduction will stop.

Is the Secretary of State being unduly optimistic about rural areas? Cable companies have told us that, for example, in Northern Ireland they are unlikely to go far beyond Belfast.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti) spoke about the elderly, especially those living alone and who need telephones. They have not received much help with installation charges and they are sometimes penalised over portability. I know of old people who had a new phone installed and then moved to residential accommodation which had cable, and they had to pay another installation charge. Surely the companies should look after such elderly people.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for welcoming the statement. He asks when the 6·25 per cent. real cuts will stop. The cap will be revised and renegotiated in July 1993 and no one can say what it will be thereafter.

The hon. Gentleman asked about cable coverage in Northern Ireland. Of course BT will have the same opportunities there as elsewhere to seek to operate in the unfranchised areas after April 1994.

We share the hon. Gentleman's worries about the elderly. That is one reason why BT has decided to introduce a scheme for spreading the charges. I will inquire about whether that applies to reconnection charges in the circumstances that the hon. Gentleman envisages, and I shall write to him about that.

Sir Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): As an advocate of competition for 10 years, I congratulate my right hon. Friend and his team on the announcement. I also congratulate him on refuting the allegation that Oftel has performed badly. There is a widespread feeling that it has performed excellently in improving choice. Does he agree that the Opposition's response to the statement shows why, if not their industry policy, certainly their telecommunications policy is impossible to sell? Does he further agree that equal access will give real choice to all telephone users within five years and must be a vindication of his announcement?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I shall pass on his compliments, which were well-merited, to Oftel and to Sir Bryan Carsberg.

My hon. Friend is quite right about Opposition policy. They have little in the way of policy that they are prepared to admit to and nothing that they could sell to the public, least of all their proposal to require BT to spend up to £21 billion over and above what is required for the commercially viable cabling of this country. I hope that within five years the majority of the country will have access to the second phase, the easiest type of equal access, which will spread onward from there as digitalisation and the new exchanges come in.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Is the Secretary of State aware that it is worrying that he should have ministerial responsibility for such a vital and important industry in this country because he seems to be totally out of touch with the reality of the situation, which is that BT customer satisfaction is at its lowest level in the history of British telecommunications? The Minister ought to face up to that problem.

On the question of prices, what is the Secretary of State really saying? Is he telling the customer that bills will be reduced, or that the increase will not be as great as it might have been but that their bills will increase in any case? What the Minister is doing is a cruel deception on the people of this country.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Member is quite wrong about the level of satisfaction. The latest survey shows that the number of people who are very dissatisfied with BT has shrunk to 2 per cent. and that about 18 times as many people were very satisfied with its performance. However, I am sure that BT can adequately defend itself on that front.

As regards bills being reduced only in real terms, as inflation comes down I expect 6½ per cent. less than inflation to mean negative increases in bills, even in cash terms. That will help inflation to come down and to give a boost to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's efforts in that direction.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): My right hon. Friend properly stressed the fact that only greater competition brings greater benefits to the consumer. Can he confirm that the success of that policy is manifest in the example of the value-added services industry, which is substantially more than the size of the German and French markets combined? Can he confirm that he has undertaken studies into the impact upon the value-added services market in Britain of renationalisation, as proposed by the Labour party? Would it reduce it to the size of the French and the German markets?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Value-added services in this country are of the order of £700 million, and are rising, whereas in France and Germany they are about £300 million each. I have not done any studies into the impact of renationalisation because I do not envisage that the Opposition will have any chance to carry out their policy, but I have no doubt that if they did my hon. Friend's guess about the direction of its effect is absolutely right.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): So that the general public are not misled by anything that the Secretary of State might say, will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that 48 per cent. of British Telecom shares are still owned by the state—the Government and the taxpayer—which means that they are only 3 per cent. short of having full control of the company?

Mr. Lilley: I can confirm that fact and there is no concealing it. When the last Labour Government owned 100 per cent. of the company, prices were rising in real terms.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard to subsequent business. There is another statement after this on air traffic distribution. I shall call three more hon. Members from each side and then we must move on.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the importance of telephone boxes in rural areas, especially of the old red telephone boxes? Can he tell the House what effect the provisions of the White Paper will have on those telephone boxes and how many of them actually work?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. At the time of privatisation, the Opposition expressed fears that the 77,000 telephone boxes then in operation would disappear. As I said earlier, there are now more than 100,000 in both rural and urban areas, 96 per cent. of which are operating every day. They are also checked every day.

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): Does not the Secretary of State realise that his statement represents a narrow-minded, inward-looking attitude? His proposals mean that the opportunities provided by Britain's current world lead in fibre-optic technology will be lost. The advantages offered to the cable companies, which are largely foreign owned, will enable them to develop a system that will lead to needless duplication and triplication—and, indeed, to a second-rate and third-rate

service—while using foreign technology. Meanwhile, restraints on trade are denying British Telecom the opportunity to develop a world-class system in our markets, using British technology which Britain could then market to the world, with consequent benefits to our balance of payments and to British jobs.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman may consider it narrow-minded to put the consumer's interests first, and to achieve reductions in real prices, but he completely ignores the fact that we are ahead of the rest of Europe in the introduction of optical fibre cables for trunk and other uses; we have achieved that by means of a competitive and deregulated market.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): It is a pleasure to be able to declare an interest in the cable industry. I believe that the expansion of cable will enhance competition and choice throughout the country.

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, although British Telecom has so far been able to resist interconnections with cable operators, such operators will in future be able to interconnect with anyone, and that, should a company such as British Telecom make it difficult to agree terms, the director general will make a determination?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The White Paper mentions the regulator's powers to ensure a much easier, simpler, more streamlined process for interconnection, so that people on different networks will be able to communicate. Proper arrangements will eventually be made for the costs to be met.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I follow up the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara), and ask why only 1·9 per cent. of the funds are to be put into research and development? The right hon. Gentleman told my hon. Friend that we were ahead of the rest of Europe. If that is so, for how long will it remain so, given the meagreness of our investment in research and development and, particularly, in optical fibres? Why should the Electronic Equipment Association feel so uncomfortable about that general area of investment?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman is quite right: British Telecom's research and development investment amounts to 1·9 per cent. of its turnover, which is exactly the same percentage as was invested under Labour. The big difference is that its turnover has expanded enormously, and, as a consequence, so has its research and development.

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the successes of competition policy in telecommunications has been the emergence of the regulatory agency Oftel? Does he accept that the many opportunities that he has described today will require Oftel to make additional efforts, and can he assure us that adequate resources will be provided for it to do that important work?

Mr. Lilley: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. We do, of course, need an efficient and effective regulator while British Telecom remains in a dominant position and the structure of the market gives scope for monopolistic abuse in the absence of such a regulator. We cannot understand why the Labour party wishes to return to a regime that did not involve a regulator.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): I am sure that the Secretary of State agrees that advanced telecommunications are vital for peripheral regions such as Wales. To attract inward investment beyond branch plants, they are selling themselves on the basis of having advanced telecommunications infrastructures. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that such an infrastructure would provide Wales with a very good facility? Certainly Mr. Gwyn Jones, the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency, agrees with me. If the right hon. Gentleman also agrees, what will he do to try to persuade British Telecom to install that infrastructure, and to ensure that it is installed beyond the obvious markets of Newport, Cardiff and Swansea?

Mr. Lilley: If, in the interests of competition, BT and the other operators are upgrading their operations and introducing the new technology, that will benefit Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and I welcome it.

London Airports

4.14 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the London air traffic distribution rules.

Following consultation, the Civil Aviation Authority has recommended that Heathrow rules 1, 2 and 3 should now be set aside. The rules prohibit new operators of international scheduled passenger services from Heathrow, ban charter flights from Heathrow, and limit new domestic services using that airport.

I start from the position that the Government should intervene as little as possible in the civil aviation market. Needless intervention through rules and regulations harms the industry and the interest of passengers. The oldest of the present restrictions on access to Heathrow was imposed 14 years ago. Since then, the industry has evolved and changed. It has been entirely right to take a fresh look at the continued need for the rules.

I have reflected carefully on the CAA's advice since I received it seven weeks ago and I have listened to the views of a variety of interests. I have met a number of hon. Members and heard their opinions, and I have weighed the points put to me in correspondence.

I have concluded that it is right to accept the CAA's advice that rules 1, 2 and 3 should now be removed. I also accept that the restrictions on all cargo, business and general aviation should remain. The London rules have been remade today to give effect to the decision.

As there is already almost full utilisation of Heathrow's capacity, the net effect of abolition of the traffic distribution rules will be modest. The Civil Aviation Authority believes that, over time, a greater proportion of the present capacity of the airport is likely to be used by long-haul services. That would bring benefits to users and increase competition in the long-haul market.

In reaching my decision, I have addressed the possible impact of the abolition of the rules on regional services. Removal of the rules does not, of course, impose any requirement on the operators of regional services to give up operating at Heathrow. That is equally the case with foreign airlines using the airport. Present incumbents may find that more carriers will wish to negotiate with them over slots. But, just as before, it will be up to each airline to decide whether to enter into such negotiations.

In that context, I recognise the importance of controls on airport charges at Heathrow to ensure that regional air services are not treated unfairly. I am clear that airports should not be able, through their charging regimes, to abuse their position or exploit their users. The Government addressed this matter in 1986 when they gave the CAA powers to carry out the economic regulation of all sizeable airports. Section 41 of the Airports Act 1986 enables the CAA to apply a suitable remedy where it believes that an airport operator has adopted a trade practice or a pricing policy which unreasonably discriminates against any class of user of the airport or against any particular user. Those are important powers, available now. Indeed, they are powers that the CAA has already used in response to complaints by domestic airlines at Heathrow.

Some of those consulted during the review suggested that night flight restrictions at Heathrow might be relaxed. Hon. Members with constituencies around Heathrow have made clear to me the importance that they attach to controls on aircraft noise. In response, we confirmed that we have no plans to relax the existing restrictions on night movements at Heathrow, which were set in 1988 and which are due to run to at least March 1993. I repeat that assurance this afternoon. I also confirm that I have no plans to end the system of runway alternation at Heathrow.

It has been suggested that removal of the rules would impinge on possible future development at Heathrow. But in practice the position is unchanged; if BAA wishes to undertake further terminal development, it will need to seek planning permission. Those with views on the environmental aspect, or any other aspect, would have the opportunity to give them. The Government's own position remains as described in the 1985 White Paper, in which we said that we would keep the matter under review, without commitment.

I have considered whether I should await the outcome of current work on the allocation of slots at congested airports before making changes to the traffic distribution rules. Both mechanisms have to do with managing demand, but the linkage should not be overstated. The rules determine the kinds of traffic that can use Heathrow; slots are then allocated among eligible airlines under the slot allocation process.

There is no immediate prospect of a major change in the way in which slots are allocated at busy airports, and I see no reason to delay decisions on the future of rules on that account. My decision does not imply that slots will be available for airlines hitherto denied access. Carriers will need to seek slots in the usual way from the airport co-ordinator. The availability of a slot depends not only on the runway situation but on terminal and aircraft parking facilities. The Government are not involved in the slot allocation process.

The present restrictions on business and general aviation at Heathrow and Gatwick reflect our perception that an airliner carrying large numbers of passengers—including perhaps some business men—might otherwise be displaced by a business aircraft carrying only three or four people. We are ready to look at any convincing case which the business aviation sector can make for taking a different view, but for the present I continue to believe that the existing policy is right. I also remain of the view that, where there is a conflict, passenger services should take priority over all-cargo flights.

The British air transport industry has enjoyed successful development over recent years. Gatwick has emerged as a major world airport. I am confident that Gatwick's established position, its convenience for Europe and its excellent rail access to central London will ensure its continuing success, irrespective of any traffic adjustments that might in due course follow from the changes that I have announced today. Likewise, buoyant medium-term forecasts make it very clear that all the London airports, including Stansted's splendid new terminal, are going to be needed.

I am confident for all these reasons that the time has come to remove the restrictions at Heathrow airport in the way the CAA has recommended.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): Today's major statement will affect British aviation over the next few years. It is about an issue that is not mentioned in or directly related to the statement. Today's statement is

about and directly a part of the present negotiations between the United States and the United Kingdom about fundamentally changing our airport distribution rules primarily to assist two bankrupt American airlines—Pan American and TWA—to sell to two major strong American competitors, American Airlines and United Airlines, which are demanding the valuable Heathrow connections. The United Kingdom's agreement is necessary to change the Bermuda agreement. Does the Secretary of State accept that he has a powerful hand in those negotiations?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that the policy change is necessary to conclude the negotiations with the Americans this week? We must assume that the negotiations have now been concluded. Can the Secretary of State give us some information about the agreement?

Does the Secretary of State accept that allowing access to Heathrow to those major American competitors, with their powerful United States hub-and-spoke network and frequent flyer and computer registration systems, when those competitors have already secured the American domestic traffic, guarantees them the major part of passenger carriage across the Atlantic? That will be damaging to the interests of British Airways. What does British Airways estimate will be the cost in terms of loss of traffic as a result of the agreement? Does BA think that the agreement is a good deal?

Perhaps the only airline enthusiastically to accept the Secretary of State's policy is Virgin Atlantic Airways. What other country has placed its major international air company in competition with both its own national competitors and international competitors?

Does the Secretary of State accept that the conclusion that the linkage of slot allocation and runway capacity with traffic distribution rules should not be overstated runs counter to the view of everyone who gave evidence to the CAA report and counter to the CAA report's judgment?

Why did the consulted interests referred to in the statement deliberately exclude workers or their representatives, particularly when they are co-operating with many thousands of redundancies as a result of the major changes in aviation stemming from the Gulf war? Does the Secretary of State accept that employees have a right to be consulted about those matters?

The Secretary of State said that he had considered the effect on regional airports and was assured that there were remedies against unreasonable discrimination. However, is he aware that last year landing fees rose by 15 per cent. and have risen by 25 per cent. this year? Such increases effectively cause increases in fares, which discriminate against smaller aircraft from regional airports when compared with the landing fees for huge jumbos which have many passengers and can spread their costs accordingly. Does the Secretary of State accept that not only will regional airports be discriminated against, but that the concentration of long-haul aircraft movements at Heathrow will again undermine Gatwick and the interline capacity of regional airports, and will throw into doubt the future of Stansted, which is shortly to be opened by the Queen?

In his statement, the Secretary of State made it clear that he rules out extra night flights at Heathrow until 1993. Presumably, that leaves the matter open for review in 1993. He said that he had no plans to end the system of runway alternation at Heathrow, but the pressure for access to Heathrow will soon change the requirements. Indeed, flight movements could be increased without the need for a flight planning agreement. That will add to the congestion at Heathrow, especially on the M25 as people begin to move from Gatwick to Heathrow. He must already be aware that there is a tremendous cost in congestion.

Finally, does the Secretary of State accept that by rushing his statement before the House today he has signalled a policy which will increase congestion and environmental problems, which will weaken the major British air carrier and reduce the possibilities for regional airlines to grow with our network system—all for the need to pursue an ideological policy of competition and deregulation which has already destroyed much of our shipping, bus and rail industries and which is about to subject our aviation industry to the same fate?

Mr. Rifkind: I certainly do not accept the hon. Gentleman's conclusion. The seven weeks that have elapsed since I received the CAA's recommendations show that we have given most careful thought not only to its representations, but to other comments made to the Department.

The hon. Gentleman began by asking about the negotiations with the United States. I remind him that my predecessor had already commissioned the review from the CAA before the request from the United States. The review was already in train when we received the request. The hon. Gentleman is incorrect to assume that the negotiations on Bermuda 2 have been concluded. To implement the request from the United States would require a change in the traffic distribution rules. The change in the TDRs which I have announced today will not allow any new American airlines to land at Heathrow. That would require a revision of Bermuda 2. The negotiations are continuing and a further phase will take place on Thursday of this week. I cannot anticipate whether that will be a means of reaching a conclusion.

We have made it clear to the United States that what it seeks to do—to replace two airlines with United Airlines and American Airlines—will make a substantial commercial difference to the transatlantic situation. It has acknowledged that and it accepts that it is necessary to make other changes that will be beneficial to British airlines if their proposal is to be contemplated. The precise terms are currently being discussed. It is too early to say whether we shall achieve a successful outcome, but the Americans have raised the issue and if they wish it to reach a successful outcome, they must make proposals that will enable a competitive overall balance to be properly maintained. We are not yet in a position to say that that will happen.

The Government wish to encourage a multi-airline policy. Therefore, it is agreeable that Virgin is also offering a service to British and other passengers. It is good not only for Virgin but for British Airways to have such competition.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the views of those employed at the airports concerned. It was for the Civil Aviation Authority to decide whom to consult as part of its review. It has consulted a wide spectrum of interests and, in addition, many others have written to the Department. We have been able to take all those views into account.

The hon. Gentleman was correct to say that, left to themselves, landing charges could be used in a

[Mr. Rifkind]

discriminatory fashion. However, I have pointed out to the hon. Gentleman that the Airports Act 1986, under which the CAA scrutinises proposals for landing charges, specifically and explicitly excludes discriminatory changes in landing charges. If the authority is satisfied that a proposal for an increase in landing charges is discriminatory, it can prevent that increase from taking place. There is a precedent for that.

I have made it clear to the hon. Gentleman that the policy on night flights, which has existed for some time, remains unchanged as a result of the statement. The policy, which was announced some time ago, was that there would be no change in night flights at least until 1993. I have re-emphasised that position today.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appreciate that the statement affects many constituencies. However, we have a heavy day in front of us with a ten-minute Bill, which is to be opposed, and a debate in which there will be considerable pressure to speak. I will move on at 5 pm. I ask hon. Members to ask brief, single questions.

Sir Barney Hayhoe (Brentford and Isleworth): Does my right hon. and learned Friend appreciate the widespread local concern that his statement will lead to increased noise, nuisance and congestion round Heathrow? Although his categorical assurance, limited though it was, about night flights and alternation of runways will be welcomed, the time limit will be a source of grave local concern. Is he aware of the massive hostility to any concept of a third runway or a fifth terminal at Heathrow? If his statement leads to increased pressure for those, it will be a black day for people round Heathrow.

Mr. Rifkind: I am extremely conscious of the legitimate points to which my right hon. Friend has drawn attention. That is why I have been emphatic in saying that nothing in the decision on traffic distribution rules will change the position on those matters to which he rightly referred. The matter may be reviewed in years to come. I have no doubt about the strong feelings of many of my hon. Friends and of other hon. Members whose constituents are affected by the way in which airports operate. We must not take into account only the interests of the airlines and of the travelling public. They must be balanced against the interests of those who live near airports before any policies are determined. That is the basis on which I shall reach decisions.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): Does the Secretary of State agree that the statement will affect regional airports? He mentioned slots. From now on, slots will be auctioned and that could affect the small airlines and the small businesses that rely on those airlines.

Mr. Rifkind: Nothing in today's announcement provides for an auctioning of slots. Individual airlines may be approached by others that wish to enter negotiations with them. It will be entirely a matter for a regional airline whether it wishes to respond to such a request. There is no change in the slot allocation procedure. At present, a consultancy is examining the whole question of slots, but it will be a long time before it reaches its views and puts recommendations to us. I do not envisage in the short term any changes in slot allocation procedure.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): May I first criticise my right hon. and learned Friend for the discourtesy within his Department? I understand that outside interested bodies knew about the statement some time today—if not yesterday—whereas hon. Members did not know about it until it came up on the monitor at 1 pm. That is an appalling way in which to treat hon. Members, especially those with interests in airports.

I agree reluctantly, but almost wholeheartedly, with the analysis by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) of the implications of the statement. There will now be increasing demand on Heathrow and there will be pressure for a third runway there, which my right hon. and learned Friend still refuses to rule out. Despite his assurance about 1993 and night flights, as I am the Member of Parliament who represents most of Heathrow, I want an assurance from my right hon. and learned Friend today that the guarantee of no night flights will continue well beyond 1993.

I hope that in the short time available—within a week or so—and certainly before 6 June 1991, the Department of Transport will announce what capital investment will be involved in surface access and in the infrastructure round Heathrow. That is sorely needed before we talk about anything else.

Mr. Rifkind: With regard to the first part of my hon. Friend's remarks, he was good enough to show his concern that some outside interests might have been given advance notice of my statement. I have checked that and can assure him that no outside interest was given advance notice of the timing of my statement. I should be worried about any suggestion to the contrary, and if my hon. Friend has reason to believe to the contrary, I should be grateful if he would inform me.

With regard to the other part of my hon. Friend's remarks, I understand his legitimate fear, as a constituency Member, that there may be increased pressure for the changes to which he referred. I hope that I can reassure him that I attach the same importance as he does to ensuring that there is no unreasonable imposition on those who live in the vicinity of airports. Any proposals to change the existing rules could be contemplated only after the most thorough examination and investigation. I referred to the noise limits extending at least until 1993 simply because those were the precise terms of the statement made by my predecessor some time ago and I wished to say that no such change was being made as a result of today's statement. I am conscious of the fact that airlines would like changes. Indeed, we have received requests recently from at least one airline for changes in night flights and we said that they would not be permitted.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): The Minister will be aware that Manchester airport is in my constituency and that its future development is of the first importance to me. What consultation was there about the issues addressed by his statement today with Manchester airport and other airports outside the south-east of England? Will he comment specifically on any implications for the regional airports? Is he aware that people flying

from Manchester are sick and tired of having to change at London airports in order to reach foreign destinations which should be available from Manchester?

Mr. Rifkind: The Civil Aviation Authority consulted a wide range of interests, including other airports in the United Kingdom such as Manchester. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that it would be highly desirable to see significant improvements in the opportunity for people to fly from regional airports direct to destinations overseas. I wish strongly to encourage that. The more that it can be achieved, the more the public interest will have been served.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Although I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's assurances about night flights, I do not believe that they will work. The pressures that have now been unleashed will force change for the worse. What will we receive in exchange for abandoning those rules? Where else in the world are there two airports in one city, with foreign airlines allowed to go where they choose? It is crazy to throw away our bargaining card.

Furthermore, my right hon. and learned Friend's remarks about slots are nonsense. There is a link between slots and rules. If he does not believe it now, he will find out shortly the hard way. Operators' licences require access to be given at Heathrow and he must deal with that. I am appalled, my constituents are appalled and British airlines are appalled. The only people who are happy this afternoon are United States airlines, which are laughing all the way to the bank.

Mr. Rifkind: Although I understand my hon. Friend's depth of feeling, I am afraid that he is misinformed. He implies that an airline has only to apply for the right to land at Heathrow to be granted permission. I have read the rules. My hon. Friend knows even better than I that Heathrow is already almost full. Therefore, the only way in which new airlines will receive permission to land there is if they are given a slot by the scheduling committee. That is possible only if airlines that now use the airport cease to wish to do so.

My hon. Friend seems suspicious that there will be increasing pressure for night flights, but my view, and that of the Government, is that the number of night flights will depend not on the level of pressure, but on the merits of the case. My predecessors and I have made it clear that we believe that night flights produce substantial environmental problems and have a significant effect on the quality of life of those living in the vicinity of airports. There is no reason to believe that there will be any changes.

As my hon. Friend will be aware, my predecessor established a working party to consider the long-term requirements for runways in the south-east. The suggestion from the Civil Aviation Authority is that there will certainly be no need for a new runway anywhere in the south-east until well into the next century. That should properly be considered as a long-term requirement. I have no intention of taking rushed decisions on such an important issue.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): This shameful decision is against the best interests of the United Kingdom and British airlines; it is simply a sell-out to American interests. As a Scottish Member of Parliament, the Secretary of State should be absolutely ashamed of himself because he has sold out to America and received nothing in return. The decision will have terrible effects on regional and Scottish airports, the regional and Scottish economy and small airlines. What guarantee can the Secretary of State give that, in the longer term, there will be continued regional and Scottish flights in and out of Heathrow—something that everyone in the Scottish regions wants continued?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is talking through his hat. He knows perfectly well that the proposals are the result of a strong recommendation from the Civil Aviation Authority and have been made after the most extensive consultation. He also knows that nothing that I have announced today will enable a single other American airline to land at Heathrow. Any such opportunities can be considered only as part of the renegotiation of Bermuda 2, which is something whose outcome I do not wish to predict now. No regional airline need withdraw from its existing use of Heathrow unless it wishes. That is a matter for regional airlines to decide.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): In my judgment, my right hon. and learned Friend has made absolutely the right decision in terms of the national interest. I am sure that he will agree that the rules served an extremely effective purpose some time ago, but we have moved on and airlines now operate in a wholly different context. Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure me that abolishing the rules, which earlier served Gatwick extremely well and helped to build it into a major international airport, will not have a deleterious effect on the pattern of flight traffic at Gatwick airport?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend for his support for my decision. I am entirely confident, because Gatwick has established a reputation as a world airport. It is already one of the largest airports in the world and has a dedicated number of companies anxious to continue serving it. I have not the slightest reason to believe that Gatwick has anything other than a healthy future to look forward to.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): When the Secretary of State for Transport caved in to the American Administration and the buyers of Pan Am, did he get anything for London, other than more congestion? What about the effects of the proposal on Stansted and the City airports, which the Secretary of State did not mention? Will not many of the flights that will not now go to Heathrow end up at those airports, producing more congestion round them?

Mr. Rifkind: The whole point about Stansted is that it should serve the demand that cannot be met by Heathrow and Gatwick, both of which are already, if not full, very near full capacity. Therefore, the new terminal at Stansted will provide a viable means of enabling the traffic requirements of the south-east of the country to be properly accommodated.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): In that a consequence of my right hon. and learned Friend's statement today might be to reduce the access to Heathrow of domestic airlines, does not it also provide an opportunity for regional airports, particularly the larger ones, to enhance their route network? Is not it time that we laid the ghost that we can fly out of this country only via one of London's airports?

Mr. Rifkind: I very much agree with my hon. Friend, who is right to emphasise that what most people who live in the regions, in Scotland and elsewhere would far prefer is to be able to fly directly to destinations in Europe and across the Atlantic. They do not wish to go through Heathrow, Gatwick or Stansted if they can avoid doing so. Anything that encourages direct services from cities elsewhere in the United Kingdom is to be greatly encouraged.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): As the Secretary of State said that the effect of changing the rules would be modest, why has he bothered to change the rules? Is not it the case that, far from being modest, the changes at Heathrow will be major and there will be an auction to get in and out of Heathrow? Although he said, quaintly, that no existing airline flying from the regions into Heathrow need give up its flights, is it not the case that no protection is given to those services from the regions into Heathrow, which goes directly against the advice given to him by experts, including Lord King of British Airways?

Mr. Rifkind: I said in my statement that the net effect of the decision would be modest, by which I meant that as Heathrow airport is close to full utilisation of its capacity, any changes could come only from new airlines replacing existing ones already using Heathrow. Therefore, I correctly described the net effect as modest. There will be no obligation on existing airlines using Heathrow—regional or otherwise—to terminate their use. It is a matter for the airlines to decide—that is an important point to understand.

Dame Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the absolute necessity to the west country of access to Heathrow at a reasonable cost? So that everyone can plan for a better economy in the west country, will he give a categoric assurance that those airlines will not be priced out?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, I believe that my hon. Friend can have that assurance. It is crucial that the legislation governing landing charges is taken into account. It expressly prevents discriminatory landing charges for different classes of user. Recently the Civil Aviation Authority required BAA to refund some provincial and regional airlines for excess charges demanded from them. That suggests that the existing legislation has teeth and can protect the legitimate interests of regional airlines, which is something I want to continue.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The Secretary of State is already aware of the concern felt by many of us in the west country about the economic impact of cutting links between the west country and the world. Will he give the House two assurances? First, he said that the CAA could act. Will he assure the House that he will intervene to ensure that it does act and that its actions are not discriminatory? Secondly, will he——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One question, please.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman said that the CAA could act, but it will have a statutory responsibility to ensure that there is no discrimination against any class of user. The CAA has a legal obligation, not simply discretion.

Sir Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that my constituency is one of the worst affected by aircraft noise. May I ask two questions——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One question only, please.

Sir Alan Glyn: I shall ask one question. Will the new plans increase the number of flights to and from London airport?

Mr. Rifkind: They will have little effect on increasing the total number of flights because Heathrow is already near its full capacity. Therefore, any significant changes will occur only if existing users decide to withdraw from Heathrow and other users take up the slots made available. There will be no significant increase in the overall use of Heathrow as a result of today's statement.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Can the Secretary of State tell the House precisely how he will guarantee continued access from the regional airports? How will airports like Manchester be guaranteed not only access to Heathrow, but an increased number of overseas flights? We have already been blocked on the second matter, and what the Secretary of State has announced today guarantees that we will be blocked on the first. We are outraged by that.

Mr. Rifkind: The liberalisation that has already occurred in respect of many of these rules has enabled airports like Manchester to extend the services that they can offer to various parts of the world. I wish that process to continue. Existing users are not affected by today's decision. Airlines that currently use Heathrow will be perfectly entitled to continue to use it.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Can my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House what is the maximum permitted level of air traffic movements at Heathrow? How close to that limit is the airport, and how will the situation be affected by the decision to allow series charter flights to use Heathrow?

Mr. Rifkind: The extent to which Heathrow can be used depends not just on runway facilities but on terminal and parking facilities. I am advised that at present those facilities are almost fully utilised. I do not believe that the decision on charter flights will have any significant effect. Even before restrictions on charter flights were introduced 14 years ago, about 90 per cent. of all charter operators chose to use Gatwick. It is very unlikely that a significant change will result from this decision.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Are not regional airlines already being forced out of Humberside, as well as Heathrow, because of very steep increases in landing charges? With these changes, life will be even harder for regional airlines. Already, Air UK has pulled out of the Humberside-Heathrow route, and Brymon, which was due to take it over on 1 April, has announced that it will not do so because it cannot afford the cost of the changes that are being introduced. The Secretary of State is decimating regional interlining and the development of a network of flights in this country.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman discloses a lack of awareness of how the system operates. He may be correct that regional airlines would like landing charges to be lower, but he is not entitled to say that there is discrimination against regional airlines. Indeed, the law

specifically prohibits such discrimination, and the Civil Aviation Authority is obliged to intervene in respect of any proposal that would conflict with the law.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I join my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) in supporting this proposal. In view of the shortage of slots, no airline should be allowed to use slots solely for the purpose of driving off a competitor airline. Airlines must use slots because they want to fly the routes, and such services must not be unviable and cross-subsidised by other routes.

Mr. Rifkind: I take my hon. Friend's point. The way in which the Heathrow scheduling committee operates is not a matter over which the Government have any direct control. However, I certainly hope that slots will be used in such a way as to benefit the public to the maximum extent, and not abused in the way to which my hon. Friend has properly referred.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What steps did the Secretary of State take to ascertain the professional judgment and views of the air traffic controllers? Did their association approve of the decision?

Mr. Rifkind: My statutory adviser is the Civil Aviation Authority. The CAA is responsible for looking into these matters and making recommendations to the Secretary of State. In this case, the authority carried out the fullest consultation with all interested parties. Many people were invited to put forward their views. The Civil Aviation Authority made a very strong and unambiguous recommendation. That recommendation has been published, and the hon. Gentleman is free to read it if he has not done so already.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that he is aware that his predecessor, when announcing on 5 June 1985 that a fifth terminal would not be constructed at Heathrow, said:

"I am pleased to be able to honour . . . the Government's pledge that terminal 5 would not be constructed."—[*Official Report*, 5 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 310.]

Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the Government have taken note of the use of the word "pledge"?

Mr. Rifkind: I say to my hon. Friend what I said in my original statement: the Government's policy remains as outlined in the White Paper of 1985.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Does the Secretary of State agree that increasing pressure on Heathrow will inevitably result in increased landing charges? Will not that result in a further increase in fares for journeys between London and Manchester, Edinburgh and Glasgow? The fares on those routes are already ludicrously high. Does the Secretary of State agree that the competition that is necessary to reduce fares will simply be squeezed out?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. He implies that BAA has an unqualified and uncontrolled right to levy landing charges. In fact, its proposals can be —and have been—overruled by the Civil Aviation Authority when it is perceived to have gone beyond its proper discretion.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Can my right hon. and learned Friend assure me that this modest move towards deregulation—towards the removal of artificial control over the movements of the airline market —will be continued while he is in office, so that Heathrow may begin to develop, as it should, as a modern airport that provides proper international services for the people of this country?

Mr. Rifkind: Indeed, I wish the movement to continue, but subject to its not having any unreasonable consequences for those who live in the vicinity of Heathrow. As I tried to indicate earlier, it is important to achieve a proper balance. The interests of the airport cannot be the only consideration.

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): Does my right hon. and learned Friend recognise that for people who live near Heathrow one of the most important elements of Government policy is the commitment to an improved night noise climate round the airport? Will he confirm that that continues to be Government policy?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, I can confirm that that continues to be Government policy. Indeed, it is a very important consideration.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): Given this initiative to allow all airlines equal access to Heathrow, when does my right hon. and learned Friend expect to announce steps to give foreign carriers similar access to Manchester and other regional airports?

Mr. Rifkind: I should certainly like to see further liberalisation of air traffic. At present, we are pursuing a number of initiatives at European Community level. The European Commission has made proposals that point in that direction. We shall certainly support strongly any steps towards enabling our regional airports to compete effectively and to provide the services that their communities want.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that my long-suffering constituents who live beneath the flight path at Heathrow are continually fearful that there will be an increase in the number of night flights and that a fifth terminal will be built? Those people will welcome the sympathy that my right hon. and learned Friend has expressed today, but in due course he will have to go much further to allay their fears completely. May I ask him to do so at the first opportunity?

Mr. Rifkind: I understand my hon. Friend's point. I hope that what I have said today will not be construed as a simple expression of sympathy. Indeed, I wish to provide practical support and to ensure that the legitimate interests of those who live near our major airports are protected from the very damaging environmental consequences that inevitably flow from the way in which modern airports operate. I do not pretend that these are easy matters, and I do not intend to address them simply by making soothing noises. I wish to ensure that legitimate interests are properly protected. That will mean occasionally saying no to the requests of airports and airlines.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for making this statement in advance of the further Bermuda 2 negotiations. It would

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

be helpful to the House if we were to have a proper debate on civil air transport. Issues of the most fundamental kind have been raised. I am grateful and sympathetic to my right hon. and learned Friend. I am sure that he, too, would welcome such a debate.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks, which will be drawn to the attention to the Leader of the House.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): If the Civil Aviation Authority has a statutory duty to act against discriminatory charges, why on earth has it not already acted to deal with the fact that the same charge is levied in respect of a small Brymon Dash 7 coming in from the west country as in respect of a jumbo jet arriving from across the Atlantic? That is terribly unfair. It will sound the death knell of the small regional companies unless something is done.

Mr. Rifkind: Clearly it is for BAA to seek to justify to the Civil Aviation Authority the respective cost of landing charges for smaller and larger aircraft. If my hon. Friend believes that the existing statutory requirements, under which the Civil Aviation Authority operates, are inadequate, I should be interested to hear any suggested improvements, but the legislation expressly outlaws discriminatory practices. There will always be a range of views as to what constitutes a discriminatory practice, but it is for the British Airports Authority to satisfy the CAA if it wishes to make changes that give rise to controversy.

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): May I warmly congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his courageous decision to get rid of the outdated traffic distribution rules which hinder competition and which have acted against the interests of the consumer? Does he agree that if we want to establish a competitive multi-airline business in Britain which will give consumers more choice, lower fares and a higher-quality service, all the small airlines, such as those which use my local airport, Newcastle, must be allowed access to Heathrow on an equal and fair basis to British Airways?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend for his warm welcome for today's statement. I agree with his desire to see the most beneficial use made of our airport facilities, consistent with the other requirements to which I referred throughout the statement.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry that three hon. Gentlemen have not been called. There is great pressure on time today. We must move on to the presentation of Bills.

BILL PRESENTED

Homeworkers

Mr. Keith Vaz, supported by Ms. Clare Short, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mrs. Maria Fyfe, Ms. Mildred Gordon, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Ken Livingstone and Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, presented a Bill to extend the rights of homeworkers so that they will receive the same protection from employment, health and safety at work and financial legislation currently afforded to employees undertaking similar work on the employer's premises; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Wednesday 27 March and to be printed. [Bill 100.]

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the three motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Immunities and Privileges) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Shops

5.1 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to relax certain restrictions on the opening hours of shops and other places where a retail trade or business is carried on; to make provision for licensing Sunday trading at such places; to make transitional provision as to the rights of persons employed as shopworkers; and for connected purposes.

The House might like to know that I have been authorised by the Consumers Association to say that it supports the principles of my Bill and hopes that the House will support it too.

Some weeks ago the Prime Minister, in a typical moment of understatement, described the Sunday trading laws as bizarre. Who can defend a situation where it is legal to sell a bottle of gin on Sunday but illegal to sell a packet of teabags? The latter-day Marie Antoinettes seem to think that it is moral to drink gin but wrong to drink a cup of tea on Sunday. Who can defend a position where it is legal to sell plants but illegal to sell the pots into which they might be put, and where it is legal to sell Sunday sport but illegal to sell the Bible on Sunday? Who can defend the absurd situation where cinemas can open legally for trade on Sunday, but a video shop, which seeks to sell or rent out the video of the same film that the viewer can see at the cinema, is acting illegally? It seems to be all right in the view of the "Keep Sunday Special" campaign to watch a film at the cinema but wrong to watch the video of that film in the bosom of one's home.

The Sunday trading law is rarely enforced. Every week it is broken by the 60,000 shops which open regularly to serve the needs of customers. The number of prosecutions is very small. A law which is regarded as so indefensible and so out of date that no one or very few seek to enforce it brings the whole rule of law into disrepute. If the law is regarded as out of date, that is not an argument for not enforcing it; it is an argument for repealing it here and now. The irony is that if the law were enforced there would be a minor revolution and a major campaign to ensure that it was changed dramatically.

The Shops Act 1950 was passed for a different era. It was an era of austerity and not of plenty, at a time when the majority of married women did not go out to work. It was passed long before anyone had thought of a DIY centre or a garden centre, and when no video shops existed anywhere in the country. The position has changed completely. Some 70 per cent. of married women go out to work. I hope I am not regarded as chauvinistic if I say that British industry could not survive without the work which women do.

Shopping on a Saturday is frequently a most unpleasant experience. One has only to get into a supermarket check-out or go to a toy shop just before Christmas to realise how unpleasant shopping on a Saturday can be. Since 1950 there has been a dramatic change in our attitude towards Sunday. Sunday sport, which was completely uncommon, is now regular and successful. More people go to watch cricket at Lords on a Sunday than on a Saturday or any other day of the week. Similarly, we have professional football on a Sunday, and it is not unknown for Wimbledon finals to take place on Sundays as well. Cinemas are open on Sunday. And of course the opening hours of public houses on a Sunday have been increased by a motion of the House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Parliament does not open on a Sunday.

Mr. Marshall: I sometimes think that those who have very little to say, apart from sedentary observations, would be better to keep quiet.

Sunday trading is defended by two unrepresentative bodies, one being the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers which represents one in 11 shopworkers. Sunday is rightly regarded as a day of rest and a day for the family, but many family-style activities are regarded as illegal under the 1950 Act. Who can say that it is bad for the family to be able to rent a video to watch in their own home, to go to a DIY centre and buy paint and wallpaper so that they can get on with improving their own home, to go to a garden centre to buy plants and other things for the garden?

Opponents of reform say that change would revolutionise Sunday. I should merely like to make two points about that. First, the Scottish sabbath has no protection from Sunday trading but many more people in Scotland than in England go to church, so the protection of Sunday does not guarantee that people go to church. I regret the recent publicised decline in church attendance. Secondly, many shops already open illegally on a Sunday, regardless of the state of the law.

The Bill seeks to introduce a system of licensed Sunday trading so that shops which currently open illegally, such as DIY centres, garden centres and convenience and neighbourhood stores, would be eligible to apply for licences to enable them to trade on Sundays. Others, such as the major multiples, major supermarkets and stores of over 3,000 sq ft, would be able to trade, again under licence, between 12 noon and 6 pm. That would show that there is a difference between Sunday and the rest of the week.

The Bill would also introduce provision for widespread Sunday trading in the six weeks before Christmas. Nothing destroys the spirit of goodwill that Christmas is meant to generate more than going shopping in a toy shop on a Saturday before Christmas. Conditions are unbearable. The queues are even longer than at normal supermarket check-outs.

The Bill would introduce local authority licensing which would mean that it would not be a formality. Local authorities could take account of the characteristics of an area.

The Bill would also introduce protection for employees who do not want to work on a Sunday. This is the first attempt to do that. I urge those who believe that there is a huge reservoir of people who do not want to work on a Sunday to consider the position at the moment. This morning I received a letter from a director of Do It All Ltd. in which he says:

"All our Sunday workers are paid premium rates and are volunteers. Indeed, the desire to work on Sunday is so strong that in many locations we have to rota the staff."

More people want to work on Sunday in that DIY store than there are jobs available.

The leaders of USDAW should point out to the House and the country that we have 2·2 million shop workers of whom 200,000 are paid-up members of USDAW. It represents one shop worker in 11. It should be regarded as being as unrepresentative as the "Keep Sunday Special" campaign.

I regard it as unfortunate that the "Keep Sunday Special" campaign has sought to rubbish my Bill and to

[Mr. Marshall]

oppose it without having the courtesy to ask me for a sight of it. That suggests that those involved have closed minds. They have issued a press release stating that they want a right of veto over Government measures on Sunday trading. I believe that that is wrong because they are unrepresentative and a small minority. They seek power without responsibility—the preserve of the harlot throughout the ages.

Under my Bill, individuals would be free to choose whether to work; they would be free to choose whether to open their shops; they would be free to choose whether to shop. Many will choose not to do so, but all should be free to make that choice. The defeat of the Shops Bill in 1986 underlined the need for compromise. This Bill provides a workable compromise, and I commend it to the House.

5.11 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Having listened with great care to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), I am even more pleased that I have sought your permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, to rise to oppose this Bill. May I respectfully suggest that the hon. Gentleman should re-read—if he has read it—the report of the full debate on the Shops Bill that was held on 14 April 1986, which was a classic debate covering this whole subject. It commenced at 3.45 pm and lasted until midnight. We had 8 hours and 15 minutes of reasoned, articulate, sincere and forthright arguments from hon. Members of all parties. As most hon. Members will recall, that Bill was defeated by 296 votes to 282—a majority of 14 votes.

Shops legislation, especially on the emotive subject of Sunday trading, will always engender considerable interest and inevitably conflicting opinions. Even if I were to attempt to sum up my total opposition to this Bill in the short time now available to me, I could say little that would be different from the many arguments that I have already made when discussing similar Bills to reform the Shops Act 1950.

The hon. Member for Hendon, South suggested that his Bill is the first attempt to protect workers on Sundays. Again, I ask him to read the report of another debate. I presented a ten-minute Bill entitled the Shops (Sunday Trading and Workers' Protection) Bill on 14 May 1986, which recognised the major criticism of the 1950 Act; its many and varied anomalies; its complications and, above all, the difficulties of enforcement. My Bill called for a standing conference and named the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), who is now the Father of the House, to chair discussions, proving that the only real solution is to seek agreement beyond the realms of personal and political prejudice.

I said then—I repeat again today—that any new proposals must provide adequate protection for some of the lowest paid workers—the shop workers. There must be wide involvement and comprehensive consultation with those who are directly or indirectly involved. The House should continue to seek consent by discussion and negotiation and should not attempt to tinker with a problem that requires great care and protracted negotiations.

The hon. Gentleman's Bill is second best when it comes to employee protection. It is essentially an exercise in damage limitation. No employee can be adequately safeguarded once the dam has been breached. Where are the proposals in the Bill to ensure the employment, remuneration and working conditions of the employees who would be expected to work on Sundays? Has the hon. Gentleman considered the cost, and the prices for the retail and distributive industries, or the interests and wishes of consumers? What about the suggested increase in crime; the demands on transport; the car parking; the effect on the environment and the interests of residents, to name but a few of the issues that the hon. Gentleman purposely overlooked?

Even more important, despite—or perhaps because of—the hon. Gentleman's known association with the deregulation lobby, he has blatantly disregarded or conveniently overlooked the talks that have already been planned and arranged by his right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold), the Minister of State, Home Office. The hon. Gentleman's Bill is singularly ill-timed, given that those talks are about to take place.

In the debate on the Shops Bill, my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) called on the Government in the last paragraph of his speech to withdraw their Bill and to hold a conference of all interests to work out agreed changes in the law that could be widely acceptable. His sound advice was rejected and the Government suffered the most humiliating defeat of their term in office.

Five years have passed and they now seek consensus. My union, USDAW, has accepted a meeting with the Minister of State, Home Office, on 11 April for talks about reform. The other organisations involved include "Keep Sunday Special"; "Sort out Sunday"; the Association of District Councils; the National Institute of Chambers of Commerce and Industry; the Free Church Federal Council; the British Council of Churches; the Irish Council of Churches; the Institute of Safety and Public Protection; the Board of Deputies of British Jews; the Churches' Main Committee; Churches Together in England; the Church of England Board for Social Responsibility; and Outlets Providing for Everyday Needs. Most have accepted dates, and discussions are already planned. That is a positive response and the most sensible and logical conclusion to this emotive subject.

My union, USDAW, is not Luddite. Whether or not only one in 11 shop workers is a member, it still has 400,000 members. They are law-abiding and expect all others to obey the law until such time as Parliament is convinced that there is a need for a change. We expect everyone, including the Prime Minister, to advocate and to ensure that the 1950 Act is not violated and that local authorities carry out their responsibilities if anyone attempts any blatant abuse.

If the hon. Member for Hendon, South is not prepared to withdraw his Bill, on the basis of the talks that are already planned, I have no alternative but to ask the House to join me in the No Lobby to vote against his Bill.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 75, Noes 144.

Division No. 88] **[5.17 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Ashby, David
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)

Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bowis, John
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Devlin, Tim
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Favell, Tony
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, John
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kirkwood, Archy
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Price, Sir David
Riddick, Graham
Roe, Mrs Marion
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sims, Roger
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waters, Sir Dennis
Warren, Kenneth
Whitney, Ray
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Barry Field and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Body, Sir Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evennett, David
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fry, Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gale, Roger
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Irvine, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kilfedder, James
Lamond, James
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudd, David
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody and
Mr. David Marshall

Question accordingly negatived.

Orders of the Day

New Roads and Street Works Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

5.29 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill has two distinct parts but there is a common theme—the reduction of congestion. Congestion can be relieved, of course, by constructing new roads—parts I and II of the Bill provide new opportunities for that—and by minimising the delay and diversion of traffic by utilities street works—which is dealt with in parts III and IV.

We are continuing a record level of expenditure on the trunk road network which, we are convinced, will bring great economic benefit. That public programme will run to about £6 billion for trunk roads in England over the next three years. That represents a 20 per cent. real increase over the past three years and will be concentrated on motorway widening and trunk road bypass schemes. The programme will involve widening most of the motorways in England and, with some 150 bypasses in the trunk road programme, it will bring relief to many towns and villages.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that there will be a wide welcome in the north-east of England for the Government's plans to upgrade the A1 to motorway status along its entire length? The northern region is the only part of the country which is not at present attached to the national motorway box. The Government's farsightedness in the matter has already gained them great praise in our part of the country.

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend is right. Upgrading the A1 is one example among many of the benefits of the public road programme—the trunk road programme for which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is responsible.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that, although he is condemned by Opposition Members, especially by the hon. Member who looks after Berwick, for spending more money on roads, when they return to their constituencies they stress the need for additional roads? The hon. Gentleman talks about the need for more roads to Berwick.

Mr. Freeman: I thought that my hon. Friend was referring to members of the official Opposition, who are in a difficult position because some of their senior spokesmen are in favour of cutting the roads programme. But in their constituencies they are in favour of maintaining the road programme, particularly where bypasses are proposed.

The private sector is playing an increasing role and the Bill will provide it with a secure framework in which to do so. We envisage private toll roads playing an albeit minor role in total road construction, but as an addition to the public road programme, which will continue on the scale that I have just described.

Let me clarify the role that we envisage for the private sector. The Bill is not about privatisation. First, it is purely about the provision of new roads and will leave the existing networks intact and free of tolls. I repeat the assurance given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State that we have no intention of tolling the existing motorway and trunk road network.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The Minister will be aware of the evidence given by banks and others to the Select Committee on Transport. Do I take it that the Minister also gives an absolute guarantee that, even where a new scheme is undertaken by private finance, no question of allowing tolling on existing roads will be discussed as a quid pro quo for providing finance?

Mr. Freeman: I give the hon. Lady that assurance.

Secondly, the Bill does not create private highway authorities. The private consortia who provide the finance and expertise to design, build and operate the new roads will work alongside existing highway authorities. In most cases, the highway authority will be the Secretary of State but local highway authorities will also be able to make use of the provisions in the Bill and the Government very much hope that they will do so. We are talking about not only national toll roads but toll roads encouraged and approved by highway authorities.

Existing highway authorities will retain their statutory powers and responsibilities, including those which relate to environmental assessment, although some of their operational functions will be exercised on their behalf by the concessionaires. In all cases, the highway authority will own the land on which the toll road is built.

Our proposals in the Bill closely follow the Green Paper "New Roads by New Means", which my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) published in May 1989. I pay tribute to him for his farsightedness in pioneering this new initiative. I remind the House that we already have the Dartford-Thurrock bridge, built with private finance and to be tolled like the existing tunnel. The bridge is nearing completion and we fully expect it to be opened later this year. It will provide welcome relief to those using the M25 and those currently forced to use the tunnel. The bridge will double the capacity across the Thames.

The Severn Bridge Bill is before the House. It will permit the construction of a second Severn crossing, to be built with private finance and tolled, like the first tolled bridge, which was opened by Barbara Castle, as she then was, the Labour Transport Minister, in 1966. The Green Paper also inspired the competition for the Birmingham northern relief road.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my hon. Friend confirm that the proposals do not include altering the planning procedure? If my constituents wish to object to the route of the proposed orbital route, will their existing rights under planning law be preserved?

Mr. Freeman: I have not yet come to deal with the western orbital route, although my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State answered a question on it earlier today. I shall have something to say about it in a moment. But I confirm to my hon. Friend that his assumption is correct. Whether a private toll road or a public road is proposed, the planning procedures will be clear. If proposals are objected to, they will be dealt with by a public inquiry. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and my right hon. and learned

Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, acting in a quasi-judicial fashion, will make a judgment on the results of a public inqury. The inquiry will take into account environmental and many other factors. The interests of my hon. Friend's constituents are well protected.

The proposed Birmingham northern relief road will be a toll road which will run from Coleshill to Cannock, providing an alternative to spaghetti junction for those travelling north or south on the M6. We are evaluating three serious tenders. Preliminary proposals are also being studied for the Birmingham-Manchester corridor. We expect to announce a winning tender for the Birmingham northern relief road in late spring.

The Scottish Office is evaluating three tenders for a bridge to the Isle of Skye and there is also great interest in the possibility of a privately financed last link between the M74 and M8 motorways in Scotland. More private finance competitions are in prospect. As I said, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced earlier today that he is seeking views on the idea of a private finance competition for the western orbital route in the west midlands. That route would join the Birmingham northern relief road at the M6 and run south to join the M5 close to its present intersection with the M42. It would provide the west midlands conurbation with almost two thirds of its orbital route. The remaining portion would be provided by the M42, which is a public untolled road.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): My hon. Friend will be aware that several hon. Members from the southern section of the western orbital route have reservations about the preferred route and its effect on the environment. Will he confirm that, although the road will no longer be sponsored by a Government Department and will effectively be sponsored by the private sector, people who are against the existing preferred options will be able to make representations prior to the public inquiry to either the successful tenderer or to the tenderers per se so that the preferred route can be altered in practice? When the public inquiry considers the route, will it take environmental factors into consideration just as such factors would be taken into consideration if the project had remained Government funded?

Mr. Freeman: As my hon. Friend represents the Wyre Forest constituency, I appreciate his concern. I confirm what he said at the end of his remarks. My hon. Friend knows that there is a preferred route for the western orbital route, but it has not yet gone to a public inquiry. We have decided that it is a candidate for private construction, with tolling. When the results of a competition, if such a competition is to be held, are known and a successful tenderer has been selected, it will be up to him, working with the Department of Transport, to prepare the draft toll and road orders which will be made available for public comment. The matter will then almost certainly go to public inquiry, in exactly the same way as the proposals for a public road—the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) laughs.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East) *rose*——

Mr. Freeman: When I have answered my hon. Friend's question I shall be happy to give way to him. I cannot understand his mirth. I am trying to deal with a very serious question that affects my hon. Friend's constituents.

A public inquiry is the right forum for considering all the environmental issues that my hon. Friend's constituents will wish to raise. It will provide them with the opportunity to argue for variations to the route. We expect the potential tenderers for the western orbital route to follow broadly but not slavishly the preferred route. If improvements can be made to mitigate the impact upon the environment, I am sure that my hon. Friend will not be slow in drawing his concerns to the attention of the construction companies which are interested in tendering for the route.

Mr. Snape: I am sorry if my smiling countenance offended the Minister. When I listened to his reply to the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs), I was merely reflecting on the fact that if the paraphernalia and palaver that he has just outlined for the western orbital route were to take as long as the equivalent procedure for the Birmingham northern relief road, the hon. Member for Wyre Forest would probably by then be the Father of the House.

Mr. Freeman: Such a delay will not happen. I cannot predict who, in generations to come, will be the Father of the House but I can confidently tell the hon. Gentleman that there is no reason to believe that there will be delay in constructing the western orbital route. There is a preferred route. The next stage is to hold a public inquiry. One of the purposes of introducing the private sector is to encourage innovative ideas and to get it to do the job quickly. If a sensible route is accepted, I envisage that its construction will be as quick, as, if not quicker than, the construction of a public road.

The House may recall that in June 1990 the Department of Transport issued a consultation document inviting views on the suitability of six new possible candidates for privately financed roads. I was greatly encouraged by the response from over 50 interested parties. The front runner among the six proposed schemes is a new second crossing of the River Tamar in the Plymouth area. We are commissioning further studies into the viability and environmental impact of such a crossing and consulting local interests. Subject to the outcome, we propose to announce details of a competition.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): Before my hon. Friend leaves the subject of a second Tamar crossing —I remind him that the existing crossing is already tolled —can he say how his remarks relate to the study that is to be undertaken into the possibility of a second road on a new line linking Exeter with Plymouth? The two projects are interrelated and interdependent.

Mr. Freeman: Yes, they are related. That is why further studies are required. That does not invalidate the arguments in favour of a tolled second crossing, but it points us firmly in the direction of ensuring that the location of the crossing is considered in relation to any new road. I hope to visit Plymouth shortly. My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) has suggested that it would be appropriate for me to examine the public transport infrastructure in the west country. When I do so, I shall confer with my hon. Friend in his constituency about the proposed road. Again the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East is full of mirth.

Mr. Snape: I do not want the Minister to think that I am laughing at everything that he says. However, he was unable to see the expression on his hon. Friend's face when he volunteered to visit his hon. Friend's constituency.

Dame Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): I am not sure to which hon. Friend the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) was referring, but if it were to me I can assure the Minister that I am delighted that he is to visit the west country. We always welcome visits from Ministers to the west country and their recognition of the importance of that part of the country.

Mr. Snape: I am sorry to have got the Minister into trouble with his hon. Friends. May I make it plain that I was referring to his hon. Friend with the new and fetching hairdo, the hon. Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks).

Mr. Freeman: Of the overland schemes that we suggested, the route between the M25 and Chelmsford seems the most promising. The Department will continue to work on this scheme, with a view to a privately financed competition after a preferred route has been established.

Sir Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): As everyone else seems to be making constituency points, I see no reason, Madam Deputy Speaker, why I should not do the same. I am prepared to accept that there should be a privately financed toll road from Chelmsford to the M25, but a few miles down the M25 motorists will be required to pay a second toll if they want to go through the tunnel or, prospectively, over a bridge. How much research has been undertaken not into whether the payment of tolls on a particular stretch of road is acceptable—by implication we know that that is the case—but into whether it would be equally acceptable if motorists had to pay two tolls on a relatively short stretch of road?

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend knows that the Dartford tunnel is already tolled. Before a tenderer put in his bid to the Department he would have to take into account, as was the case with the Birmingham northern relief road, the prospective demand by motorists for a particular toll road. When the competition is held for the M25 to Chelmsford corridor, the prospective tenderers will take into account the Dartford tunnel or Dartford bridge tolls and the likely demand for such a road.

Sir Robert McCrindle: Am I to take it from the Minister's answer that, in reaching the conclusion that the proposed motorway from Chelmsford to the M25 should be a candidate for a competition, the Department has not undertaken sufficient research to establish that the road is likely to be used to such an extent as to interest people in entering the competition?

Mr. Freeman: I apologise to my hon. Friend. He may not have heard my earlier remarks. I said that we have been consulting the industry for nine months about six prospective routes. Three of them were estuarial crossings, the other three were overland routes. Of the six, the two that seemed feasible, having consulted over 50 interested parties, were the Tamar crossing and the M25 to Chelmsford. That is why I am referring to them. It seems to us that there is prima facie evidence that they will work. Firm bids will be made only on the basis of a detailed traffic study.

The Bill will give those schemes a new impetus, by creating a new framework for authorising toll roads in much the same way as traditional trunk roads. I envisage, therefore, that the Birmingham northern relief road and the Skye bridge will be authorised in that way.

All those toll roads over land and water were either in the roads programme or under study for inclusion in that programme. They were all justified as serving the public interest. Including the Dartford and Severn bridge, the total programme amounts to over £1·5 billion.

The new procedure for authorising toll roads entails, first, competitive tendering for the provision of a road or bridge on a route or in a corridor nominated by the highway authority, national or local. The successful tenderer will be answered and the details of his proposal —apart from commercially confidential matters—will be made public. A concession agreement will be negotiated and signed and detailed draft road orders and toll orders will be prepared. They will be subject to a public inquiry, following which the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport will reach a decision, bearing in mind all relevant factors, just as for a public untolled road.

Before dealing with the street works and utilities side of the Bill, for which the Minister for Roads and Traffic has direct responsibility, I will deal with some remarks made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who is not in his place. Speaking for the Opposition in the debate on the Loyal Address, he gave eight objections to toll roads. I will deal with each because all eight, though succinct, were badly argued and reasoned.

He said, first, that sufficient money had already been raised from motorists and he did not understand why motorists should also pay a charge at the point of use. The Government are anxious to make the point that these are extra roads, additional to the roads programme, and that there will be a public toll-free alternative to those roads. By asking motorists to pay albeit an additional charge on their motoring costs, but at the point of use, they are given a clear alternative, in terms of overland routes, between paying the toll and perhaps enjoying a quicker journey and staying on the public road and not paying the toll.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): Does the Minister have notes in his brief about getting rid of any tolls? I am thinking of the Mersey tunnel toll. Talks about whether that toll should exist have been going on for about seven years. Does the Minister have any notes along those lines?

Mr. Freeman: No. The straight answer is that there are no such proposals from the Department of Transport, to the extent that it is our responsibility, about that or, for that matter, about the Humber bridge.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East argued, secondly, that toll roads would cost more to build than public roads. There is no evidence to suggest that is the case. Indeed, all the evidence points in the reverse direction. We would expect the private sector, using its skills and innovation and better project management skills, to complete a private sector road faster and with good value for money.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The Minister seems to have been congratulating himself for some time on the way in which he has streamlined and improved not only the speed but the control of road building plans. If he and his

Department are in such good control of the speed at which contractors build roads and the general way in which they operate, how does he imagine that there will be an improvement on the part of wholly private operators? What magic formula will they adopt that the Minister does not already apply, or is the truth that he is not at present doing the job very well?

Mr. Freeman: The private sector will design the roads and then build them. That is not, and never has been, the case with public roads. There is a division of responsibility between highway authorities for designing and preparing road schemes and private contractors coming in to do the construction work. Here we are talking about designing, building, maintaining and operating.

Mr. Snape: What is the difference between the reasoning of the Minister's answer to the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs), that all environmental considerations would be examined before the private sector went ahead and built a road, and what he said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), that the private sector expertise would result in roads being built even faster? Is he denigrating the expertise of his own highway people, formerly known as the road construction units, and the battery of civil servants without whom he rarely appears in the Chamber?

Mr. Freeman: I am baffled by the hon. Gentleman's logic. The public inquiry stage comes before the road is constructed. By bringing the private sector into various schemes, such as Dartford, the second Severn crossing, Birmingham northern and the western orbital, the private sector, using its skills and better project control and with its own funds on the line——

Mr. Snape: Better than whom?

Mr. Freeman: The public sector. A privately constructed road, in the judgment of the Government, will be completed as fast as, if not faster than, a public sector road, which is the reverse of what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East argued.

That hon. Gentleman said, thirdly, that there would be greater delays. He referred to the Birmingham northern relief road, which was a special case, the western orbital route, the Tamar crossing and Chelmsford to the M25. There is no reason why there should be a greater delay in the completion of a privately tolled road than the comparator public road.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East argued, fourthly, that congestion on public roads would increase. Logic tells one that if one builds a road to help relieve congestion on a public road, those using both the new toll road and the public road will benefit.

His fifth argument was that it would presage two-tier road use. The principle of tolling is well established over many bridges in this country. The private sector company, the concessionaire, will set tolls at a rate that will attract custom. There will always be a public sector free alternative.

He argued, sixthly, that it would take 20 to 30 years to pay for a toll road. The Secretary of State will continue to own the land, as will be the case for local authority roads, and at the end the road will revert to the state. A Labour Government in the past supported the tolling of the Severn and Humber bridges with long payback periods.

The hon. Gentleman's seventh argument was that the road that it was relieving would have to be kept congested —"congested" was his word—to encourage business for the toll road. That is absolute nonsense. The public road will be properly maintained by the relevant highway authority and, I believe, will be less congested.

He argued, eighthly, that toll roads would ruin the green countryside. I answered that by pointing out that our proposals must be subject to public inquiry.

I come to the street works and utilities, and the Minister for Roads and Traffic will perhaps be better able to answer points on this aspect of the Bill when he replies. That portion of the Bill applies to England, Wales and Scotland, although there is a separate section for Scotland. The principle of the Bill—I gather that there is widespread support on both sides of the House for the provisions that implement the Horne report—is to lay on highway authorities the responsibility for co-ordinating utilities, the statutory undertakers, and their planning for digging up the streets and, at the same time, to place on the utilities concerned responsibility not only for proceeding diligently and with all deliberate speed but with reinstating the road properly and then guaranteeing the quality of their work.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Perhaps the Minister will clarify the interpretation of clause 54. As he said, there is a widespread welcome for implementing the recommendations of the Horne report, on the reinstatement not only of the roads but also of the pavements by public utilities. London boroughs fear that the clause might exclude pavements. Ordinary human beings talk about roads and pavements, but the legislative terminologies are carriageways, highways and footways. Perhaps the Minister could reconcile those terms and assure us that pavements will have to be reinstated.

Mr. Freeman: We shall return to that matter in detail in Committee. I hope that I can give my hon. Friend some reassurance. Clause 54 encompasses pavements and the public highway. The Bill intends to provide control in certain circumstances over pavement works. I hope that my hon. Friend and other London Members will be satisfied with the outcome.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Will the Minister look at devising some means of persuading authorities that normally have nothing to do with roads to get their heads together and co-operate so as to avoid the ludicrous situation which I shall describe? The electricity authority, the gas authority and the water authority all insisted that three separate trenches should be dug on a 20 m stretch of highway. Surely that is nonsense. Some of us pleaded with them to be sensible and to put all three services in one duct, but they said no, that each authority must have its own trench.

Mr. Freeman: I sympathise with the right hon. Gentleman. The Bill's object is to make sure that the local authority, relying on the latest computer technology, keeps a register of proposed and existing street works that will ensure the co-ordination of the various utilities so that, one after the other, they do not all dig up the road.

Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen have introduced an element of humour into the debate and perhaps I could conclude on a similar note.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I always like to share a good joke with my hon. Friend the Minister. Does he

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

accept that all highway authorities, the Department of Transport and the territorial departments and the local authorities, together with the utilities, should urgently seek to make temporary reinstatements to some of the trenches that were uncovered during the recent frost and bad weather? They pose a real danger, especially at night and to motor cyclists, and during the next two weeks it should be possible with some push to cover up some of those death traps. I know that that needs to be done before the Bill receives Royal Assent.

Mr. Freeman: I shall certainly convey my hon. Friend's thoughts to the appropriate authorities. My hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic is beside me on the Front Bench. I have experienced some of the problems to which my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) has referred. I pay tribute to him for his work on the Horne report. His early acceptance of that report presaged the Bill.

All hon. Members will recall the immortal words of Flanders and Swann which have been quoted many times. They run:

"It was on a Monday morning that the gas man came to call."

I hope that we can soon add the words, "But only after checking with all his other mates, and by Friday he had made good and gone, job well and truly done."

In commending the Bill to the House I shall finally refer to the main and, I suspect, the controversial part of the Bill —the section on toll roads. Our toll road proposals mean more roads provision than would otherwise have been possible and those roads will probably be built quicker. All will be built with proper environmental safeguards and, where there is a monopoly, the tolls will be controlled. Where there is no monopoly and a public free highway alternative exists, tolls will be set at levels determined by the market. Those roads will provide benefits to their paying users and relieve congestion on the public roads. The Labour alternative is to deny that opportunity. The result of its policy is either fewer roads or higher taxation. I commend the Bill to the House.

6.4 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): As the Minister of State said, this is very much a two-stage Bill. Parts I and II provide for the construction and management of privately funded roads, and parts III and IV implement the recommendations of the Horne review of the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950. The first part is at best irrelevant and distracts from the steps that must be taken to tackle Britain's transport problems.

We believe that need is the proper justification for road provision and that privately funded roads that are designed to offer opportunities to construction companies and similar businesses must be properly scrutinised in the House to ensure that matters which the Government would regard as distractions are not set aside. What are these matters? They include countryside and environmental protection policies, which were mentioned by the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs). They include interaction between land use, planning and transport, which were identified in the Government's recent White Paper on the environment but were not mentioned by the Minister in his speech.

Those concerns demand some answers before we go ahead with the projects that the Minister has outlined. What assessment has been made of the environmental impact of the first part of the Bill? What steps have been taken to identify and regulate any property development which will inevitably be associated with new road proposals and may be considered an inducement to construction companies to compete for such roads?

What details will the Minister make available to the House about special road proposals and how will such proposals be made available for public scrutiny? What consideration have the Government given to the conflict between the Government's current transport policy, in so far as it exists and was outlined by the Minister, and the need for countryside and environmental protection?

We are sceptical about the likely level of privately funded road building. Those of us with constituencies in the west midlands are aware of the long-standing saga of the Birmingham northern relief road. Despite the passage of many years, that road seems to be no more than a private sector twinkle in the weary and jaundiced eyes of successive Transport Ministers. The project has been touted round the private sector for years, but appears to be no nearer commencement.

Thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), just before the debate started I received a Department of Transport press release which mentions private finance competition for the midlands western orbital route. The hon. Member for Wyre Forest spoke about some immediate concerns on that proposal and I did my best, inadequate though it probably was in the Minister's eyes, to reassure the hon. Gentleman that, given the saga of the Birmingham northern relief road, he did not have too much to worry about for some years.

The hon. Member for Wyre Forest amply illustrated the concerns felt by many hon. Members about the environmental consequences of this piece of ideological nonsense. He pleaded with the Minister on behalf of himself and other hon. Members affected by the midlands western orbital route to be allowed to make representations to the developers. I am not sure whether the Minister agreed because he shrugged off his hon. Friend's plaintive cry with his customary sophistication. That shows the difficulties in which the Government will find themselves when they substitute private sector competition, such as it is, for a proper and reasonable transport policy. I commend to Conservative Members who have been unduly impressed by the Minister's oratory an in-depth look at the saga of the Birmingham northern relief road.

If there is a proven need for the two roads in the west midlands that the Minister mentioned, they should be built and paid for, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said, out of the estimated £19 billion that the Treasury raises from transport taxes of one kind or another. That view is not held solely by the Labour party. Employers' organisations and organisations such as the British Road Federation Ltd., which are not normally known for left-wing bias and tendencies, take exactly the same view. If those roads were properly planned and resourced, the environmental and other factors that I mentioned would be properly considered. Even the Government, with their naive belief in the private sector cavalry galloping to their rescue, think that that would be a better alternative than the sort of gold-card, senior executive highway which they are trying to coerce the private sector into building.

Let us consider the history of private sector involvement in the Birmingham northern relief road. That road was formally included in the roads programme as long ago as 1980, although parts had been considered by the Department of Transport as far back as 1971. Orders for the scheme were published in 1987 and a public inquiry held in the summer and autumn of 1988, when there was little opposition. In November 1985, the dual-three road, the A446M, was costed in the roads programme at £140 million. In the most recent programme it was not costed.

At a public inquiry the Department argued that the road was essential for the relief of the M6 between junctions 4 and 10 and to allow maintenance on the midlands links viaduct to take place. Those hon. Members with constituencies in the west midlands need no reminder of the amount of time that maintenance has been taking place on the midlands links viaduct.

Construction of the road is expected to begin in 1991 and end by 1994. In May 1989, the then Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), unexpectedly announced that no ministerial decision would be taken as he would invite the private sector to build and operate the road, but he said at the time that that would not delay the scheme.

The Department told potential developers that their route should broadly follow the original line. Once again I am sorry that the hon. Member for Wyre Forest is no longer in his place, because in view of the Department's attitude, there is not much consolation there for him regarding his environmental concerns. Pre-qualification bids were invited in late 1989 and early 1990. Four bids were received and were all deemed acceptable. Formal tenders were invited in spring 1990 and three were received from the Tarmac, Trafalgar House and Manufacturers Hanover consortia. According to the latest information, the Department will make the decision. Press speculation suggests that it will be between Tarmac and Trafalgar House.

The Minister said that the decision would be taken in the spring. That was elegantly put. It means that there has been a slippage, because we were recently told that the decision would be taken in March. I am not sure when spring starts in the Minister's eyes, but I have an idea that it does not start in March. There has already been a slight delay. Perhaps the Under-Secretary of State can be a little more precise, as none of us is sure when spring starts for the Minister of State.

That will not be the end of this long-drawn-out business; once the decision about allocation of contracts is taken, the Department will presumably have to renegotiate a contract with the developers because the original costings were made some years ago. I should be delighted for some confirmation of that from the Under-Secretary or whoever replies to the debate. I should also like to know whether it will be considered necessary to hold a further public inquiry, once a decision has been taken.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I know that what really concerns my hon. Friend is the stress and strain that will be placed on Trafalgar House by these methods. Perhaps I can reassure him that since it is doing extremely well out of its relationship with British Rail Engineering Ltd., in terms of the amount of money that it is borrowing from Trafalgar House, he should not put himself out too greatly.

Mr. Snape: I always acknowledge my hon. Friend's expertise in these matters. I am sure that the Minister will have heard what she said. I must confess that the future financial well-being of Trafalgar House was not uppermost in my mind when I mentioned it, but no doubt its involvement with BREL will enable it to generate enough capital out of job losses within that company to make a successful bid for this contract.

The Department of Transport should tell us how long the decision will take and how such roads fit in with policies that are supposedly designed to reduce the generation of carbon dioxide by the British transport sector. The Minister said that there will be roads for ordinary mortals and roads for executive types running from the same point A to the same point B, although not necessarily parallel. Surely the Government accept that the construction of duplicate roads will generate more traffic. Surely extra traffic generation will mean more carbon dioxide. I see that the hon. Gentleman at the back of the Conservative Benches is shaking his head. He and I have crossed swords on too many occasions. If he would like to stand up and tell me why he is shaking his head, I should be delighted to give way.

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon) *rose*——

Mr. Snape: I was not looking at the hon. Member for Swindon, but I shall come back to him in a second; he should contain himself or go and lie down, as I shall give way to him in a moment. In so far as the environmental aspects of the Government's road-building policy exist, do they have any impact on the ranks of Conservative Members?

Mr. Simon Coombs: The hon. Gentleman is making an interesting case about the idea of having one road for the wealthy and one for the not-so-wealthy—people like himself and myself. Does he think that there might be a benefit in road safety terms if the wealthy Jaguar drivers, who exceed the speed limit, were on one road, leaving the other road for people such as ourselves?

Mr. Snape: It was predictable that someone would lob in that especially cheap jibe at some stage during the debate. I had taken little bets with my hon. Friends as to which Conservative Member would come out with it. The hon. Member for Swindon was not in the betting, but he has obviously come down to the same level as his hon. Friends. If any hon. Members in the House who cover a considerable number of miles in the course of parliamentary duties have never exceeded the speed limit, let them stand up and be counted. I would soon have to sit down. I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Swindon would like to reply to that.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham) *rose*——

Mr. Snape: There is always one, and I shall give way to the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) if he wishes to intervene.

Mr. Arnold: I thought that the reference was to the Jaguar of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), not to the Jaguar belonging to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott).

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I am getting a little envious. I think that we should leave Jaguars alone and get on with the debate.

Mr. Snape: I was going to ask if I might ride in yours, Madam Deputy Speaker, but in view of your strictures, I had better not. However, there is not a better car. It is built in the west midlands and I commend it to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that we will have less of the advertising.

Mr. Snape: Our party is not renowned for free commercials, so I shall leave it at that.

I shall return to the question whether privately funded roads are necessary. The Government will have to concede that, if privately funded roads are necessary, it is essential that the interests of people who may use them are properly protected. The Bill specifically refers to some issues which must be included in any concession agreement and during debates in the other place it was acknowledged that safety and maintenance and construction standards can be dealt with in such an agreement. Not only does that not go far enough, but the Government have so far refused to amend the Bill to reflect those and other concerns. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Member for Deptford will return to these important matters in Committee.

The Minister did not linger long on parts III and IV of the Bill. Opposition Members welcome the overhaul of the provisions of the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950. We especially approve the following proposals. We agree that the provision for local authority direct labour organisations to tender for utility work is fair and sensible and we hope that, having seen the common sense of that proposal, the Government will ensure in later stages of the Bill that some of their less enlightened Back-Benchers understand the reasoning behind it.

We agree with the duty that is imposed on both highway authorities and utilities to ensure the better co-ordination of street works. As has already been said, few things are more annoying than the constant digging up of roads by various utilities. We are pleased about the reference in part IV to the needs of people with disabilities. We should like to know, however, how the Department expects the power in clause 70—to introduce charges for the occupation of road space—to be used. We understand that it will be treated merely as a reserve power. We do not want the clause to undermine the delicate balance of parts III and IV.

Finally, let me ask a few specific questions, particularly about tolls. For instance, how many schemes do the Government propose to introduce under part I, and where will those schemes be implemented? The Secretary of State referred to one or two, but, if only five or six are envisaged, do we really need the earlier parts of the Bill? Would not the schemes be better considered individually—or do the Government, in what I hope is the short time left to them, plan to introduce a countrywide system of toll roads?

The Labour party believes that toll roads will create a system of first-class and second-class roads——

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Snape: Of course; I am delighted to be thus described.

Mrs. Hicks: I have listened carefully to what my honourable colleague has said. I am rather saddened by his negative approach to the transport system. Does he not realise that, if he opposes the introduction of the private roads, he will cause further harm to the process of opening up the west midlands? Anyone who has sat in a car for some time on the M6 north of Birmingham knows about the congestion. I should have thought that he, as a fellow west midlands Member, would welcome the opportunity to introduce the private sector in an attempt to speed up the provision of a choice of routes. Business men in my constituency who will be affected by the western orbital route will be very disappointed by his small-minded approach.

Mr. Snape: Having been described first as the hon. Lady's hon. Friend and then as her honourable colleague, I am sorry that she has been so rude to me. I was trying to explain how her party's ideology had taken over its commitment, as a Government, to alleviate road congestion in the region that both she and I have the honour to represent.

I have been trying to show—obviously inadequately, as the hon. Lady has not understood—that the northern relief road proposals have been part of the Government's road programme since 1980. I shall say this fairly slowly. I hope that the hon. Lady understands that any further hawking of the proposals round the private sector and any further public inquiries, should they be necessary—we do not know whether they will be; so far the Government have not told us—will lead even more of our business men to sit fuming on the M6. If the hon. Lady will not take my sensible advice and travel by train—Jaguars notwithstanding, Madam Deputy Speaker—I am afraid that, thanks to the Government's ideology, she and the business men for whom she has so properly expressed concern will remain trapped in traffic jams for many more years while this futile ideological debate continues in the ranks of the Conservative party.

The Government amended the Bill at an early stage to allow tolls to be levied after the road had reverted to the public sector. Why? Will that be the norm, and is there some specific reason, apart from the ideological ones, for the making of the amendment in another place? Organisations such as the Automobile Association, the Freight Transport Association and the British Road Federation have expressed concern, fearing—I hope that this will interest the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks)—that private finance will be not an addition to, but a substitute for, Government money. I hope that the Minister will clarify that, for the benefit of those organisations as well as that of the Opposition.

Will tolls have to pay capital as well as maintenance costs? If so, will not that be prohibitively expensive, as well as causing road users enormous delays? What concessions are envisaged? Will there be tolls for cyclists and motor cyclists, as well as for lorries and cars? How will the toll level be assessed and who will be responsible for assessing it—the developer, the Department or a combination of the two? Will an upper limit to the price of tolls be imposed anywhere in the country? After all, we understand that a study at the North London polytechnic's business school forecast that a toll on the double decked M25—if the Government were daft enough to propose one—would amount to as much as £21 per journey, given a rate of 60,000 vehicles per day.

How extensively have the Government consulted the European Commission about the proposals in the early parts of the Bill? When other member states have introduced tolls, the United Kingdom has rightly claimed

that they would unfairly affect our road haulage industry, as hauliers would have to pay two levies—domestic licence fees and toll charges. Presumably the same point was made to other EC countries; if so, perhaps the Minister will tell us their reaction.

In industrialised countries, transport accounts for about 30 per cent. of total energy consumption. Within that 30 per cent., road transport alone accounts for a great deal. Transport is the fastest-growing cause of carbon dioxide emissions, and nearly 20 per cent. of all United Kingdom emissions are related to road transport.

According to figures from the Department, there are 140 million cars and 15 million goods vehicles in western Europe. The Department forecasts an increase in road traffic in this country of between 83 per cent. and 142 per cent. by the year 2025. How and where do privately financed roads fit in with the Government's environmental thinking—a question that I have already asked, but one that I ask again in the context of the Department's own figures? Despite much argument in the other place, the Bill contains no provisions concerning its environmental effects or its relation to land use planning.

The Nature Conservancy Council estimates that up to 160 sites of special scientific interest are threatened by the current roads programme, as are five county sites of wildlife importance, two trust reserves, one national nature reserve and three local nature reserves. English Heritage estimates that the programme will have an impact on more than 800 known archaeological sites; the National Trust estimates that 32 of its areas will be affected.

Privately financed roads neither benefit the environment nor relieve congestion. Will not many cars and lorries simply prefer to continue to use the existing roads, rather than paying tolls? How will the Bill stimulate a modal shift to rail travel which, supposedly, is part of the Government's philosophy, as espoused by the new Secretary of State for Transport?

Opposition Members believe that the proposals are motivated more by ideology than by any attempt to solve Britain's transport crisis. In Committee we shall do our best to improve the Bill—although we believe that the earlier parts are largely beyond improvement, and the Labour Government who will be elected at the next general election will look again at all its proposals.

6.28 pm

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Let me take up two points made by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape). He seemed to suggest that the two midlands schemes should be financed from the taxation currently imposed on motorists and the motor industry. Does that represent a move towards hypothecation on the part of the Labour party? Alternatively, perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell us what other parts of its policy Labour will jettison to fund the roads from the Exchequer. Perhaps he really meant that the roads should be built because taxes would have to rise to pay for them.

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman refers to hypothecation. Labour's transport document "Moving Britain into the 1990s" contains the proposal—no doubt, in Conservative Members' eyes, Marxist-oriented—that large companies in major cities should be made to pay a 1 per cent. payroll tax, to be spent entirely on improving public transport provision in those cities. We suggest that, to pay for that, companies should reduce the amount that they spend on company cars.

The hon. Gentleman also asked how the roads would be paid for. He was obviously not listening when I made it plain that, given that £19 billion is available, if the roads are essential, the money ought to be spent to pay for them.

Mr. Fry: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his answer. I would merely point out that, when we went to Grenoble to see the new public transport system, involving a levy on employers, we discovered to our interest that there were more car parking places in the centre of the city and more cars coming into the centre of the city than before the public transport system was built. Perhaps public transport systems do not always create the desired effect.

The hon. Gentleman also talked about pollution. Surely he would agree with me that cars that stand in long traffic jams create far more pollution than traffic flowing freely on inter-urban roads. Far from increasing pollution, the creation of inter-urban roads could do something to reduce it.

Both of the matters covered by the Bill have been of great interest to me as joint chairman, for the past 16 years, of the parliamentary road study group and as the senior Conservative on the Select Committee on Transport. As long ago as 1983, the Select Committee argued that the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950 should be amended. Almost two years ago, in an Adjournment debate answered by my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities, then Minister for Public Transport, I asked for plans to allow further private financing of road building. At long last, we have a Bill before us. Although the Department has not exactly moved with the speed of light, we should warmly welcome the Bill. As always, one or two minor details will need to be examined in Committee, but in general the House should approve the Bill and hope that it will be enacted as soon as possible.

I found the comments made by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East a little strange. The Labour party apparently feels so strongly about toll roads that it has not even bothered to whip its members and does not intend to divide the House. The hon. Gentleman and I both know that if the Labour party was really so strongly opposed to the Bill, it would have brought its members in to vote against it.

Mr. Snape: Senior Conservative or not, the hon. Gentleman can rarely resist making a cheap political point. I made it quite plain that the Labour party is strongly in favour of the second part of the Bill. No doubt had we whipped our members tonight, the hon. Gentleman would have pointed out how illogical it was to vote against something of which the Front-Bench spokeman had already said we were in favour. The hon. Gentleman's problem is that he does not stick to the script.

Mr. Fry: Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I write my own script. I can only say that, if I have learnt cheap political tricks, it has been in many years of debate with him on transport matters.

Let me refer first to the second part of the Bill, which deals with street works. I do not think that we need say too much about that tonight. All of us have experienced frustration and irritation as a result of the constant digging-up of roads. I am reminded of an incident that

[Mr. Fry]

took place a few years ago. A hole was dug in the road in one of our major cities. It was surrounded by fencing and everybody went away. It was a week before anybody asked who had dug up the road and which authority was responsible. In fact, no one had been responsible; it was a practical joke. The problem has existed for many years and regulation is needed.

As I said, we shall have to consider one or two points in Committee, including the right to charge a statutory undertaker for his occupation of the road and questions concerning emergency work, and further work after substantial road works have been carried out. I hope that we shall defer to the Committee on all these matters. I hope that they can be dealt with satisfactorily and in the spirit of co-operation already shown by the joint utilities —the cable industry and the highway authorities. The proposals are long overdue. There should be a minimum of further argument about them and we should seek to ensure that they reach the statute book at the earliest opportunity.

As the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East said, much more controversial are the two parts of the Bill dealing with the provision of new roads. There will be those—both in the House and outside it—who believe that we do not need any more new roads. They are perfectly entitled to their opinion, but I feel that they are misguided, for the reason spelt out clearly by the hon. Gentleman —the enormous increase in car ownership that will take place over the next 20 years. We already have the most congested main roads of any developed country in the world. With an influx of new traffic on the scale that has been forecast, our present network is in danger of becoming overloaded—even given the Government's far-sighted plans to improve the motorway system. The task of building sufficient new roads even partially to meet the new demand is clearly the Government's responsibility.

I do not want anyone to go away with the impression that I am advocating covering the countryside with concrete or asphalt. I believe, however, that successful inter-urban movement is the prerequisite for economic development and achievement. Some people say, "Put everything on the railway." Anyone who has examined that proposition knows perfectly well that if we double or treble what is being carried on British Rail—I would welcome such a move—it would still leave a tremendous amount of freight to be carried on our road network, and that is even if British Rail itself could cope with such an increase in demand. While I do not suggest that more and more money should simply be put into the road building programme—be it private or public—I believe that there will be an ongoing demand for road expenditure. That is why the Bill is important, as is the move towards securing more private finance.

Whatever our political views, we all accept that public resources will always be scarce and that public moneys will increasingly be needed for all kinds of transport infrastructure projects. Only recently, we read that British Rail needs—or has asked for—an extra £2 billion next year. We have learnt that the new light rail schemes that the Government are approving will be funded almost entirely from public funds. Only this week, London Underground announced that it would take seven or eight years to bring about the improvements that are needed, and its chairman said that the company could not achieve that entirely without Government assistance. In addition to such projects are the many experiments needed to improve access to buses and to encourage more bus operations in our towns and cities. All those activities will take up a valuable part of our national resources.

The need for transport finance is becoming enormous. Surely, therefore, we should welcome any proposal that will add to our transport infrastructure and take some of the strain off public expenditure. The urban improvements that we need are on such a large scale that it is essential that we find any assistance that we can.

We must put the proposal for private road finance into context, however. The 1989-90 Select Committee report "Roads for the Future" said that private finance may make a welcome contribution but that it will not provide a solution to the fundamental problem. Among the evidence that we received before we reached that conclusion was that from the Bank of America, which pointed out that privately financed roads would make only a minor contribution. However, the Bank of America saw such roads playing a significant part in providing major thoroughfares. It is clear, therefore, that, although the proposal will help, it does not provide the whole answer. I do not think that the Government would claim that it does.

During that investigation, we also discovered that the construction industry still had many reservations. It felt that much still needed to be done to make its involvement in building roads more attractive. For its part, the Select Committee felt that the time between conception of a road and its completion was still far too long. Even with the Government's welcome new proposals on planning and compensation, the period will still be too long.

In addition, there is the problem that the cost of preparing and planning a road project is very high. Figures given to the Select Committee showed that about 5 or 6 per cent. of the total cost of a new road project could be taken up purely in planning and preparation. If a concern is uncertain whether it will win a contract, few construction groups will want to put up or borrow large amounts of money when it will be a very long time—even if the project is successful—before there is a return.

I think that I know what the Government's response to that point will be. They will argue that the schemes that they have put forward have attracted many interested parties. However, it is worth considering the Select Committee's report and another quotation from the Bank of America:

> "Investors need to keep a balanced portfolio of assets and this is not possible if the Government releases relatively few schemes at a time as at present. The private sector money would show more interest if and when a relatively large number of schemes is available on the market."

I support the Bill, but I believe that more must be done to attract more private sector involvement because I desperately believe that we must spend more on transport as a whole.

One of my reservations about the success of the current proposals is fairly simple: although there are a number of obvious candidates for private money, at the moment that list is not too extensive. The Select Committee considered that problem. We took up the suggestion that more joint funding between the public and private sectors was desirable. We felt that that was particularly appropriate

where there would be large benefits to the public which would not be extracted in the form of revenue by the promoter—for example, an increase in land values or congestion relief for the public road network.

The Select Committee concluded that, properly set up, there was no reason to suppose that joint funding ventures would involve Government subsidies or even Government guarantees. We thought that such schemes were a sensible way of sharing the risks and maintaining the benefits of private sector involvement.

The Government have taken their time to promote many more joint fundings, particularly on a national scale. For a number of years there was an insistence on either totally public or totally private. The most recent example involved the question how to finance the channel rail link entirely within the private sector. However, I believe that there are some encouraging signs. The climate is changing and in that respect I pay tribute to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and to his work in public transport. He has been willing to involve the Government in schemes to improve transport efficiency. I want particularly to pay tribute to his attitude towards sensible light rail schemes and to his approval of schemes that meet the national criteria. However, there are many schemes available, but insufficient money to meet them. Therefore, the more that we can do through joint funding or by other means to attract more private money, the better.

Already many of our local roads have been considered suitable for developer contributions. Although that is welcome, there are problems. For example, it often takes some time to put a scheme together and to reconcile the views and needs of the local community, the local authority and those who want to take advantage of the development. Schemes are being delayed because of a lack of sufficient public money in the form of the local authority contribution and also because the developers must be convinced that the scheme will be to their best advantage.

There are two schemes in my constituency that have a high priority in terms of traffic flows and they are necessary on environmental grounds. One of them, the Wellingborough eastern relief road, which would complete the town ring road and help hundreds of my constituents, has had to be dropped from the county council's transport policy plan because the council felt that it did not have sufficient funds to build it purely as a county road. Therefore, the building of the road has been delayed until developers can fund part of it. A similar problem applies, although to a lesser extent, to the other priority scheme, the Isham bypass.

All that seems to show that joint funding can make a contribution and has much to offer, although the present circumstances need to be improved. One of my minor criticisms of the Bill is that it does not address that problem. I believe that more could and should be done to build more schemes through joint funding arrangements.

Another concern is land use. In recent years, it has been fashionable to develop out-of-town shopping and to open up new land that was previously not used for commercial purposes. That has happened frequently because town centres have become congested. This is not the occasion to debate whether that is desirable, but there is no doubt that the right kind of road and planning policies could cause more developers to be interested in subsidising or paying for roads if they felt that the scheme opened up new land.

The Bill tends to relate to access on to the road from nearby land. If that is to be the criterion, there is a danger that many firms will want access to that private road. Too many accesses to a road could constitute a road safety problem. However, a limited access to the road, opening up new land away from but adjacent to it, could create more interest without creating road safety problems.

It must be possible to allow a promoter to benefit from a development that would not be acceptable without the new road but would be acceptable with it. Such land would then have an increased value and a planning gain. If it was taken up by the promoter of the road and sold later when the road was completed, the proceeds from that extra gain could well form a substantial part of the cost of the whole venture.

The Bill's proposals are good, but I suspect that their impact will be more limited than the Government might like. I have tried to describe further steps which must be taken to encourage more private ventures and I hope that those schemes will come forward.

For a long time I have felt strongly that additionality was an essential part of the Government's proposals in relation to private financing of roads. Indeed, I said that two years ago in an Adjournment debate. I believed that we must be sure that we were not merely saving on schemes that the Government would otherwise produce themselves.

I have been impressed over the past two or three years by the enormous demand for transport investment in many realms of activity, and I have become aware that we cannot solve all our traffic problems simply by building roads. We must consider new light rail systems, new bus systems and park-and-ride. Provided that the money saved by building private roads is reinvested in transport infrastructure as a whole, my opposition to no additionality would be much diminished. We face a serious future unless we put more money into the transport infrastructure. The Bill must be supported because, whether we are road, rail, pipeline or water advocates, it will give the Government the opportunity to spend more money on transport as a result of the schemes.

For far too long, transport has been the Cinderella subject in national debate and in political priorities. That is the result of two main factors. First, we discovered that personal services were more important. One tends to win or lose more votes on personal services such as health and education. Secondly, in a local authority that is confronted with a problem, the first item to be cut is capital expenditure. That is true of national and local government.

In the past few years, there has been increasing public awareness of public transport problems and increasing public demand for the Government to attend to them. That increasing public awareness is the result of two factors—increasing affluence and the demand for more mobility, and the neglect of transport investment over the past 30 or 40 years.

Public financing will not solve all the problems of congestion, but it can help to ease them. It may not build many more new roads, but it will build some. It will not relieve the Government of their responsibility for public sector finance, but it can help to divert resources to where they are desperately needed. For those reasons, the Bill deserves support.

6.52 pm

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): Unlike the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry), I do not like the Bill at all. I do not like parts I, II, III or IV. Like the hon. Gentleman, I am astonished that the Opposition will not divide the House tonight. I wish that they would.

Parts I and II expand the role of toll roads and bridges. It would be a progressive policy to abolish tolls on some roads. The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) asked about the Mersey tunnel and the Humberside bridge. At one time, it was the policy of all parties to get rid of the ancient system of tolls on roads and to make all roads the Queen's highways and free to all. Parts III and IV replace the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950, but they have more holes in them than they seek to prevent in the roads themselves. In parts I and II, the Government wish, in a doctrinaire way, to abrogate their responsibility for public spending and to shift it to tolls, to the private sector and to the motorist. They are taking us back, kicking and screaming, to the Turnpike Acts of the eighteenth century, under which people paid to go along a stretch of road. The Bill is worse than that: at least under the Turnpike Acts the people responsible for roads were elected or appointed to consider local and national needs and to provide proper roads. They were not entrepreneurs who sought to make a profit from the roads, which is what parts I and II seek to allow.

The Government claim that the Bill will provide additional expenditure for public roads. That may be so, but there is always a grave risk under any Government, and especially under this Government, that what is intended to be additional to becomes a substitute for public expenditure on public roads. It is a good cop-out for the Government not to spend more money on roads by introducing toll roads and getting private industry to build roads and bridges.

Like you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and like most hon. Members and their constituents, I am a motorist. I am becoming sick of the way that motorists are kicked about —by the Conservatives and by my party. I pay road tax of £100 a year. The intention of the road fund licence was to build roads for motorists. A vast amount of the money that goes into the Treasury is not spent on building roads but goes into the general maw of the Treasury. As a motorist with a private car, I pay very little compared to the road haulier or bus operator. Where does that money go? It should provide public roads. Each time that I buy a gallon of petrol, I pay a huge duty. Every gallon that goes into my tank contributes to the Government's costs of building an infrastructure that I expect as a return for the tax that I pay.

Like other hon. Members, I pay income tax. Part of that tax should provide the essential infrastructure, namely, a proper transport system. If I sell a property and make a profit, I may pay capital gains tax. Again, that goes to a Government who are seeking to opt out of their duty to provide a transport system. I also pay the poll tax. Like many hon. Members, I pay twice, because I pay in London and in my constituency. Part of that tax goes to the county council or to the roads authority for lighting and for improving and maintaining the highways.

In addition to paying those taxes, motorists would have to pay, as a result of the Bill, for the privilege of travelling along some roads, but the Government should provide those roads from the taxes already being paid by the motorists.

That is why I object bitterly to the provisions of parts I and II. I do not think that they will work. Contractors and builders will not jump at the chance to provide capital investment in a sector where it will be a long time before they see any capital return. The Bill is a doctrinaire attempt by the Government to deal with a real problem, and I think that it will fail.

Many hon. Members—including the Minister—gave constituency examples. I shall give one because it is apposite, although I do not like to use such examples on Second Reading. My constituency is divided by the River Mersey—Runcorn is to the south and Widnes to the north. Part of Cheshire is to the north and part is to the south. The first bridge over the River Mersey is in Halton. It is the Runcorn-Widnes bridge, which is unbelievably, obscenely congested many times during the day. People used to cross the river by ferry. Hon. Members may have heard the famous recitation of the late, great Stanley Holloway, which was called "Tuppence per person per trip". That referred to the Runcorn ferry in my constituency. If we have a toll road, as the Government suggest, it will not be tuppence per person per trip. Goodness knows what sum will be paid in tolls.

We then had a transporter bridge to replace the ferry. Again, it was a toll bridge, but the toll was not for a highway, but for a bridge. The transporter bridge was one of only three in the country, and it carried vehicles across the river and the Manchester ship canal.

A new bridge was built in 1963 which has two lanes each way. That bridge is now desperately congested, so there is a desperate need for a second crossing of the river. I wrote to the former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson), about a second crossing, and he replied that the Government were "considering" a second crossing. He said that they were considering a toll bridge across the River Mersey which would not be near the present bridge, but which would connect Runcorn with Speke airport. It would, therefore, be linked with a dubious scheme by British Aerospace to make Speke airport a hub-and-spoke airport. As two such schemes are being considered at the same time, I do not believe that it would be a viable venture. The toll bridge would take the road over the widest part of the estuary, as my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) will realise.

As there is an existing bridge, it is unlikely that people will pay to go over a toll bridge. Haulage firms will not do so. We are told constantly by haulage firms in our constituencies how strapped for cash they are, so they will not add to the costs by going over what could be an expensive toll bridge. The bridge will not relieve congestion on the existing bridge. We need two public bridges—two roads. One should go in one direction and the other in the other direction. That would be the sensible solution. The *Widnes Weekly News* and the *Runcorn Weekly News* are running a campaign on the desperate need for a second bridge. The local chamber of commerce, Halton district council, Cheshire county council and everyone concerned with transport in the area agree that the idea of a toll bridge to link Runcorn to Speke is one of the most ludicrous ideas imaginable. The doctrinaire

policies of the right hon. Member for Hertsmere and the policies in the Bill have led the Government to propose that for an area that desperately needs a solution.

Crossing a river is the highest point of expenditure when building a road. Building a road is expensive, but building a bridge is far more expensive. In view of the cost to the construction firm that undertook the private work on the bridge, if it was to get a decent return on its capital, as it would be entitled to do, the tolls for going over the bridge would be desperately high. The Bill seeks to lead us down that path. It will not work, and it is not desirable. In Scotland, in Northern Ireland, in Wales and in England, the Queen's highways should be free to those who pay taxes, as we all do, to a Government who are responsible for building highways.

Parts III and IV are designed to replace the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950, which needs replacing because it is over 40 years old. In the very old days—the days of smaller units—we did not need such legislation because a local authority, such as my borough of Widnes, provided water, gas and sewerage services. One man was responsible for public lighting, for water supplies and for gas engineering. He would consult with himself or he would go to the highways engineer and say, "We are going to dig up such and such a street. Is that all right?"

The 1950 Act was introduced as a result of the fact that many local services, such as gas and electricity, had been taken away from local authorities. People had to deal with a nationalised body for public utilities and with a local authority, which made it necessary for new legislation. The public utilities have now ceased to be public; they are private utilities, whether water, sewerage services, gas or telephones. There is a need for another Act on that basis alone.

A golden opportunity has been missed in parts III and IV. It is sometimes essential for utilities, such as telephones, gas, electricity, sewerage and water, to go under the streets. I admit that. A vivid example came in the recent terrible war in Iraq, when we rightly bombed the bridges to stop transport going in and out of Kuwait. In bombing the bridges, we destroyed not only the telecommunications services which were carried along them but the water supply and sometimes the sewage pipes. That brought home to people a fact that we do not usually think about—that streets, roads and bridges carry not only traffic, but essential modern services. I hope that there are not terrible problems in Iraq from plague and from disease as a result of the lack of water supply and proper sewerage systems. What has happened in Iraq brings home the fact that streets and roads are not only for traffic.

Why is there not a far more positive approach in the Bill towards the use of highways for public utilities services? Why is there not a specific requirement for new roads, whether toll roads or not, in towns and in development areas around towns that services should go under the grass verge between the pavement and the road itself? That would cause the minimum disruption to traffic and to pedestrians. There are verges in almost all new developments. Why not put all services there? Pneumatic drills would not be needed for digging and there would be no disruption to pedestrians or to traffic. When services are reinstated or when new systems are being installed, it should be possible to provide a verge for the services to go under.

We should accept the fact that roads are not only for traffic, but for other services and we should plan for that. I should have liked the Bill to require local authorities, planning authorities and public utilities to use verges to prevent disruption from digging up roads. There should be separate facilities for public utilities. However, the Bill perpetuates the old system as utilities can still go under roads. The initial engineering may be cheaper, but in the long term, in view of the capital cost to the public utilities and the disruption to the public, it would be cheaper to use a special conduit along the highway.

The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) raised with the Minister the pertinent question of reinstatement. The Minister did not answer him but quoted clause 54. When I checked that clause, I found that it had nothing to do with reinstatement. Perhaps the Minister quoted the wrong clause. I then looked at the provisions on reinstatement and found that the word "pavement" was not there. I looked through the definitions, but the word was not there either. The hon. Member for Battersea is clearly on to a good point.

When I practised as a solicitor 20 years ago, I dealt with many cases of people who fell over on roads, usually as a result of inadequate reinstatement. Unfortunately, such people are usually old, frail, disabled, or blind.

A reinstatement may look all right to the street authority just after it has been done, but two weeks later it may sink and cause poor old souls to fall down. Moreover, there is not necessarily a follow-up. The Bill does not provide that local street authorities must ensure that the reinstatement is perfectly carried out and maintained. The utilities will simply say that the work is temporary and that they will correct it later, but they often leave it for months or even years. Road reinstatements may cause great danger to motor cyclists, who may be thrown off their machines, or to cyclists, who may be thrown over their handlebars. They are also dangerous to pedestrians, particularly old and disabled people, who may fall and injure themselves, and those in wheelchairs.

The matter is important to the public and the Bill should deal with it because there will probably not be another such Bill for 40 years. I hope that the Minister will consider my arguments sympathetically in Committee, as well as those made by the hon. Member for Battersea, who clearly also regards the matter as important.

I expect that most other hon. Members will have received some material over the weekend from the National Joint Utilities group, which is a consortium of people who dig up roads and provide important services. The material consisted of some special pleading, but also raised two important matters. The first was about clause 48, which deals with emergencies. An emergency is an unexpected or unforeseen event, and public utilities must move quickly to deal with it. I know that the Bill provides for that to a degree, and provides that less time can be given to the street authority than it would otherwise have, but sometimes a repair must be carried out immediately as the emergency might be a matter of life or death. People may have to make enormous insurance claims for food that is ruined as a result of a loss of electricity supply to their freezers for more than 24 hours. That may seem trivial to the Government, but it is important to electricity users. Indeed, in a sense, it is just as important to them as using the street. The electricity service must repair the supply as a matter of urgency.

[Mr. Gordon Oakes]

I do not understand why the Government have included such a provision. The matter was raised in another place. I understand that the Government want to be tight about it because they do not want roads to be dug up unnecessarily. There is much mythology about public authorities digging up roads unnecessarily and they are sometimes a little careless, but, on the whole, the work is co-ordinated. Unlike under the 1950 Act, if no emergency has occurred, the local authority could be prosecuted in the criminal courts for needlessly digging up the road. The street authority has such a protection. Will the Minister consider my fair argument about emergency provisions?

The National Joint Utilities group also raised the problem of clause 91, which deals with offences and penalties. Under the 1950 Act, only the highway authority could prosecute the public utility for digging up the road, whereas, under the Bill, any person can do so. That may appear to increase individuals' access to justice, but the Government should be careful. A vindictive, litigious person who wants to stick his knife in the gas or electricity board will be given a glorious opportunity to involve himself in spending enormous sums of money by taking the case to court simply out of spite. I shall not mention names, but I know a shopkeeper in my constituency who constantly complains to me that every public utility seems to dig up the road outside his shop. I am convinced that, with clause 91, he will be hotfooting to court week after week whenever someone digs up the road near him. The clause will also cause increased expenditure for the public utilities, which will eventually be passed on to ordinary people in their bills.

The Government should think again. Perhaps the provision could be expanded beyond allowing the highway authority to take cases to court to include other bodies but not any person. That takes it much too far.

As I said at the outset, I do not like the Bill. It is a cop-out for the Government, who seek to provide for private sector roads instead of what we are used to—transport services. I do not like the slipshod way in which the Public Utilities Street Works Act is being replaced. I should have loved to have been able to vote against the Bill because of those deficiencies, but, surprisingly, shall not have the opportunity to do so. I shall not raise a lone voice against it. However, I hope that the Government will bear in mind that the Bill is imperfect and that there is much to be done. They have a golden opportunity to put things right, especially with regard to street works.

7.16 pm

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): Following the interesting speech of the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes), which is always an experience, I can neither agree with his views on the Bill, nor with his showbiz example of Stanley Holloway. However, nor could I follow my hon. Friend the Minister's remark about Flanders and Swann. I grew up in the 1960s and could not think of anyone suitable from among my records of the Beatles and Dusty Springfield to quote in my speech.

I shall begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Minister on his robust speech this afternoon and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on taking a firm grasp on the problem of transport and roads during their past few months in office. For the first time, my constituents, who suffer badly from poor British Rail services and inadequate roads in and around Greater London, feel that the Secretary of State and his colleagues understand their problems and concerns. If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can do for roads in Greater London what he undoubtedly did so successfully for the people of Scotland in the road building programme in the past few years, my constituents will be delighted.

The roads in our country today are totally inadequate for the needs of the modern age. On excellent roads such as the A2, which goes through my borough of Bexley, constant repair work makes the road much less effective than it should be.

I am well aware that this debate does not cover road maintenance repairs to the A2, which have caused us to suffer so regularly in the past year or so. However, it takes note of the need for a higher quality road network than we have at present. I appreciate that tolls are not always popular, at least in general terms, and tolls for crossings such as the Dartford tunnel hold up traffic and cause some delays—*[Interruption.]*

Mrs. Dunwoody: Pay attention. The hon. Gentleman is being funny.

Mr. Evennett: I should be grateful if the hon. Lady, who will no doubt have an opportunity to make her own speech, would give me a chance to develop my theme.

Elsewhere in the developed world, toll roads are a way of life. My constituents warmly welcome the building of the Dartford bridge and look forward to its opening later this year. The fact that a public sector alternative exists in the Blackwall tunnel and, I hope, in the not-too-distant future, an east London river crossing, means that there will be increased choice for motorists who need to cross the Thames in south-east London. Motorists have the choice of paying a toll at the Dartford tunnel and, subsequently, with the addition of the bridge, making an easier crossing, or travelling further, to the public sector road which has no toll, and crossing at Blackwall. The second option involves a substantially longer journey, but at least motorists have a choice. As I am sure the Minister will agree, Conservatives believe in choice. As we have heard from speeches this afternoon, the Labour party always wants to deny choice to the people of this country. Conservatives passionately believe that there should be alternatives and choice.

It is easy for all of us to say that we would like more money spent on absolutely every aspect of public sector development, whether in the health service, education or transport. But Conservatives are realistic and know that there is a limited amount of money for the hard-pressed taxpayer to put into the public domain to spend on desirable but often expensive developments.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is absolutely correct that any additional money from the transport budget should go to the railway network. Network SouthEast in my district is a poor railway system. However, the investment that the Government have made is beginning to work its way through—it certainly needs to because the hard-pressed commuters in my district are tired of a second-rate service.

This country's road network also needs to be developed, in particular the roads round London, which are poor and inadequate. Therefore, I was delighted to hear from my hon. Friend the Minister that the public

sector road programme will be unaffected by the Bill. The Government are endeavouring to improve and increase the opportunities for road development, without any extra cost to the taxpayer. Of course, we do not want our countryside to be ruined by building more and more roads and developing a concrete jungle, but I believe that there is a growing demand for road development.

The motorist is never supported, but always criticised, and condemned to a second or third-rate service, by the Labour party. But the hard-pressed motorist deserves a better deal. The Bill offers him an improvement in his driving opportunities by providing toll roads in some parts of the country. It is no good to use the green ticket and merely say that it is better to build fewer roads when we have congested roads, bumper-to-bumper cars, emissions from cars that are hardly moving and bad-tempered drivers being made to suffer. We need a developing road network. Therefore, I welcome the first part of the Bill and take issue with Opposition speakers who offered no alternative to road development.

The Opposition have merely said that they want more and more money paid into the public transport system —the railways and the underground. We would all like that, but for many people in parts of the country such as mine there is no underground network system. Roads are vital for people to get from north-east and south-east London to East Anglia because the only means of transport—short of coming into London and transferring to another public transport system, which would take much longer—is the car. There is no other choice. Therefore, I welcome the first section of the Bill, although it contains issues that need clarification. Perhaps those matters can be dealt with in Committee. In principle, I welcome the initiative taken by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and his departmental team and look forward to an improving road system that will be in the interests of the motorist.

I shall concentrate on the second half of the Bill, which I also welcome. I believe that it will go a long way towards relieving existing problems associated with the repair work of our roads. The extent to which street works create traffic snarl-ups should not be under-estimated. That is especially true of prolonged work or where the same road is dug up by one statutory undertaker after another. Those problems occur in my constituency, in districts such as Crayford in London and in other major conurbations. Therefore, I shall concentrate my comments on the second half of the Bill, which deals with the control of street works in England and Wales.

The present law, which has been discussed—the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950—is long overdue for reform. Times and traffic conditions have changed drastically in the 40 or so years since the legislation was enacted. There is now four times as much traffic on the roads as there was in the 1950s and holes are dug in the roads by more service providers than ever before. Some of those providers, for example, cable television operators, did not exist when the present law was passed.

Today's heavy use of roads means that traffic often has to be disrupted simply for carriageway repairs—an issue that I have raised in the House many times in connection with the A2 trunk road and other major roads serving my constituency. If we are to limit the disruption and congestion caused by road works, it is essential that work —other than carriageway repairs—such as street works carried out by statutory undertakers should be properly regulated by up-to-date legislation.

The Bill, which implements the changes recommended in the Horne report, will introduce important changes that will lead to fewer holes being dug in our roads, street works being undertaken in a safer and more controlled manner and reinstatement work being carried out swiftly and to a higher standard—we should aspire to higher standards. We all know that many street works have been substandard, with unattractive and potentially hazardous results. I am sure that we have all witnessed the spectacle of the same road being endlessly dug up and refilled by a succession of utility companies. The Bill's powers, enabling local authorities to co-ordinate and control street works, will, I hope, bring to an end the farce of one company digging up what another filled in the day before.

Another feature of the Bill that I am sure will be widely welcomed, not least by the statutory undertakers, is the right for undertakers to carry out permanent reinstatement. Disputes over the reinstatement costs charged by local authorities are all too frequent and are probably the main cause of disputes between statutory undertakers and local authorities. The fact that utility companies cannot carry out permanent reinstatement also leaves roads in disrepair. Temporary repairs often leave humps or holes in the road for long periods before permanent work is carried out, which creates unnecessary hazards for road users, particularly cyclists.

There is no logical reason why utility companies should not carry out the work, provided that it meets the appropriate standards. The change proposed under the Bill is clearly sensible.

One issue relating to street works that is regularly raised by my constituents is safety—the adequate lighting and guarding of street works. It is essential to do everything possible to help eliminate the hazards that street works create for pedestrians, particularly those who are blind or have impaired vision. It is not feasible to include detailed safety requirements in primary legislation. Utility companies use various methods and the safety requirements of a static excavation, where water mains are under repair, will differ from those used for the rolling trench techniques used by pipe and cable layers.

I am pleased that the Bill provides for codes of practice on safety. Will my hon. Friend the Minister ensure that there is adequate consultation on safety requirements, particularly with representatives of disabled groups? Will he ensure that the codes of practice are published as soon as possible after the legislation is enacted?

The Bill contains three issues that worry me. I agree with the issues in principle and wholeheartedly support them, but have doubts about their practical operation and application. The Second Reading debate is not the place to consider clauses in detail and I am sure that such matters will be fully addressed in Committee. However, I shall briefly outline my concerns to my hon. Friend the Minister.

The first matter about which I am concerned is the limited definition of emergency works. The aim of the Bill, rightly, is to reduce the congestion caused by street works. Therefore, it is sensible to limit exceptions by tightly defining what constitutes an emergency. However, the present definition, which limits emergency works to those required to stop or prevent circumstances likely to cause danger, goes too far. Clearly, escaping gas is a danger, but

[Mr. Evennett]

is it dangerous for a home to have no water, or for a family with young children to have no electricity to heat their home in winter, or for someone who is housebound or disabled to have no telephone? As the Bill places the burden of proof on the person carrying out the work to show, in any proceedings, that an emergency existed, why is the definition so tight? I urge my hon. Friend to look more carefully at this issue during proceedings in the Standing Committee, on which I hope to serve with him.

The second matter about which I am concerned is payment for occupying a road. Again, I understand the idea behind the principle. The logic of discouraging unnecessary street works and of ensuring that any works that are carried out are completed rapidly is clear, but I believe that this will be a bureaucratic nightmare, which could achieve little. Utility companies are not in business to disrupt supplies or to tie up plant, personnel or contractors any longer than necessary. There would be no commercial sense in doing so. My concern is that if charges are made for occupying a road, corners will be cut for the sake of meeting deadlines and that contractors will do work to minimum standards, with a view to limiting the period of occupation. The danger is that the utility company will have to dig up the road a short time later to carry out emergency work. At the end of the day, any additional cost will simply be passed to the customer and little, other than higher bills for the consumer, will have been achieved.

The third issue that concerns me is the power given to authorities to order work to be carried out at other than normal times to avoid serious disruption to traffic. What I am concerned about is that the only thing to be taken into consideration will be the effect on traffic and that no regard will be paid to the effect on local residents. I am concerned about how this provision will operate in practice. Let me give an example of the problems that could arise. In my constituency, serious problems are caused by commuters who park on roads near railway stations—particularly those at Crayford and Belvedere. Many of those commuters are not local people; they drive considerable distances from outlying parts of Kent. As the Minister will appreciate, the congestion caused is a source of considerable annoyance to local residents. The volume of parked cars would make any work carried out during the day a serious disruption to traffic.

Of course, the streets authority could order that such work be done in the evenings—say, after 9 o'clock. If such an order were given, there would be no traffic disruption, but local residents would be far from pleased. It may not be the intention, but my reading of the Bill suggests that that is a possibility. If works are carried out at other than normal working times—particularly on evenings or at weekends—there will be increased cost arising from overtime and unsocial hours payments, as well as disruption for residents. The additional cost will, of course, be passed on to the consumer.

However, these are issues that can be debated at some length in Committee. At that stage, I hope, the Minister will be able to allay my fears. In the context of what the Government are endeavouring to do, they are minor issues. This is a good Bill. It arises from a vision of a better future for the motorist. Toll roads will provide a choice, and the problems of motorists and pedestrians that arise from the constant digging up of roads, particularly in suburban and urban areas, will be overcome.

The need to control and co-ordinate street works has been recognised, as has the need for the long-overdue reform of outdated legislation. I am confident that road users—drivers, cyclists and pedestrians—will see an improvement in the state of our roads as a consequence of the Bill. Transport is one of the major issues of the modern age. In saying that, I refer not just to public transport but to transport in all its aspects. That being the case, toll roads are a way forward, although I do not say that they are the only solution. I was grateful to hear the Minister say that the Government will continue to provide new roads and to develop and improve existing roads, but the toll roads will help with areas of great need that have not so far been addressed.

7.34 pm

Mr. Ron[illegible]Fearn (Southport): This is the second transport Bill to come before the House in a very short time. It could easily have been divided into two Bills. If it were so divided, we should find that one Bill would get full and wide support, while the other would receive rather less of a welcome. As in the case of other road traffic legislation, I admire the Government's sleight of hand.

Having said that, I must declare that I am not in complete opposition to any part of the Bill. One could make an argument against the principle of private profit from toll road users, but it is not one that I intend to put forth today. Nor, indeed, is it an argument that would necessarily have my full backing. I realise that what I have just said may be seen as somewhat ambiguous, but it could be said by many hon. Members. I intend to restrict my remarks to the anxiety that I and many others have over the environmental consequences of private financing for public roads.

Ministers in both Houses have assured us that the environmental appraisal for private roads will be no less rigorous than that for publicly funded ones. That causes me great anxiety. I have never viewed the Department of Transport as a great friend of the earth, despite the wonderful defence of its policy since the second world war that was put forward by the Minister of State during the Third Reading debate in another place. It is not difficult to point to instances in which specific environmental concerns were overruled because the solution was considered to be too expensive. Twyford Down is a case in point. In that instance, it was considered that the environmental benefits and the protection of ancient woodlands that would be achieved by tunnelling would not justify the extra public expense. What chance is there of environmental considerations being given greater emphasis when private profit and responsibility to shareholders are the paramount concern?

My main objection, though, is the general lack of an overall strategy on the part of the Department of Transport. Red routes and, now, toll roads are examples of the Government's piecemeal approach to transport problems and are typical of the Department's long-standing preference for roads and private cars over other modes of transport. From comments made by Ministers in both Houses, it is obvious that the Government have a habit of confusing strategy with planning.

When I plead for an overall strategy, I am not asking for centralised planning. Any planning can be done at regional or local level. What I am asking the Government to do is to lead the way and to set an example by stating broad but clear objectives, and by providing the incentives, and where necessary the funding, to ensure that Britain has national, regional and local transport networks that are adequate to meet the needs of the 21st century. I want some sign that the Government recognise the environmental and social advantages, as well as the economic advantages, of good transport systems.

The introduction of toll roads does not reassure me. It is generally accepted that the building of new roads will merely encourage more people to use cars. Traffic forecasts published in 1989 indicated a growth in traffic ranging from 40 to 69 per cent. between 1988 and 2006, and from 100 to 200 per cent. by 2026. It is my contention that this level of growth cannot be met by an expansion in our road building programme without devastating environmental consequences. Geographically, this country is unable to stand such a great increase in road traffic.

We must consider very carefully how the impact of any new roads, private or public, is measured. The Government must take into account the overall environmental, social and economic costs, and then compare those costs with the costs of other transport options. I know that the Department has commissioned research into the monetary evaluation of the environmental effects of roads. I welcome that, although I am not sure that the results will be capable of rigid application, or that they should be rigidly applied. Much will depend on the use to which the findings are put. We must also find ways of developing a more sophisticated method of measuring the true environmental benefits and losses of all transport modes, including the land use charges brought about by new systems.

If I were convinced that the Government would change their attitude and that they would view transport policy as a key issue, encompassing the economic, social and environmental development of our nation, regions and communities, I would be less hesitant about giving my support to parts I and II of the Bill. However, I fear that the philosophy of the market will have overriding influence on any proposal for private road concessions.

Despite constant reassurances from Ministers about public inquiries and normal planning control procedures, I am concerned about the implications of private toll roads on the development of the surrounding areas. Although I accept that highway authorities will be able to acquire land only for a highway-related function, there is nothing to stop a concessionaire from buying land with a view to development. The fact that there will already be access to a road may make the planning application more acceptable and the countryside may become a developers' paradise.

I believe that development potential will attract bids for the concession. I do not think that many companies will clamour to build new roads in the sole hope of making a killing from the profits from tolls. The introduction of private toll roads will bring the danger of a two-tier road system, possibly even on toll roads themselves. Will the Minister take the opportunity to assure us today that he will not permit private roads or even lanes to be used exclusively by lorries? Will he knock that stupid idea on the head once and for all?

Many people will not be able to afford the tolls, which by all accounts will be very expensive. They will have no alternative but to use the free road system. Other European countries, including France and Spain, have good toll road networks which are a delight to drive on. They are virtually empty while other roads are crowded with local drivers and commercial vehicles. Unless the Government are committed to providing and maintaining a public road system of comparable standard, we shall end up with private affluence and public squalor.

Although we hear much banter about the word "additionality", I have little faith in the Government's commitment to anything that is seen as public. We have only to look at the sorry condition of most of our infrastructure and other public services to see that underfunding is prevalent.

In future, allocations of Treasury money will take account of existing provision, private or not, and the assessment of the needs of the Department of Transport will be correspondingly reduced. I fear that it is too much to hope that any money which the Department may save the Treasury through the private financing of roads will be allocated to the improvement of the public transport provision, which we badly need, particularly on railways. Perhaps the Minister in his reply will state that the financing of roads will help other modes of transport.

Those are some of my concerns on parts I and II; I hope to pursue those and other matters in Committee.

As for the remainder of the Bill, I can only say, at long last. For years road users and pedestrians have suffered from the dangers and inconvenience caused by constant, lengthy and unco-ordinated street works. The measures in that part of the Bill are welcome. Some amendments may be necessary, for example, to the permissible level of fees payable by utilities which undertake street works.

Many of the groups that represent disabled people are grateful for the changes made to the Bill in another place and for the amendments which the Government have promised. They seek further assurances and hope that in all cases they will be consulted on the code of practice and safety. The Minister will know that I sought assurances for disabled people when we were discussing previous legislation. I make a similar commitment on the current Bill. Perhaps I shall not have to follow that up because the Minister will have considered it already.

I hope that road work costs, which are a terrible imposition on residents, will be considered fully, although there is not much in the Bill on the subject. On the whole, I expect the street works part of the Bill to have a smooth ride through the House. Perhaps the other parts will not have as bumpy a ride as the Minister assumes.

7.44 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): I must begin by declaring a financial interest as a consultant to British Telecom and an interest in the cable industry, not of a financial nature but as chairman of the all-party cable satellite television group in the House.

So far this has not been the most exciting debate. The official Opposition are now represented by three hon. Members, of whom two are women, which would certainly please the 300 group, but one would have expected greater interest and opposition from the Labour Benches than there has been so far.

Mrs. Dunwoody *rose*——

Mr. Coombs: I am tempting the hon. Lady, and she is succumbing.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Perhaps I may explain to the hon. Gentleman that two women members of the Labour party are the equal of any 50 male members of the Conservative party.

Mr. Coombs: The hilarity which which that remark has been greeted is, I think, sufficient reward for the hon. Lady without me adding anything. Perhaps I should not tempt the hon. Lady further but should proceed with my remarks.

Having listened to some of my hon. Friends giving a warm welcome to parts I and II of the Bill, it may be sufficient for me to say that I share their feelings. I hope and believe that the Government will agree that there is no question of the publicly-funded road programme being cut in any way as a result of the additional funding that may become available from the private sector. I think that I can anticipate what my hon. Friend the Minister will say when I draw attention to the fact that the Government's road programme has been doubled in size in recent months and that there is now a substantial commitment to new road building, to the widening of motorways, to other trunk road schemes and to bypasses. That is extremely important. I welcome any commitment from my hon. Friend that there will be no slackening in the Government's determination to continue that programme wholeheartedly.

The new roads proposals in the Bill are exciting because they offer the prospect of additional funding. I want to add a word to the earlier exchanges between some of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members about the length of time that it takes to construct roads. I do not want any unfair or unreasonable advantage to be given to the private sector in building roads. I want roads to be constructed more quickly, irrespective of whether they are being provided by the private or the public sector. The period that elapses now between the original concept of a road and its completion is far too long.

I hope that my hon. Friend will say something, in reply to the debate or later, about the Government's examination of the procedures for public inquiries, which I understand has been under way for a long time—perhaps not quite as long as it takes to build a new road, although it begins to seem like that. We should give the potential private road constructor reassurance that he can begin his task within a time framework which would enable him to estimate the financing involved.

The experience of the French in building motorways and other major roads is interesting. They are much quicker. There is now a considerable number of toll motorways throughout France, which, as other hon. Members have said, are extremely attractive. Although the French have succeeded in persuading private companies to construct motorways, some of those companies do not last very long and the motorways then return to the public sector. The Bill proposes that roads return to the public sector over time. However, what would happen if, having constructed a private road in this country, a company then went out of business for whatever reason? What would be the Government's attitude?

Other hon. Members have already stated that they welcome the proposals in parts III and IV. We have waited a long time for the implementation of the Horne report. I should like to praise Professor Horne for his report, which is the basis of this legislation. There is a substantial measure of agreement between interested parties which have formed the Highway Authorities Utilities Committee and which has been pressing hard for the introduction of legislation such as that contained in the Bill. It is sometimes difficult to know which is worse—the disruption that is caused by the undertakers who open our highways, frequently in serial rather than in parallel procedures, or the patchwork of poorly finished repairs that they leave behind them. At present, the ultimate responsibility for reinstatement lies with the highway authorities.

Several hon. Members have already drawn constituency examples to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister. I should be happy to welcome him to various roads in Swindon, such as Kent road and Hythe road, which are a danger to life and limb in their present state. When I was the chairman of the Reading transportation committee a few years ago, there was great pressure from the public for speed humps, which are also known as sleeping policemen. On a return visit to Reading recently, I noticed that several had been introduced. In Swindon, we have the alternative—speed hollows, which are the remains of street works that have been badly finished. They have the same effect as speed humps in slowing down traffic because they have an equally disastrous effect on a car's suspension when taken at speed.

I am delighted that there has been such a large measure of consensus on the basis of the Horne report and that we are now considering detailed legislation. The only snag is that the Government have not simply brought forward legislation that implements the recommendations of the Horne report. The Bill contains a series of proposals that differ from the provisions of the Horne report—admittedly in small ways, but in ways that are important for the parties with an interest in the legislation.

I refer now to some of those points of difference between the utilities and the highway authorities on the one hand, and the Government's proposals on the other. Two hon. Members have already referred to clause 48, which deals with emergency works. I follow my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) on that subject. As worded, the Bill limits the definition of emergencies as

"danger to persons or property."

My hon. Friend was right to ask how far that definition will stretch and how the courts will interpret it when, inevitably, a case based on the definition comes before the courts.

Clearly, the proposals limit the definition of "emergency works" to utilities such as gas and electricity. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to tell me whether an emergency that affects, for example, the communications of a large company would be of sufficient importance to justify emergency work being undertaken. If a utility is digging up a road and severs a cable, for example, to the stock exchange, would that constitute an emergency or would the Government be happy to see the stock exchange off air for hours or days? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I have little doubt that the Labour party would want to see the collapse of our economy for its own purposes, but I suspect that most rational people—perhaps even Opposition Members if they were trying to be rational—would agree that that would be unfortunate. Such things could happen to any company. If a company

that relied on computers suddenly found its power supply cut off, how long would that company have to wait for work to be carried out? That question deserves an answer.

Is it not ironic that the legislation affecting the operations of British Telecom requires that company to pay a rebate to customers who lose their service? Is it fair to demand that BT pays a rebate to its customers when the Bill would make it impossible for BT to take the action that is needed to restore that service? I very much hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to give some satisfaction on that point.

Clause 70 relates to the requirement for undertakers to pay fees before they are allowed to open roads. In the other place, Lord Brabazon of Tara said that the clause would constitute a useful reserve power. However, it is not clear on the face of the Bill that it is a reserve power because the phrase

"An undertaker . . . shall pay . . . the prescribed fee"

does not itself suggest a reserve power. It would be helpful if my hon. Friend could make it clear whether the Government intend to introduce a fee-paying basis for street works from the outset or whether they intend to keep that in reserve as a back-up threat if the regime that they otherwise seek to put in place under the Bill is unsuccessful in bringing about the improvements that we all want.

I remind the House that about 50 per cent. of all street works are undertaken by the existing highway authorities, not by the public utilities which have been the main subject of our debate until now. Will those highway authorities —as street authorities—be required to pay fees in the future? If a financial system is to be imposed for street works, it would be better to introduce a system of penalties for poor performance or for over-long street openings rather than impose a system of fees right from the start. Most people accept the common sense of suggesting that those who fail to deliver should be punished, but that those who deliver satisfactorily should not be punished. Again, I should be pleased to hear my hon. Friend's comments on that suggestion.

Clause 51 refers to breaking up or opening streets. Does that include an undertaking opening a manhole cover to get at the plant underneath it? If so, that would have a minimal effect in terms of disruption or reinstatement. It would make sense to exclude from the Bill the opening of a manhole cover in order to deal with plant underneath.

Clause 54 has been the subject of considerable discussion already this evening. I can tell those hon. Members who have been drawn into the argument about footways and pavements that, whereas people tend to use the word pavement when referring to that part of the highway where pedestrians usually feel safe to walk, the law refers to the footway. Hon. Members will find in the Bill plenty of references to footways. That covers the point raised by, amongst others, my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) and the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes).

The 12-month restriction rule, which is the essential feature of clause 54, will create problems for some utilities. It is right in principle to ask a utility to plan well in advance, but sometimes that simply is not possible. Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friend will be sympathetic to the approach of utilities which simply cannot, for a good and reasonable cause, meet the requirements of the 12-month restriction rule.

For example, what would happen if two undertakers in competition with one another were in a position where one had opened the street knowing full well that the other intended to lay additional plant in that street in the near future? Would the second undertaker be prevented from doing any works for 12 months? If so, there is a case in natural justice for re-examining the clause.

Clause 57 refers to protected streets. There will be a great deal of sympathy in the House for the desirability of ensuring that some streets are not subject to works of any kind. We look to the cable industry to provide a substantial amount of new infrastructure during the next five years so that Britain will have a cable network, for a number of reasons, including the provision of a greater choice of entertainment. If we go ahead with clause 57 as drafted, there is no doubt that the cable industry will be severely disadvantaged. I hope that my hon. Friend will take that into account when we discuss the Bill in Committee.

The availability of arbitration for undertakers is written into the Bill in a number of places, and clause 57 is one of them. But it is not widely available. Parts of the Bill give no indication that arbitration will be available. Is the Government's intention to provide arbitration across the board where the street authority and the undertaker are in disagreement?

Clause 78 refers to liability for damage or loss. Here again, there is a fairly dramatic change from the provisions of the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950. How widely does that provision go? It seems to suggest that any individual who owns apparatus in the street will have the right to claim financial loss if street works are undertaken in his street. As each householder owns the drain that links his house to the main sewer, that appears on the face of it to give every householder the right to claim financial loss if an undertaker is operating in the street. It may well be that the courts would dismiss any such claim out of hand, but if the effect was to lead to a large increase in vexatious litigation, I am sure that my hon. Friend would agree that it would be undesirable. I hope that he will therefore look carefully at the wording of clause 78 to see whether some reduction in the scope of the clause would be appropriate.

Clause 91 has already been referred to and deals with the general power of prosecution. At present, there is no restriction on the people who can prosecute the undertakers—the utilities. In the 1950 Act only the local authorities and interested parties have the power to prosecute. I hope that my hon. Friend will look carefully at the scope of the power to prosecute in clause 91 and see whether it would not be appropriate to reduce that scope.

All those matters will be dealt with in Committee, but my hon. Friend should be given every opportunity to allay hon. Members' doubts and fears and I hope he will find time to do so tonight.

I conclude by making two more general points. First——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Penultimately.

Mr. Coombs: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

We are putting a further important responsibility into the hands of local authorities. We are to call them street authorities. How competent are those authorities to shoulder that burden? Many authorities will find it difficult to employ the staff needed to tackle co-ordination. I make

[Mr. Coombs]

no criticism of them, but we must recognise that they will have a problem. However, I do criticise local authorities —Lambeth, not so far from here, springs to mind—which at present seem incapable of running anything. We are putting considerable power into their hands in asking them to take on the co-ordination of street works. That worries me and I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to address the question of resources and the competence of street authorities when he discusses the Bill further.

As the public purse will no longer have to fund those roads which will be built by the private sector, I hope that those resources will be made available for an increased programme of repair for local roads which have been the subject of so much abuse and poor maintenance and repair in the past. We have the potential for a much improved means of proceeding with street works in future, as in the Bill, and that is to be welcomed, but what about those roads which are not likely to be the subject of any street works in future but which still have the legacy of 40 years of poor repair and maintenance? I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to give the House some comfort tonight by saying that additional funds will be made available for those roads which would otherwise be left out. With those words, I give the Bill a warm welcome.

8.8 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I am unable to join the hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) in his criticism of the excitement that has been engendered by the Bill. One of the privileges of being a Member of Parliament is that one has the opportunity to take part in such exciting occasions. This will probably remain in my memory for many years as one of the most interesting occasions that I have experienced, ranking a little below the occasion on which, at 4 o'clock in the morning, we debated rape seed. But everyone must have a set of priorities.

The Bill is an interesting example of an attitude of Government which I had not truly suspected. It seems to be an elaborate joke. We have before us a beautifully printed document, which is in effect two Bills jammed together. Its main purpose would appear to be that the Government, who are coming up to a general election and face considerable pressure on their transport policy—they do not have one and they will have to appear to have one —have decided that one way out of their difficulties is to suggest that some alternative form of finance is available for a whole lot of new and important roads. If that is the theory, we should examine it closely.

In America the Select Committee on Transport consulted widely the people who have built toll roads and the various authorities, both elected and private, who were involved in building such roads. The Committee also advertised in Britain and particularly within the banking community asking for evidence—an old-fashioned idea, I know—of any real demand in the private sector to get into the business of building main or other roads in Britain.

When the Minister's friend—if I may so describe him —made his opening speech, I was convinced that he would say that the Government had clear, positive and definite evidence that private enterprise in Britain was full of entrepreneurs who were inspired by the efficiency of private transport projects such as the channel tunnel. This week it has become clear that there will be no train services from the tunnel north of London and that there is considerable difficulty with even producing a signal system within the tunnel which will allow it to open on time. I expected to hear from the Minister that, inspired by the efforts of private enterprise in transport during the period of this Government, private companies were keen to enter into partnership with the Government and provide finance for new motorways and that the result would be a great extension of road building in the coming years. That was not what we got. It is not in the Bill.

We have not had any evidence from Ministers with responsibility for transport that the private sector is champing at the bit to rush in and build new roads. Indeed, tonight we have heard several speeches which dealt more closely with the inability of private utilities to put back the right bit of earth in the right hole in the right road than with the basic meaning of the Bill.

The Select Committee on Transport asked some questions and obtained some revealing answers. We asked about additionality. If the Government are sincere about providing cash, we need to know whether the money generated by the private sector will be an additional commitment to roads or in exchange for the amount put in at national level. If so, perhaps the Government can answer a simple question—one posed by the Select Committee: will private sector funding be allowed to lead to a net increase in the long run or is the spirit of the Ryrie rules still in evidence? We asked for a clear statement, but that has not been forthcoming.

The Committee asked about the costs of toll roads. Motorists in Britain who will have access to the toll roads will want to know about the advantages. They will want to know not only now long it will take to get from A to B but how the finances can be justified, what they will be charged and what benefits they will receive in return. Some of our witnesses ventured estimates of how much the tolls would be. For example, some said that they would be 18p per vehicle mile, not counting land costs. They said that from Oxford to Birmingham it would cost about £3 for cars and £15 for commercial vehicles. There was some doubt whether tolls could be sustained at such a level, given the existence of competing free roads. The Minister did not address that point.

The Minister suggested that private industry would gain all sorts of benefits from toll roads and would therefore be prepared to make considerable sacrifices to enter into partnership with the Government. But in America we were told clearly that unless the land was given to the company, in many instances it was almost impossible to make a toll road viable in modern conditions, unless there was an alternative means of making money out of it.

One of the witnesses who came before the Committee made it clear. He said that if, for example, he was asked to take part in widening the M6, he would expect to be given some input almost from the moment the work started. The quid pro quo would be simple. A private firm would undertake the extra widening, but it would put a toll on to an existing public road and the users would have to contribute towards the private developer's cash flow. That is fine, if that is how one wants to do it. But hon. Members from the north-west may find that their constituents who use the M6 will have the odd word to say when they are not

only jammed in the queue to join the motorway but paying for the privilege before the widened road is anywhere near the planning stage.

I also expected to hear from the Government some clear statements that they looked forward to private finance coming in to plan better schemes. One objection to private roads has always been that it may be in the interests of a developer to divert a road in a certain direction in return for putting money into it—it may open up land, bring benefit to private individuals or firms and mean a great deal of money to them—but it may not suit the priorities of the road planning authority, the people who live in the area or, indeed, those who will use the road.

May we have an undertaking from the Government that there will be no question of private roads being planned to go where the developers want them to go rather than where the people who will use them would like them to go? I ask that question because in my area we have been told that we are to be given the great joy of a private road from Birmingham to Manchester. Many people would be happy to see a road built parallel with the M6. But in my experience roads fill up. It is sod's law. The more roads that are built, the faster people rush out to buy cars.

But let us accept the case for a road from Birmingham to Manchester to speed up the traffic in both directions and the movement of goods and people. We have had no information about where such a road will go. When we ask questions about it we are told that only when the Government have evaluated the three options and talked to the developers about where they want the road to go will it be possible to tell the House of Commons where the line of route will be. That is not an acceptable way to plan a major road. It produces planning blight and considerable difficulty for local authorities and people who want to develop other services. It runs away with the basic question of road planning. An important part of any road development must be the right of people in the area to object to the line of route, the impact on the environment or the general changes that it will bring about in the quality of their lives.

We are told by the Government that a move towards private development of roads would not alter people's right to object in any way. But that is not made clear in the Bill. That right would have to be written into the Bill in no uncertain terms before I would be prepared to trust the Government. That may be ungracious, but perhaps the more that one knows them, the less one trusts them. That is why I am worried.

A road scheme is a long-term investment. It is not built quickly or cheaply. Considerable investment is put into it and a return is expected only over a long period. Therefore, the decisions taken must be carefully thought out and properly researched. Ever since the Government came to power we have been told by successive Ministers of Transport, who seem to go in and out of the Department of Transport's door like revolving puppets, that the Government have speeded up the commissioning and designing of roads, that they have introduced penalty clauses for those who construct roads, that they have simplified the planning procedures and that they have produced a high quality system that has cut much of the waiting time. Ministers tell us that they expect that to continue to such an extent that in future the time taken to plan and build a road will be nothing like the time taken by previous Governments.

If that is so, the Government should demonstrate where the advantages lie in allowing private developers to build toll roads for which our constituents will have to pay. So far, they have not done that. They have not demonstrated the commercial advantages of toll roads, nor have they said what commercial road builders would do that present road builders are not required to do. The fact that the Government skated so lightly and quickly over the point means that they have no case.

My objection to toll roads does not necessarily derive from a Marxist point of view. To be perfectly honest, I do not even know what is the Marxist-Leninist point of view on toll roads. However, the Government will have to demonstrate both to me and to those whom I represent the positive advantages of toll roads. In this debate no one has bothered to put that case.

We have been told that in future we shall have toll roads. There is talk about hypothecation—a lovely way of saying that we must try to find a way of ensuring that the Treasury does not get its sticky fingers on money that has been raised for something else—but there is no suggestion that the Government intend to break the habit of hundreds of centuries and say that the money raised from toll roads will automatically be used for other road schemes. I would not expect any Chancellor of the Exchequer to allow anyone to get away with that. They all have a dozen things that they want to do with the money. All that they plan for is how much more money they can get in, not how much more money they can shell out.

The Government's decision on toll roads is based on an invincible ignorance that arises from their political commitment. Their decision cannot be demonstrated in terms of road planning. They cannot say that everybody wants toll roads. They cannot even demonstrate that the City of London, or the Bank of America, or any of the other financial institutions have demanded such a development. They have not. Both the Government and the House of Commons know that.

The Government are doing something else: a Bill concerning street works, which is important and necessary and has been knocking about for a long while and that probably needs more work to be done to it, is being combined with another issue, new roads, so that at the next general election they can say, "We're going to build you all sorts of marvellous new roads because British industry wants to rush into partnership with us." As a partnership, it sounds to me like the difference between Abbot and Costello.

8.23 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): The whole House should be grateful to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). Until she spoke the level of excitement in the debate was indeed of the order of that in a debate about rape seed at 4 o'clock in the morning. She has certainly brought some dash and panache to the proceedings. I am sorry, therefore, that beyond that her contribution was less positive.

The hon. Lady's attacks on my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and his colleagues were uncharacteristically ungenerous. They took no account of the numerous initiatives that they have launched. The only criticism is that they were introduced so late in the life of this Parliament. However, they are now producing sums of money that would have been

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

unthinkable under previous Labour Administrations and that would be just as unthinkable if, heaven forfend, another Labour Government came to power. That has been clearly demonstrated in every statement made by Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. The economy of this country would be wrecked. A road programme, or any other programme, would then be completely out of the question.

The hon. Lady was not sure whether it was Marxism or Marxist-Leninism that led to her opposition to toll roads. I believe that it was neither; it was something much more deep and fundamental—a totally blind, deep-seated, 1950s resistance to any new idea. That is characteristic of the Labour party.

I intend to refer to part III. I must declare my interest in the cable industry. I founded and now I am the chairman of a cable television company. My interest and involvement in the cable industry dates back to about 1981. The Bill will have an important impact on the cable industry, which will play a crucial role in the sensible management and maintenance of the streets and highways of this country, particularly during the next few years. The exciting, new construction programme resulting from the recently awarded franchises covering 70 per cent. of households means that the cable companies will probably construct as much of the infrastructure as all the other public utilities combined.

Most of the provisions in the Bill are based on the Horne report. The cable industry will help to create a high-tech modern network that will bring great benefits to this country—both to the domestic consumer and to the business sector. The industry welcomes the general objectives of the Bill, in particular the power to extend cable franchises and to carry out its own reinstatement of works. The cable industry, more than any other public utility contractor, has the strongest possible incentive to carry out good reinstatement. When the cable operator has dug a hole, carried out the work and then filled in the hole he has to knock on householders' doors and try to sell his product. He has a strong incentive, therefore, to carry out good, effective and permanent reinstatement.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) referred to the fact that improvements can be made to the Bill in Committee. It would be inappropriate to go through them in detail during a Second Reading debate, but I intend to mention two of them. They deviate from the Horne report. The first is the fee for the occupation of the highway. The question is whether that is intended to be a reserve power. But the Government have taken the matter further than the Horne report and I hope that they will reconsider the matter in Committee, particularly if the provision is left unclear on the issue of whether it is a reserve power.

A second area on which the spotlight should be turned in Committee is clause 78 and the liability for damage or loss which may be caused as a result of street works. The liability provided for in the Bill goes beyond the limits recommended by Horne, which said that the liability of utilities should be confined to making good any physical damage caused by undertakers to the street or other apparatus in it.

The need to make sure that the climate is right for the cable industry, which means right for the people of Britain, was underlined this afternoon with the encouraging announcement by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in his White Paper following the duopoly review of the telecommunications industry. My right hon. Friend made a slight error when he suggested that cable operators would be spending about £3 billion in the coming five years. Most industry estimates put the figure at about £5 billion.

I hope that now that the duopoly review has come out the way it seems to be moving, more investment than hitherto appeared likely will come from British investors. It will go towards creating, unique in the world, a high-grade, very high-tech—indeed, the ultimate in modern technology—telecommunications network.

If that objective is to be achieved—all the building blocks are now in place after many years of making progress; the omens and prospects are extremely good—it is crucial that the few remaining areas where the Bill can be improved should receive consideration in Committee. Then our objectives for improving communications, in addition to improving the maintenance of our streets and highways, which is the primary objective of the Bill, will be in our grasp.

I congratulate the Government on introducing the Bill. Parts I and II, which extend the range of ideas for the road network, are to be highly commended and I have pleasure in supporting the Bill on Second Reading.

8.32 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Seventy-seven clauses in the Bill relate exclusively to Scotland, so I make no apologies for intervening in the debate. The appearance of those clauses may or may not have anything to do with the fact that the comparatively new Secretary of State for Transport is the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), who is not affectionately remembered from his tenure of office as Secretary of State for Scotland. That is particularly so in transport matters, for it has not escaped the attention of many people in Scotland that he managed to spend more money on roads around London in his first six days than he spent on transport as a whole in Scotland during his six years as Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Ian Bruce: The hon. Gentleman has often reminded us of the Socialist majority in Scotland. Perhaps my right hon. and learned Friend, when Secretary of State for Scotland, listened to the strictures of Labour Members to the effect that we should not spend money on roads and should even discourage motorists from using the roads.

Mr. Home Robertson: That was a phenomenally silly debating point. If the hon. Gentleman had ever been to Scotland, he would appreciate how much the entire economy there depends heavily on road transport. Indeed, there is no alternative to road transport in much of Scotland, and the condition of the road network is deplorable in many areas.

The Scottish aspects of part II of the Bill relate to toll roads, of which we have a number, or at any rate a number of *de facto* toll roads, namely, the bridges. I do not know how one can separate bridges from roads, of which they form a part. We must pay tolls to cross the Firth of Forth on the Forth bridge, the Firth of Tay on the Tay bridge and the Erskine bridge, and in due course the Minister

proposes to have a privately funded road bridge built from Kyleakin to the Kyle of Lochalsh to form a road link to the Isle of Skye, and that will be a toll bridge.

I regard the imposition of tolls on those essential sections of road as a totally unreasonable imposition on the affected communities. It is a fiction to say that people have a choice because they can use an alternative road to get from one place to another. Try telling that to the people of Fife, who must pay to get in and out of the region, and perhaps that will apply even more so to the proposed bridge to the island of Skye. When that is constructed, it will be the only way on and off the island. People will have to pay to use it and they will have no alternative.

Toll roads represent a discriminatory and unfair imposition on people and businesses in areas which are dependent on toll links. I suspect that the experience of the financing of the Forth road bridge shows that the whole toll system is more bother than it is worth. It is an expensive undertaking to continue collecting the tolls, with all the hassle involved in that, and I doubt whether all that much has been achieved.

I suppose that part II of the Bill is paving the way, from Scotland's point of view, for the so-called fast link, which the Scottish Office is proposing, to be funded privately to establish a new road link from the west of Edinburgh to join the A74 road near Biggar. I regard that as a gimmick in many ways and doubt whether it will come to pass. I think it unlikely that commercial investors will be all that interested in footing the bill to build a road in that part of the country.

Even if they were to do so, why should people from the west side of Edinburgh—for that matter, from anywhere in Edinburgh or from the area which I represent in Lothian region, and businesses in those areas—have to pay a toll to get access to the road southwards towards the west of England? It is discriminatory.

There may be a case in principle for establishing tolls. Equally, from my point of view, there is a case in principle for not having tolls. Either the whole network or none of it should be covered by tolls. It is wrong that it should be discriminatory and that unfortunate people in some areas should have to pay to travel about.

The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), who I am glad to see on the Government Front Bench, will not be surprised to hear me refer to the burning need for investment in the A1, the highway which is supposed to serve my constituency. The hon. Gentleman knows it well, being a constituent of mine.

The House has heard me going on and on, and will hear me going on more, about the shortcomings of the A1 trunk road and the single carriageway section of the so-called great north road between Musselburgh in my constituency and Morpeth in Northumberland. That road is hopelessly inadequate to meet the needs of the traffic there and is a serious handicap to travel and trade between the east of Scotland and the east of England.

I again draw the Minister's attention to the joint report produced last year by the three local highways authorities —Lothian regional council, The Borders regional council, and Northumberland county council. That report made an overwhelming case for a phased upgrading of that route. There is no way that that will be done by the private sector. There is only one way to upgrade that 60-mile stretch of highway, which is the missing link between the east of England and the east of Scotland, and that is by public investment. The road is congested and dangerous and it gives rise to accumulating difficulties in my part of Scotland. Fully a third of the traffic on the A1 consists of heavy goods vehicles. It is a single carriageway and twists a great deal, and that gives rise to what the Minister and his officials call "platooning" of traffic. It would be more accurate to refer to convoys of traffic. The situation is chaotic and the issue will not go away. I hope that the Department of Transport and the Scottish Office will continue actively to consider the case for upgrading the A1.

I shall now deal with part IV of the Bill as it affects Scotland. It is related to congestion on the A1 because of the high proportion of heavy goods vehicles. The situation is aggravated by road works, whether by the highways authority or the Scottish Development Department or the statutory undertakings, such as British Gas, Scottish Power, Scottish Nuclear, British Telecom or the water department of Lothian regional council.

In a written question that I tabled last month I asked the Secretary of State for Scotland to

"list the locations and duration of temporary traffic light controls on the Scottish section of the A1 trunk road during the last year, giving the reason for each case."—[*Official Report*, 12 February 1991; Vol. 185, c. *452*.]

I will not bore the House by referring to the Minister's reply in detail, because it takes up almost a page of *Hansard* and it is in small print. I shall highlight a couple of instances which have caused chaos in my constituency last year. The Minister will be aware of them.

In his reply the Minister said that for six months from June to December there were traffic lights at a maximum of two locations because of a gas main installation between Haddington and East Linton. Just up the road, for four months between April and August, there was another set where a new roundabout was being constructed by the Minister's Department at Haddington. That makes three sets of temporary traffic lights on the single carriageway A1 in East Lothian. They caused absolute mayhem for people in my constituency travelling to and from work in Edinburgh. It was not uncommon for people to be delayed for half an hour, three quarters of an hour or even an hour by those temporary traffic lights. There were 16 more temporary traffic lights further south of that section of the A1 in The Borders region, and they operated at different times during the same period.

Such delays lead to chaos, cause long convoys of trucks and create dangerous traffic conditions and frustrated people. The Bill is supposed to improve the situation, but I suspect that little more than pious hopes are being expressed. Clause 113(1) reads:

"A road works authority shall use their best endeavours to co-ordinate the execution of work of all kinds (including works for road purposes) in the roads for which they are responsible—".

I know that Lothian regional council used its best endeavours to prevent chaos in my part of the world last year, but it still happened. I hope that there will be powers to ensure that local highway authorities, which can foresee the kind of difficulties that will arise in their areas, will manage and phase roadworks not only by their own work force but also by statutory undertakers and gas boards and so on to overcome such problems. They must be able to ensure that works do not all occur at once but are properly phased so that traffic is kept flowing.

[Mr. Home Robertson]

We have all experienced the frustration of being stuck for what can seem a long time at a red temporary traffic light in the middle of the country. Sometimes we can see that there is no traffic coming in the opposite direction and are tempted to jump the red light. There is no need for such frustration because "smart" traffic lights, which can tell when there is no traffic coming, can help to keep the traffic moving. I am glad to see that some contractors are using such equipment. That should be the norm rather than the exception. I hope that Ministers will ensure that local authorities and contractors working on roads will use the most up-to-date equipment to avoid unnecessary congestion.

I reiterate that I am not happy about the principle of tolls. They should be done away with, and I hope that part IV of the Bill will lead to better management and co-ordination of street works. However, I am not optimistic.

8.45 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): It was interesting to note that the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) thought it necessary to justify his taking part in the debate. The hon. Gentleman shakes his head, but he said that he spoke as a Scottish Member because there was some Scottish content in the Bill. Even if there was not a Scottish dimension to the Bill, I would welcome his contribution, just as I hope that in future he will welcome my contributions at Scottish Question Time.

Mr. Home Robertson: No deal.

Mr. Riddick: That is an interesting observation.

The hon. Gentleman was rather mean-minded in his comments about my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. An enormous amount of public money has been pumped into Scotland. I spend my summer holidays in Scotland every year. I drive up to Ullapool, and year after year I have seen an improvement in the quality of the roads. I have seen roads widened and dual carriageways introduced. The hon. Gentleman should give credit where credit is due.

Mr. Home Robertson: Where?

Mr. Riddick: For example, I drive up the A74 and the A9, both of which have been significantly improved. I at least congratulate my hon. Friends in the Scottish Office on the way in which they have improved Scotland's roads.

I shall devote most of my speech to parts III and IV of the Bill, which deal with street works. However I welcome parts I and II, which will encourage the private sector to initiate road building schemes and will bring private capital to an area which has been almost the sole preserve of the public sector. There has always been pressure on public spending, and when roads have to compete with hospitals and schools and other vital public services, it is almost inevitable that not as much money will be spent on new roads as we would like. The Bill will provide the opportunity for extra private capital to be brought into this area.

The speech of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) demonstrated once again that the Labour party has an ideological hang-up, a hostility, to private enterprise. It does not want private enterprise to be involved in the designing and building of roads. The hon. Gentleman accused the Government of being ideological in parts I and II of the Bill; but it is Labour Members who are being ideological in their opposition to these parts of the Bill.

You may remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I initiated an Adjournment debate last October on the state of the roads in Kirklees, which is my local authority area. At that time—before the Queen's Speech—I called for legislation to be introduced to implement the Horne report's recommendations. You gently chided me for calling for legislation in an Adjournment debate as the rules of the House do not allow that. I am delighted that the Bill is now before the House and that the recommendations of the Horne report will be implemented.

Anyone who goes to west Yorkshire knows only too well when they have arrived in Kirklees, not merely because of the reassuring signs telling them that they have entered a nuclear free zone, but because the roads seem bumpier and less comfortable to drive on. Potholes and uneven surfaces abound in Kirklees, but local roads in other parts of the country also leave much to be desired.

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie (Glasgow, Pollok): It is lack of money.

Mr. Riddick: That is not the case and I shall demonstrate later in my speech that it is not the problem. More often than not, the cause of such problems is the way in which local authorities have failed to support utility companies. We know that the main cause of the problem is that utility companies have dug up the roads to lay new pipes or cables, or to repair the existing ones. On average, nearly 30,000 excavations are carried out in Kirklees every year. That is a phenomenal number. Yet utility companies are unable to complete the work of excavating the road that they started. The Bill will give them the power to do the job properly. Indeed, it will not merely give them the power but will place responsibility for full reinstatement of roads fairly and squarely on their shoulders, and I welcome that. From my conversations with representatives of utility companies, I understand that they also welcome the Bill.

Kirklees council, like many other highway authorities, insists on carrying out permanent reinstatement work. Such work should be carried out between six and nine months after the utility companies have completed the first part of the excavation process and carried out the temporary reinstatement. Regretably, that is not being done competently by my local council.

My inquiries to four of the main utility companies have revealed some fascinating statistics. Utility companies were cagey about giving me too much information. It was not because they did not want me to have the information, but because they were worried about the fact that it might sour their relationships with local councils. Nonetheless, I found out enough to know that something is wrong. I discovered that between £2·5 million and £3·5 million has not been claimed by Labour-controlled Kirklees council for permanent reinstatement work, which it should have carried out during the past four years. That is complacency on a grand scale, and it is resented by the utility companies, who find it unbelievably frustrating. They get much of the flak for the poor state of the roads in Kirklees but the major cause can be laid at the door of the council.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie) said that the cause of the problem was that the Government did not provide enough money. I hope that he will accept that that is not the root cause. It is because local authorities, many Labour-controlled, have for many years been incompetent in carrying out permanent reinstatement work. The figures that I have given to the House this evening are an illustration of that fact.

Yet local Labour councillors in Kirklees are opposed to Professor Horne's recommendations, which are contained in the Bill. I realise that that contrasts with the views expressed by the Opposition Front Bench. Perhaps Kirklees Labour party is not as enlightened as they are. The only crumb of comfort—if one can call it that—for residents living in Kirklees is that the situation is almost as bad in other west Yorkshire highway authorities as it is in Kirklees, or at least that is what the utility companies have told me.

Recently, British Gas issued a paper suggesting that about £8·3 million is waiting to be collected by local authorities in the north-eastern region to carry out permanent reinstatement work. That is an indictment of many local authorities. In the paper which was released last November, British Gas said:

"The proposed legislation will benefit both British Gas and the public."

It points out that £8·3 million is awaiting payment and that the legislation should lead to earlier completion of reinstatement work and, in some cases, lower costs for that work. It continues:

"Lower costs could come from the higher productivity stemming from new techniques, such as foamed concrete, pioneered in the North Eastern region",

which incorporates Yorkshire.

Finally, the paper points out that British Gas anticipates

"reduced timescales for jobs using the new techniques and less inconvenience to road users."

I am pleased that the Bill is before the House. Help is at hand for Kirklees residents because the Bill will end the present unsatisfactory arrangements. Utility companies will be fully responsible for total reinstatement of roads and the clearest standards covering the quality of work, specifications and workmanship will be laid down nationally. Work will be inspected and penalities will apply if it does not come up to scratch.

The fact that the law has been clarified at this stage is especially important because we are entering the era of cable television, as some of my hon. Friends have mentioned. Cable television provides an exciting prospect for the country, although we cannot minimise the disruption that will be caused to local people as pavements and roads are dug to lay the cable.

Last Thursday, when I was canvassing in the Ribble Valley constituency, I came across road works in a couple of streets in Preston where the cables for cable television were being laid. Local residents welcomed the fact that cable television would be available to them, but they were not enjoying the disruption caused to them in the meantime. While I am on the subject of Preston and the Ribble Valley, let me add that the Conservative candidate will undoubtedly win a handsome victory on Thursday, when the good people of Ribble Valley go to the polls.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. Friend think that the people of Ribble Valley would be keen on the idea of a cable network providing direct input from this place? Mr. Evans would become a household name before long.

Mr. Riddick: I am a modest fellow. Tonight's debate has not been one of the most riveting, but of course, if people want to watch us, who am I to deny them that pleasure?

It is worth asking why some people in local government—for example, my local Labour councillors; and, let me point out to the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn), Liberal Democrat councillors—retain their hostility to the street works provisions. The hon. Member for Southport shakes his head; I can show him a press cutting that reports the Liberal Democrat representative on the highways committee as saying that the Horne report is wrong and should not be implemented. But perhaps that particular councillor is just a maverick.

I believe that there are two reasons for that hostility. First, there is the genuine and honourable concern about the quality of the work carried out by the utilities. I believe that the rigorous standards imposed by the Bill; plus the technical advances made by British Gas—for instance, the foam concrete—will prove those fears to be groundless. The second reason is less honourable: those arguing for the status quo do not want the local authorities' direct labour organisations to lose any work.

I am surprised and dismayed—and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister is listening to this part of my speech at least—by clause 90, which empowers local authorities to undertake street works. I presume that the aim is to enable the DLOs to make their services and expertise available to the utilities if they so wish. However, having seen how some local authorities have gone out of their way to undermine competitive tendering in other regards, and how they have attempted to keep those functions in-house, I believe that we should firmly close the door on the opportunity for that to happen here.

I would have expected my hon. Friend, who is one of the pioneers of competitive tendering in local government, to be the first to be concerned about clause 90. If he needs any convincing, he should note the welcome given to the clause by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape). By all means let us allow these organisations to offer their services to the utility companies; but they should do so as private companies, not as DLOs. If they need time to change their status, let us by all means provide for a transitional period.

I know that two of my hon. Friends are keen to speak. Let me merely say that I welcome the Bill. It will take time for its provisions to be implemented, but there is light at the end of the tunnel for my constituents, who have had to put up with the appalling state of the roads in Kirklees for far too long. They are fed up with potholes. I strongly welcome the Bill.

9.3 pm

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): I did not intervene in the speech of the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), who did not like having his leg pulled about the fact that the Labour party constantly harps on the need for good roads in its own localities while constantly criticising the Government's overall policy of increasing road building.

[Mr. Ian Bruce]

I used to live in Scotland. For three years, I lived by the beautiful River Tweed, and I assure Opposition Members that I shall vote for any measure that will ensure that Scotland has more good roads and that I can visit Scotland more often and more easily. None the less, it is absurd of the Labour party—and, indeed, the Liberal Democrats—to produce policy documents day after day that seem to suggest that good roads are not a good idea, and that we should restrict road building and spend all the money on public transport or on reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

Mr. Home Robertson: The hon. Gentleman cannot be allowed to get away with his outrageous suggestion without quoting his source chapter and verse. Where on earth has the Labour party in Scotland said that it does not want to invest in the roads network?

Mr. Bruce: The hon. Gentleman talks as if the Labour party in Scotland is different from the Labour Front Bench.

Mr. Home Robertson: It is.

Mr. Bruce: I am glad to hear that it is. The Library has a file marked "Labour party policies". Of course, they are different from the policies of the Labour party in Scotland—and I do not know where the Scottish Labour party's policies are kept—but the hon. Gentleman should read that file. He will find that the Labour party has repeatedly attacked the Government's road investment plans.

There is ample evidence to suggest that more and better roads are needed and no evidence to suggest that the more roads one has, the more cars there will be. Many people are rightly concerned about carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide and all the noxious gases that come out of the back of cars, and we want to reduce those emissions. However, there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that the worst pollution comes from stationary cars running their engines, and that roads allowing people to move from A to B are the best solution.

There is another important factor. Good roads—good links between urban centres—allow diversification. Jobs and trade and industry are kept out of city centres. At the last general election, I had the honour to vote for my hon. Friend the Member for Kirklees—I was one of his constituents.

Mr. Riddick: Colne Valley.

Mr. Bruce: I am sorry, Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick). My hon. Friend described the roads in Kirklees. He should come down to south Dorset for his holidays and have a look at the road network. There is only one trunk road in the whole of Dorset, let alone my constituency. We need greater investment. The bad road network has an effect on the economy of my area: it is the reason given by various companies, including the Ministry of Defence, for not siting jobs in my constituency. I hope that the Bill will result in greater investment in roads.

Having emphasised my positive attitude to increased road building, I ought to express my unhappiness with the Government's position on toll roads. It is all very well for my hon. Friend the Minister to say that toll roads would be additional. We all know very well what happens when one is trying to build a new road. If one is lucky, there is a single best route, and it is often difficult to find any sort of route. Once a toll road has been built in a particular area, the chances of the Government building their own road are more or less destroyed.

The road fund licence was rightly originally set up to provide for the user to pay for roads. In fact, we have gained far more from the road fund licence than is ever spent on roads. That balance should be redressed. The problem with toll roads is that one needs a large amount of financing in advance. That would be acceptable if it meant that, in some clever way, the Government were getting their roads built cheaply and quickly with a view eventually to taking them over. I rather believe, however, that the opposite will happen. Tolls cost a great deal to collect. That has been shown——

Mr. Home Robertson *indicated assent.*

Mr. Bruce: I am glad that I am taking the hon. Member for East Lothian with me. Not only do tolls cost money to collect; their collection slows down the traffic. Take an extremely good road and stick a toll booth on it and one finds traffic jams occurring just when one is hoping to get the traffic moving through as quickly as possible.

Meanwhile, the money that one collects on a road comes long after one's investment in it. Our experience of toll bridges tells us that when one sets up a company and establishes a sinking fund, that fund simply gets larger and larger. The interest payments are not met by the tolls. If wonderful schemes can be found to overcome that, fair enough, but I believe that if we want more roads—and I certainly do—taxation is the way to achieve the aim. If we wish also to look after the environment, the most sensible course is to take the money from petrol tax. This should also reduce the consumption of petrol by making it more expensive and by persuading people to buy more fuel-efficient cars. I must give a thumbs down to the prospect of tolls, but with the proviso that if private enterprise can get rid of the problems that I have outlined, we should not prevent that from happening. As a free marketeer, I would support that.

It is extremely important that the Government are tackling the difficult problem of ensuring that roads are not dug up consecutively by different people. If two or three different utilities intend to carry out the same kind of work in the same place, it makes sense to use one excavation. That would reduce inconvenience, and the parts of the Bill that deal with that are extremely good. Making use of one excavation would also speed up reinstatements. We all want that to happen, but not if costs increase or if the process is slowed down.

The definition of emergency work in the Bill is too narrow. We should not exclude the unplanned breakdown repair. The Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950 defines emergency works which include works to restore loss of service and works to prevent substantial loss of utility. If a sewer has collapsed outside a house and sewage is backing up into someone's garden and beginning to flow around, that may not constitute a danger to life, but it is a danger to amenity.

What happens if a telephone cable becomes defective and there is a seven-day delay before someone can dig up the road to discover the problem? That cable may be connected to the telephone of the little old lady about whom hon. Members always talk or it may be connected

to the stock exchange. Enormous problems can arise when telephone cables and other cables break down beneath roads.

Cable television lines will often carry telecommunications equipment. Many councils are against the installation of televison cables and there may be elements in the Bill that will allow councils to prevent the installation of such cables.

Recently, an old lead waterpipe from the road to my house split. We had to set up a temporary warning sign in the road so that our plumber could turn off the water to allow maintenance to be carried out on the pipe which was on my property. My road boundary is going to be pushed back. The stopcock used to be on my property 50 years ago, but over the years it has moved into the road. If that waterpipe breaks, as it is bound to do over the next 10 or 20 years, I would be unhappy to think that I had helped to pass a Bill that prevented emergency work from being carried out to reconnect a water supply to my property and leave my family high and dry. A council could impose a one-year ban on digging up a new road surface, but that should not be inflexible. We should be able to allow a new road to be broken into in certain circumstances.

We must also consider the way in which the street authority is defined in the Bill because there may be complications. For example most district councils in Dorset take the agency for the highway from the county council. It should be clear who should be keeping the records.

The question of the cost of the register to the councils is important, particularly when we are trying to keep down community charges. It is easy to say that the fees will pay for everything. However, an examination of the accounts of Weymouth and Portland will show that those councils are supposed to get full reimbursement from the highways authority, but they actually spend thousands of pounds more than they receive back from the county council. The planning department is also supposed to be reimbursed a massive amount for fees, but it costs the charge payers thousands of pounds to run the planning authority. It is important to ensure that we keep costs down and that we do not pass them on to the community charge payers.

This is a good Bill, and only some minor aspects need to be reviewed. I hope that they will be keenly considered in Committee. I support the Second Reading of the Bill.

9.15 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) referred to a toll bridge with a sinking fund which continues to sink. It seems obvious that he is talking about the Humber bridge which, as I remember, was commissioned by the then Labour Government just before the by-election in Hull, North. I recollect that the choice of that bridge, of course, bore no relationship to the election and was, of course, carefully funded by the Labour Government on transport and financial grounds. That is why the fund continues to sink. Perhaps we should note that, significantly, no prestige bridges are currently being built across the Ribble valley.

I shall confine my remarks to part III, which deals with street works in England and Wales. Street works have of late brought misery to many of my constituents. Five per cent. of the working population of Gravesham travel to work in London by road, almost entirely on the A2. Over the past two years they have suffered continual disruption —the hard shoulders have been put in; the road has been resurfaced in parts; the barriers have been built and renovated and the disused railway bridges at Pepper Hill near Northfleet have been removed. All this marvellous work is evidence of the Government's record road programme, but the resultant misery has made the improvement pill rather difficult for local people to swallow. For example, the recent removal of the disused railway bridges at Pepper Hill was programmed for January and February of this year. Winter is a dangerous time of year to restrict traffic lanes on major roads. What happens when one tempts fate? It snowed heavily. The traffic on the A2 was confined to two lanes and queues built up in the rush hour back to Scalers Hill in the east. Motorists coming westward came off the A2 at Marling Cross and pushed through the entire urban area of Gravesend and Northfleet, south of the old road.

Only last September, Gravesham borough council agreed its winter emergency plan with Kent county council. In the event, the traffic coming off the A2 went down side roads that were not prepared for salting or gritting, as main roads are. The result was chaos for my constituents in the residential areas of south Gravesend and Northfleet. I presume that the Department of Transport advised the local highways authority—Kent county council. Apparently, the county council did not advise its highways agent in the area—Gravesham borough council. The borough council has considerable highways experience in that area of the borough, so the population and Gravesham borough council had 10 days' notice of the works—from the date that the Department of Transport issued its press release. I understand that Kent county council is now taking steps to remedy that procedural failing.

The example highlights the importance of developing a computerised street works register to co-ordinate such works. The Department of Transport is to be congratulated on its initiative to fund such a development. The co-ordination of street works is vital off the motorways and trunk roads, because it is there that disruptive works by other public utilities are to be found.

Every hon. Member has his or her own horror stories. I have mine, but, in fairness, they have been minimised by the good relations between most public utilities and Gravesham borough council. The potential for continual or widespread disruption is immense.

Gravesham borough council, for example, decided to carry out smart repaving of the pedestrianised high street in front of the old town hall only to find that Seeboard, the local electricity company, planned to dig up the newly paved road to relay a high voltage cable. Fortunately, the borough council was able to reschedule its work until after the electricity board's work. On another occasion, British Telecom decided to dig up the Wrotham road in Gravesend. Almost simultaneously, British Gas decided to dig up the immediately parallel Windmill street. At a late stage, Gravesham borough council was notified and realised the impending effect on local traffic. It managed to encourage British Gas to delay and thus avoided chaos. In a more serious case, British Gas proposed to lay a new gas main right along the main traffic thoroughfare through the central shopping area of Gravesend. Gravesham borough council prevailed on British Gas to hold on so that a pedestrianisation experiment could be developed to take advantage of the inevitable major disruption.

[Mr. Jacques Arnold]

In all those cases, advance co-ordination would have produced a mutually agreed works programme to minimise public inconvenience and the waste of resources. Voluntary co-ordination has had its successes, as shown by the Gravesham cases. The Bill will make a quantum leap in requiring adequate advance notification and giving statutory powers to the highway authorities to determine when such work can be carried out in a co-ordinated fashion.

All our constituents have bitter experiences of road works. Too often, the restoration of the pavements and road surfaces after repair—especially the interim temporary surfaces—has been done to a poor and uneven standard. All hon. Members know of cases of elderly constituents who have tripped and fallen over the bodged repairs. Too often, apparatus, equipment and supplies are left lying round creating a hazard. I am encouraged to see detailed clauses about the signposting, safety and supervision of street works which are vital if we are to make progress in this matter. This replacement for the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950 is long overdue and thus very welcome. I look forward to supporting its passage through the House.

9.21 pm

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): In opening the debate, the Minister of State was honest enough to acknowledge that the Bill contains two wholly disparate measures. It seems to be becoming a fashion with the Government. In the Road Traffic Bill, we dealt with road safety in part I and with the introduction of red route schemes in part II, with no obvious link. In this Bill, we find the uncontroversial and generally approved street works proposals combined with measures introducing private toll roads. Clearly, that is a strategy to get fringe schemes through the House on the back of sensible measures. I sympathise with the frustration of my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes). In both cases, the controversial part of the Bill comes from the outer reaches of the Conservative party and is flashy in appearance, but lacking in strategy and substance.

The construction of parts I and II is a triumph of narrow ideology over common sense. It is, like the red routes, an example of a solution that is wholly inappropriate to the crisis. The Minister sought to argue that congestion was the link between the two sets of proposals. That was a superficial argument. He could just as easily have linked rail building proposals with the Bill if that were to be the justification.

I should have thought that the Minister would have learnt by now that he cannot depend on the private sector to improve our transport infrastructure because the private sector will not be persuaded or coerced into taking the role that should properly be played by central Government and public funds. We need look no further than the fiasco of the channel tunnel rail link to know that the Government should be investing in transport and building a proper planned network of rail and road and not hiving off bits of it and hoping that the private sector will pick up the pieces.

As my hon. Friends, without exception, have said, the Labour party has serious objections to parts I and II. Giving the green light to private roads is yet another example of a piecemeal policy and it will further hinder the development of the integrated transport strategy for which this country so desperately calls out. When new roads are to be built, they should be built on the basis of proven need. The Bill, however, seeks to encourage road building on the basis of opportunity for profit.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Ruddock: No, I shall not give way as the hon. Gentleman took up my time.

As the Government admit, the market will determine the construction of private roads. If enough people are willing to pay for new roads to avoid existing congestion, the Government will support the building of a private tolled road, irrespective of the effects on other transport planning or on residents in the area, or on broader strategic considerations.

Even more ludicrously, the Government's consultation paper, "New Roads by New Means", suggests that

"there is no way of saying in advance how many or which privately-financed toll roads would be viable. Only the open market can decide that, and once a tolled road is constructed, the market can decide whether it is a commercial success."

That breathtaking assertion begs the question: supposing the road is not a commercial success? Will we have carved up thousands of acres of countryside just to let the market show that there is no demand for a toll road? The Government do not suggest that British Rail lay thousands of miles of track on the off-chance that the new route might be commercially successful. If they did, they could find that the market was very welcoming.

However, if the private road is successful and makes a profit, as the Select Committee on Transport noted, the consequence will be more roads than would otherwise be built under the public sector. We cannot treat our transport infrastructure like a brand of washing powder. Resources are too precious and the investment in infrastructure too great to be so cavalier.

In fairness to the Minister, I invite the Government to quantify the contribution to the relief of congestion to be made by private roads. He will be aware of his Department's prediction that road traffic will increase by between 83 and 142 per cent. by 2025. What percentage increase in this country's road space will derive from the building of private toll roads? If the Minister makes that calculation, he will know that there is no solution to the transport crisis faced in Britain other than Government investment in roads and public transport.

We are committed to investment in a proper infrastructure, including both road and rail. We do not rule out examining systems of charging, but they should be for the purpose of greater investment, not for making profit per se.

Mr. Ian Bruce: I have heard the hon. Lady say several times that the Government should pay. She will have heard what I said about not having toll roads, but instead increasing taxation on petrol. The Labour party constantly says that we should not finance roads by tolls. How much extra will Labour invest in roads?

Ms. Ruddock: I intend to deal with the hon. Gentleman's question as I continue my speech, so he should not interrupt me again.

We put concern for the environment, providing access and promoting the passage of people and goods at the heart of our policy, rather than private property. Nowhere

do we say, as the hon. Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) said in his speech, that we oppose good roads. We have provided a critical analysis of the potential for increasing road space vis-a-vis the increase predicted in car ownership and use. That is a valid analysis. There is no way that the hon. Member for Dorset, South or any other Conservative Member can demonstrate that it is possible to concrete over sufficient tracts of British land to deal with the projected increases in road traffic. The Labour party is not against roads, but is in favour of an integrated transport system that gives proper emphasis to the environment and the provision of public transport and deals with congestion problems.

As my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) said, we are particularly concerned about the environmental consequences of parts I and II. It was obvious from the contribution of the hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) that Conservative Members are, too, the moment that their constituents' interests are threatened. However, the Government's position remains unsatisfactory. The Minister says that private roads will be subject to the same environmental safeguards as public roads, but the current environmental assessment, carried out under the Highways Act 1980, is limited in scope and is not required to address the broader effects of roads on land use or the countryside.

I repeat what my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East said earlier. The Department's current road programme threatens more than 100 sites of special scientific interest, about 30 National Trust properties, numerous areas of outstanding natural beauty and the Peak District national park. That catalogue is hardly a recommendation of the environmental sensitivity of the Department of Transport.

Government assurances are insufficient and the concerns expressed to us by the Council for the Protecion of Rural England and others appear more than justified. In Committee, we intend to table amendments to ensure that environmental considerations are written into the contract between the concessionaire and the authority, and that concessionaires are required to meet the highest environmental standards. Without an explicit requirement to address the environmental impact, we fear that a concessionaire may not adequately fulfil those responsibilities.

We intend to deal with many other issues in Committee. We shall look carefully at land use issues and what safeguards will be available to prevent the exploitation of land by developers. The Minister must accept that when a road is being built for profit, the potential for profit must be maximised, which must involve a potential conflict between development plans, and planning and countryside protection policies.

We are also extremely concerned about the costs of policing the roads. We strongly believe that if a private developer is building a road for profit rather than need, the associated costs should be paid by the developer rather than the authority or, indirectly, by the poll tax payer.

We shall also voice our concerns about the secrecy of concessionaire agreements. At present, the contents of the agreement would be known only to the concessionaire and the highway authority—in most cases, the Secretary of State. Even the local authority would not know the terms of the agreement, which is clearly nonsense and against the public interest. We propose to tackle that problem in Committee.

We very much welcome the long overdue provisions in parts III and IV. I add my congratulations to the members of the highways, utilities and authorities committee working party, who have worked so long and hard during the past five years, and to Professor Horne, who wrote the report on which that section of the Bill is based. There is a great need for a flexible and modern system of organising street works to accommodate ever increasing amounts of traffic and increasing pressure by utilities. There is unanimous agreement that the old system, based on the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950, was clumsy, bureaucratic and inconvenient. With 3 million holes being dug a year, street works have become a major factor in congestion and delays in cities.

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Ruddock: No, I shall not give way because I shall run out of time.

The costs of congestion are estimated to be £15 billion a year and the cost of delay due to street works is put at £55 million a year. Clearly, it will benefit everyone, including business, to reduce that cost.

The Bill will depend, to a greater extent than usual, on regulations to implement its provisions. Therefore, it will be more adaptable to new circumstances and developments in technology. In this instance, we have no argument with that approach.

Mr. Riddick *rose*——

Ms. Ruddock: I shall not give way.

We acknowledge that the Government accepted in another place the need for street authorities and utilities, when carrying out their duties, to have regard to the needs of people with disabilities, but we shall press in Committee for more specific undertakings. We shall also seek clarification of the implications that this part of the Bill will have for cyclists. We shall ask for cyclists to be given the same rights as pedestrians with regard to consultation on street works proposals. It is extremely important, we believe, that the needs of all vulnerable road users, including pedestrians, cyclists and people with disabilities, be given proper consideration.

Clause 70 causes us some concern, as, indeed, it gives rise for concern among other hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney). This clause was not subject to the same extensive consultation under Horne as was the rest of the Bill, and the utilities and street authorities are very concerned about its implications. In Committee, we shall follow that through. It is felt that the whole package is a delicately constructed balance between the interests of the utilities and those of the highway authorities, and the power to charge upsets that balance. We shall table an amendment to ensure that it is clearly understood that this is a reserve power only.

The Minister ended his speech by accusing Labour of seeking to raise taxes and to build fewer roads. He completely misses the point. We seek, and the Government should seek, to enable people and goods to be moved as efficiently as possible by the least environmentally damaging means. That is why we reject private toll roads. Government Members have provided no evidence that such road proposals will substantially relieve congestion, or that they will aid freight movement, or that they will not have a serious and damaging impact on the environment. As my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich

[Ms. Ruddock]

(Mrs. Dunwoody), in what was undoubtedly the most exciting and pertinent speech of the debate, said, the Bill appears to be an elaborate joke. The commercial advantages of private toll roads have not been demonstrated and fundamental questions have been left unanswered. I trust that the Minister will respond positively to the challenge that my hon. Friend's remarks set for him.

In combining two measures, the Government have put at risk our co-operation. Only our eagerness to see the very worth while and much-overdue measures arising from the Horne report implemented prevents us from pushing this matter to the vote. However, I promise the Government that they cannot expect such an easy passage in Committee.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Chope.

Mr. Riddick: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I have not heard anything that is out of order.

Mr. Riddick: Perhaps you could clear something up for me, Sir. As the Minister was due to start his speech at 9.40, the hon. Lady had all the time in the world to give way to me. This is supposed to be a debate.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady decided not to give way, and I have now called the Minister.

9.38 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Christopher Chope): We have had a good debate, although at times it has been somewhat low key. It is symptomatic of the Opposition's performance that they have convictions about the issue of transport but do not have the courage of their convictions. That will be reflected in what happens later.

I am very grateful for the constructive and supportive contributions of my hon. Friends the Members for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry), Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), Swindon (Mr. Coombs), Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett), Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) and Gravesham (Mr. Arnold). They have added to the debate a quality that will be much appreciated.

I shall deal first with the part of the Bill that concerns street works. I welcome the general support on both sides of the House for parts III and IV of the measure. We believe that the provisions in these parts will be widely welcomed in the country, and will lead to better planned and better executed street works. The outdated procedures prescribed by the Public Utilities and Street Works Act 1950 no longer serve their purpose. Let me give one example. The requirement to serve notices in writing on all the authorities involved before starting work results in unnecessary bureaucracy, with some 4 million holes each year being subject to the requirements of the 1950 Act.

The present framework is seriously inadequate when it comes to the state of repair of roads. The 1950 Act allows highway authorities to elect to do the permanent reinstatement of the upper levels of the roads themselves at a utility's expense. No time limit is laid down for the highway authority to carry out the reinstatement in those cases. As a result, temporary reinstatements done by utilities are often left for far too long in a totally unsatisfactory condition, a point made vividly by my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley and others. Labour-controlled authorities have a lot to answer for. In Kirklees, not only is there money available from the utilities for the repair of the holes in roads, but there is also a substantial amount of money available through the standard spending assessment to be invested in highway maintenance. It is clear from what my hon. Friend said that that investment is not being made.

As we have heard, the Bill will remove the confusion and unnecessary bureaucracy involved in the present arrangements for street works. It will allow the introduction of clear national standards on matters such as the signing and guarding of works, the training of those involved in works and the quality of reinstatement of roads by utilities. For the first time it will allow the effective co-ordination of street works activity.

Various points of detail have been raised in the debate. I cannot answer them all, but I shall try to deal with some. One issue concerned the definition contained in clause 54, which was referred to by several hon. Members. Parts III and IV of the Bill regulate all works in streets in England and Wales and roads in Scotland, and both terms include the footway, or what the man in the street would call the pavement. Particular attention will be paid to the needs of pedestrians and other vulnerable road users when detailed requirements are prescribed under the Bill. I hope that that is of interest to hon. Members.

There were comments about emergency works. To put the provisions in context, it is worth reminding the House that the Horne committee found that 35 per cent. of all works notified were notified as emergency works. That was based on the evidence of local authorities given in 1983. That showed the extent of the abuse. In many cases a majority of the works carried out in individual council areas were deemed to be emergency works. Therefore, a new definition is called for. In order to be workable, it has to be a tight definition.

Because of the exemptions given for emergency works, which clause 48 limits to the avoidance of danger to persons or to property, there will be cases falling short of emergencies where an undertaker has to take action before the normal period of advance notice has expired. Some examples have been given in the debate. In some cases, such as the restoration of a supply or service, or works necessary to avoid substantial loss to an undertaker, considerably shorter advance notice requirements may be appropriate. After further consultations with highway authorities and utilities, suitable provision will be made in regulations containing the notice requirements.

Points were raised about charging for the occupation of road space. I assure the House that it is not the Government's intention to bring the power into effect straight away. We have said that we would prefer to wait to see how the other controls operate. It is a reserve power, but nevertheless a useful power, because it is a reminder to utilities that associated with the works which they carry out is a cost to the public and to the road user in time wasted and inconvenience. In the same way as lane rental has been successful in road contracts, the power to charge for occupation or road space will concentrate minds well.

Mr. Simon Coombs: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said. Do the Government intend to introduce a system of charging for all undertakers, if one undertaker

has failed significantly to deliver, in the early period after the introduction of the legislation? In other words, will all undertakers be punished by the system of fee paying if only one is found to be seriously at fault?

Mr. Chope: The Government would look at that issue from the point of view of the consumer and the road user. If it is clear that there are abuses, we shall wish to implement the powers contained in the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swindon also referred to the opening of streets. That can include lifting a manhole cover, which could be quite disruptive in the middle of a busy carriageway. However, it will be possible to make suitable exemptions from the requirements of the Bill for such street works, where necessary.

The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) referred to bringing proceedings for offences. The 1950 Act confined the ability to bring proceedings for an offence subject to a criminal penalty to an authority, body or person having an interest in the performance of the obligation in question. We think that it is right that the Bill should not limit enforcement of the street works provision in the same way because some of the duties in the Bill, such as the duty of undertakers to co-operate or the duty to avoid unnecessary obstruction, are not owed to particular authorities or persons but are of a general nature. In those circumstances, it would not be appropriate to limit the ability to bring proceedings for breach of a statutory obligation to particular interested persons.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley made an interesting point when he questioned the provisions of clause 90. I am sure that we shall return to that issue in Committee because, as presently drafted, there is effectively an exemption to the local authority goods and services legislation. I am sure that my hon. Friend and others will need a lot of convincing that this Bill should contain such a provision.

Parts I and II deal with new roads and private finance. I am not really surprised that the Opposition have been reluctant to give support or enthusiasm to those provisions because they are, after all, radical proposals. They break the long tradition in this country of roads being paid for by the taxpayer or the charge payer rather than by the user. In recent months and years, we have found that the Opposition never take kindly to fresh, imaginative and radical thinking.

The Government are not alone in seeing the private sector as a likely source of finance for the roads of the future. The signs are that in many European countries, and in many parts of the United States of America, the same policies are being developed—not only in countries such as France, Italy and Spain, which have a long history of tolled motorways, but in more surprising places such as Germany and the new democracies in eastern Europe. By daring to challenge the conventional wisdom, once again this Government are pointing the way forward to the rest of the world.

We have no intention of abandoning the traditional public sector roads programme. As my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) has said, trunk road expenditure is now at record levels, but even the greatly expanded programme that we introduced in "Roads for Prosperity" will leave many demands unmet. The public purse is not bottomless, and all the money in it comes from taxpayers and charge payers.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): As my hon. Friend knows, the Birmingham northern relief road will be the first private motorway in Britain and a large part of it will pass through my constituency. I warmly welcome both that private sector road and the measures in the Bill that will assist that process. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the new arrangements that are proposed in the Bill will speed up the process of bringing private roads into being, and can he assure me that the Birmingham northern relief road is very much on target for opening in the mid-1990s?

Mr. Chope: Certainly, the Birmingham northern relief road is very much on target for opening in the mid-1990s——

Mr. Snape: In a private moment, perhaps the Minister will point out to his hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) that that matter was discussed earlier in a fair amount of detail. Furthermore, the Birmingham northern relief road first appeared in the Government's road programme in 1980, but it is still no nearer commencement. If the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood had been present for just one moment of this debate instead of strolling into the Chamber 11 minutes before it will end, he would know those basic and simple facts.

Mr. Chope: I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) has been serving on a Committee elsewhere in the House and that that is why he has been unable to participate in this debate.

I can assure my hon. Friend that the Government have no interest in going slow on the Birmingham northern relief road and we hope to be able to announce the successful tenderer in May. There has been a slight delay because of today's announcement that the western orbital route will be subject to private tender and it is right that the tenderers for the Birmingham northern relief road should have a chance to consider whether they wish to adjust their tenders as a result.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Opposition Members were keen to say that neither in "Looking to the future" nor in "An earthly chance" does the Labour party have a policy which suggests that it is anti-road. It is not suggesting that more money will come from the taxpayer or the Government for more roads; it is saying that it wants to see money switched from roads to public transport. It is difficult to get firm policies, but in its transport policy the Labour party says:

> "The Roads White Paper will be reviewed. Road and public transport developments will be assessed on a common basis".

That suggests that it will switch from roads to public transport.

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend is right. The kindest thing that one can say about the Opposition's policy is that it is muddled. My evidence for saying that is that about last autumn the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), whose presence is sorely missed today, announced that the Opposition's policy was to transfer resources which were to be spent on the roads programme to rail and other forms of infrastructure investment. The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) is nodding in agreement.

[Mr. Chope]

On 18 May 1989, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, responding to the roads White Paper, said:

"We welcome the Government's acceptance of the fact that the economic and social cost to the nation of chronic congestion is such that urgent action in the form of a doubling of present road expenditure is needed."—[*Official Report*, 18 May 1989; Vol. 153, c. 484.]

There is much evidence to suggest that the Opposition want it both ways. They want to suggest to their friends in their constituencies who want new investment in roads that such investment would continue under a Labour Government while at the same time suggesting to their friends in British Rail that even the record amount being invested by this Government in British Rail will be exceeded at no additional cost to the taxpayer under a Labour Administration.

There has been much discussion about whether the new road schemes and procedures would be any quicker than the existing procedures. The Government hope that they will be quicker and we believe that we have reasonable grounds for expecting that. Unlike the private sector, the Government are unable to dedicate resources to any one particular scheme, so that it can take time to reach inquiry. The promoter of a scheme will have a strong incentive in the form of profit to undertake the necessary preparatory work as quickly as possible. The private sector may choose to buy land on a voluntary basis at above market value if it were in the longer term interest of the project. That is something that the public sector cannot do. Therefore, the overall procedure could well be quicker. All those who want a quicker implementation of the roads programme are in tune with public demand.

The Government have already made substantial progress, but it is apparent that we need even greater investment in roads and there is no way in which all the necessary money will be forthcoming from the taxpayer. One vivid example of my proposition that it is better to have a toll road than no road is the Skye bridge, referred to by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). The Scottish Office is currently evaluating tenders from the three consortia, and it is hoped that the winner of the competition will be announced in April.

Subject to the enactment of the Bill and the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures, the bridge could be completed during 1994. By comparison, a bridge could not be provided from public funds for perhaps 20 years or more without displacing other worthwhile projects which are already in the public progamme. Therefore, the local community will be able to enjoy all the benefits of a fixed link much earlier than would otherwise be the case.

Ms. Ruddock: Time is running out and I am anxious to ensure that the Minister does not fail to answer the question that I put to him. It is important that we hear from him tonight what increase in Britain's road space he envisages from the provision of private toll roads. How does that compare with the increases in road traffic, as predicted by his Department?

Mr. Chope: I am sure that there will be plenty of time in Committee to deal with the hon. Lady's question and similar questions.

There are those who claim that the private sector does not have the competence to carry out the task which we shall ask it to undertake under the legislation, that it is in it only to make a quick buck, or that it will have no regard to safety or the environment. One might say that those are the same old tawdry arguments that the Opposition have used against every private sector initiative that the Government have introduced. However, compared with the Government's major privatisation and deregulation measures, the measures that we have debated tonight are relatively modest.

We are not selling off motorways or privatising the highway authorities, although some of my hon. Friends believe that we should do just that. The private consortia will derive their powers from the highway authority. The highway authority will be answerable for authorisation of the route, for its environmental impact and for its compatibility with other land use objectives. The concessionaires' role will be to raise the finance, design and build the road and operate and maintain it once it is open. That is very much the role of the toll-operating concessionaires in continental Europe, except that we propose fully private sources of finance and to take free market principles a step or two further.

It has been suggested that the measures can be implemented only at the expense of the environment. That is absolute nonsense. The new roads to be promoted by private entrepreneurs will be subject to just the same planning and inquiry regime as the existing roads programme. I was asked whether these new roads would attract development. Almost every new road attracts development, but it is up to the local authorities, the planning authorities and ultimately the planning inspectorate to decide whether a planning application should be successful.

Indeed, when putting forward their proposals for the new east coast road recently, several local authorities relied to a great extent on private sector developers to help finance the cost of the road. The hon. Member for Deptford nods in agreement. Clearly, she believes that that is a reasonable way to proceed.

Ms. Ruddock *rose*——

Hon. Members: No.

Ms. Ruddock: I am sorry, but that cannot pass. I said to the Minister tonight that clearly a conflict can arise if a company seeks to maximise profit. A conflict can arise in the land use proposals. We are all too familiar with the fact that local authorities' objections are frequently overturned by the Department.

Mr. Chope: They are not frequently overturned, but when they are overturned, it is done on good planning grounds. That is because the Department has to operate in a quasi-judicial capacity. If it did not act properly, it would find itself on the wrong end of a High Court challenge.

In conclusion, I remind the House of the massive investment which the Government will continue to make in the road infrastructure in Britain. Capital spending on roads has more than doubled since the last year of the Labour Government. Progress on new construction, trunk roads and motorways is extremely good. By the end of the current financial year we shall have completed some 40 schemes, adding some 140 miles of new or improved roads to the national network in 12 months. We shall also have started 54 schemes with a length of over 150 miles. We plan to maintain that record level of progress next year when we shall start work on a further 53 new schemes, including

three motorway widenings and 19 bypasses, covering some 172 miles. When the Bill is approved, even more investment in our road infrastructure will be facilitated.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

New Roads and Street Works Bill [*Lords*] [*Money*]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That for the purposes of any Act from the New Roads and Street Works Bill [*Lords*], it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenses incurred by a Minister of the Crown in consequence of the Act, and

(b) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

9.59 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): May I ask the Minister to say a word about historic cities such as York which have suffered unduly from the disruption caused by street works. Those who work——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

New Roads and Street Works Bill *[Lords] [Money]*

Question again proposed.

Mr. Gregory: In historic cities such as York a number of agencies have disrupted commerce and tourism for considerable periods. Will my hon. Friend assure the House that adequate funds will be provided for historic cities so that the continuous disruption of recent years caused by street works can be avoided? York's city council has sought to reduce that disruption as much as possible. It will be helped by this measure. However, we should be grateful for such an assurance from my hon. Friend at this important juncture in the passing of the Bill.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Christopher Chope): I can assure my hon. Friend that there will be appropriate funding for local authorities under the provisions of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

WAYS AND MEANS

NEW ROADS AND STREET WORKS BILL *[Lords]*

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the New Roads and Street Works Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the charging of tolls for the use of a new special road in respect of which an order is made under the Act,

(b) the charging of fees for occupation of the highway (in Scotland, the road), and

(c) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of sums received under the Act by a Minister of the Crown.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Sea Fisheries

Mr. Speaker: I remind the House that this debate must end at 11.30 and that a great many hon. Members wish to participate in it. I intend to give precedence to those hon. Members who were not called to speak in a similar debate on 14 February. However, I hope that all those on both the Front and the Back Benches who are called to speak will be brief so that as many hon. Members as possible can participate in the debate.

10.1 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Sea Fishing (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (S.I., 1991, No. 335), dated 26th February 1991, a copy of which was laid before this House on 27th February, be annulled.

This statutory instrument——

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I draw your attention to the Order Paper which makes it clear that the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments has not yet completed its consideration of the amending regulations that we are dealing with tonight which amend the principal regulations—the Sea Fishing (Days in Port) Regulations which we have reported. The amending regulations arise out of our recommendations. I hope, therefore, that the Government will find time to debate, in addition to these regulations, the principal regulations. We have reported the principal regulations. Our report is in the Vote Office. I mention that in case hon. Members are confused. The Committee asked the Government for information about the exemptions that are not clarified in the instrument that we are to debate tonight. We cannot report it because, as you know, Mr. Speaker, we have to wait for a memorandum from the Government under the terms of our Standing Order. I hope that you will not mind me drawing that matter to the attention of the House. I know that we shall debate the merits rather than the technicalities, but the two are closely linked.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who is the Chairman of the Committee, has done the House a service by saying that.

Mr. Morley: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point. He carries out essential work by going through European Community documents.

This measure is of vital interest to the fishing industry. It is being implemented retrospectively, so it is important to deal with the effect that it is having on the industry. It clarifies the legal enforcement of the Sea Fishing (Days in Port) Regulations, though I doubt whether it will clarify the way in which they will be enforced by those who have a duty to do so. It also takes into account the exemptions for those boats that use 110 mm mesh nets, as belatedly agreed with the Commission by the Minister. On behalf of the Opposition, I would not quibble with exemptions, but the whole basis and effect on the industry of the regulations should be brought to the attention of the House and debated in depth.

The regulations were introduced to reduce effort on our fish stocks, and we have no quibble with the Government in trying to meet such objectives. We are concerned with the way that it is being done. I have consistently argued on behalf of the Opposition that effort must be reduced and I have supported conservation measures that may be necessary, and hard on fishermen who must implement them. But while I accept that conservation measures are essential, they must be supported by the fishermen and be seen to be to their advantage. I am not convinced that the eight-day tie-up regulation meets those objectives.

During the debate on the take-note motion on 13 December 1990, I expressed concern lest the then proposed 10-day lay-up rule would be inflexible and dangerous. Tonight I heard from Scottish fishermen, some of whom are listening to the debate, about the inflexible way in which those regulations are being imposed, contrary to assurances that were given by the Minister of State, Scottish Office. We heard how many of them had been forced to stay at sea fishing in bad weather, how many of their families and the community life of their crews had been disrupted, how many boats could not steam to home ports for resupply and repair without being caught by the rules and how many boats had had to run for port to comply with the regulations in bad weather in situations which made it difficult for them to get into port, so endangering their ships and crews.

The implications have a knock-on effect for local economies. Hon. Members representing fishing constituencies will give further details of the effects of the regulations on their communities. We are speaking not of insignificant effects. It is clear from the excellent brief supplied by Grampian regional council that in that area 10,000 jobs are linked directly to the fishing industry. Fish for the north-east ports is vital for the local processing industries, and the same is true of areas such as Humberside. There is concern that the proposed eight-day rule will make it hard for producer organisations to regulate landings and will cause severe price and supply distruptions.

In financial terms, the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations has calculated that the tie-up rule could reduce fishing days by 72 days. That would represent a reduction in effort of about 38 per cent. It is calculated that, on that basis, average wages of fishermen could be down by about £6,000 a year, and gross profits would be slashed by 99 per cent. Differing working patterns may reduce those figures, but the net result would inevitably mean cuts in income.

The NFFO also argues that the approach adopted by the Government, and agreed by the Council of Ministers, could be in breach of articles 28 and 39 of the Treaty of Rome. The regulations contain defined objectives, including the rational development of production, the optimum utilisation of the factors of production, in particular labour, a fair standard of living, the stabilising of markets and the availability of supplies at reasonable prices. I claim that the regulations do not meet those objectives.

There is a crucial difference between Britain and other countries whose boats are subject to the restrictions. Other countries are covered by the EC decommissioning scheme and are taking advantage of it. That puts the situation facing them in a different light. They are already in a scheme that is reducing fleet size and effort and is providing compensation for the industry. The only compensation that our fishermen are offered is bankruptcy and the dole queue.

We must contrast the situation in fishing with the comparable position in farming. Over-capacity exists in

farming. One scheme on offer is set-aside, giving farmers financial compensation for reducing effort. Like decomissioning, the bulk of farmers' costs are met through the EC, in that case 60 per cent. Last year the scheme cost Britain £21·6 million, close to the estimate of £25 million that a decommissioning scheme would cost.

That scheme is subject to the same Fontainebleau agreement which we are told makes a decommissioning scheme unviable. Why should farmers enjoy such a scheme while fishermen are denied it? The only difference that I can see is that a decommissioning scheme is a one-off scheme and hence cheaper than an on-going commitment to a set-aside scheme. Its EC contribution is 10 per cent. higher, which is hardly an argument for ruling it out.

Although the measure gives the option of 110 mm nets in terms of exemption from the eight-day tie-up, the Scottish mixed fishery fleets are most affected. This is a national issue and there is broad agreement between the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations and the Scottish Fishermen's Federation.

As I have said, fishing effort must be reduced and it is significant that the former head of the EC fisheries conservation department, Mr. Michael Holden, made it clear in conversations with me that efforts must be reduced by restructuring through decommissioning to match capacity to availability.

The industry is prepared to play its part, given the chance to develop fishing as a prosperous and sustainable industry. I have said that I am concerned about the number of discards from 90 mm diamond mesh and about rule-breaking by some fishermen, whether by falsifying the area in which they say fish have been caught, by using techniques to close mesh, or by taking high by-catches from prawn trawls.

I am greatly encouraged by the positive and responsible approach of fishermen to these problems. The Minister would do the industry far more good if he argued in the Council of Ministers for measures such as the option of fishing with square mesh panels. The Scottish Fishermen's Federation has stongly advocated an 80 mm square mesh panel with a 90 mm diamond mesh, and research on reduced discards is encouraging. Why not have a comparison between that system and a 90-90 mm square mesh and diamond mesh option, or even a 90-100 mm option to see the effects on catches and discards? We could press for dispensation from the eight-day rule on the basis of the most suitable configuration.

The issue of EC minimum mesh sizes still needs to be resolved and the Minister has the option and the opportunity in the forthcoming year to table proposals and to amend the present scheme. I advocate the fishermen's proposals for the adoption of a one-net rule, the introducton of square mesh panels on prawn trawls, an increase in the minimum landing size of whiting to 30 cm, and a licensing regime for all fishing boats. Those are some of many measures that should be incorporated in a proper national fishing industry.

I accept that progress on discards and conservation gear should have been made long ago, but if we are to have a sustainable fishing industry, the Government must be supported by the fishermen. The need for a decommissioning scheme is accepted by every sector of the industry and has attracted universal cross-party support from hon. Members with fishing interests. The Government's arguments against such a policy do not stand critical examination and I do not think that Ministers, who should know better, have their heart in their standard and discredited defence of their policy. They know that a decommissioning scheme can be implemented and made to work properly.

I suspect that the eight-day tie-up rule has been advocated by the Government because they do not have anything else to offer to reduce fishing efforts. In the end the scheme may not even work adequately in that sense. At best the regulations are crude, disruptive and of doubtful conservation value. At worst, they endanger lives and boats. Unless there is an adequate fisheries management policy that includes a decommissioning scheme, the industry will continue to stagger from crisis to crisis. I am concerned that this eight-day rule will also create tragedy and grief.

So important is this measure and so great is the cross-party support for it that I offer the Government the support of the official Opposition in a non-partisan effort to construct such a scheme and speed its passage through Parliament. That is a genuine offer for a genuine problem, and I urge the Government to reconsider with extreme urgency their attitude to this matter.

10.14 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): We last debated fisheries on 14 February. I recall that the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) said that she would like to debate these regulations, and as it was St. Valentine's day, it would have been extremely ungallant of me not to accept such a proposition, so we are debating that statutory instrument tonight. However, one would not have thought so from the speech of the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), which, as he meandered round the entire course of fisheries policies, was indistinguishable from all his previous meanderings.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Curry: No. The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe was not interrupted. Mr. Speaker has asked us to be brief and I intend to keep to his injunction.

I want to know why Opposition Members have decided to pray against the gear option. Do they know what they are doing? It is quite curious. The Labour party is running scared in front of the Scottish Nationalists, who prayed against the original order and got a day or two ahead of the Labour party. The Labour party is now trying to catch up.

I am surprised to find the name of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on this motion because, of all the ports in the United Kingdom, it was Humberside which wanted the gear option most.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I do not know what the point of order is as I have heard nothing which is out of order.

Mr. Mitchell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I prayed against the original regulations.

Mr. Curry: I am delighted to hear——

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister referred to me in his opening remarks, in the context of 14 February. His remarks were cheap, given the significance of the fisheries industry to

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

Scotland, and he should apologise to the House and tackle the issues which are of key importance to many people in my constituency and throughout Scotland.

Mr. Curry: I am addressing a question that many fishermen will ask—why are the Opposition praying against the gear option which I was so earnestly enjoined to obtain from Brussels? We obtained it, and if I were to accept the Opposition motion and they were to carry it, we would be left with an eight-day compulsory tie-up, with no alternative. I want to know how they think that that would be of benefit——

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) *rose——*

Mr. Curry: No, I shall not give way. Why do they think that that would benefit the United Kingdom fishing industry? It seems curious and perverse.

Mr. Morley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Curry: No. I allowed the hon. Gentleman to speak uninterrupted. Mr. Speaker has asked me to be brief, and I intend to be.

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe went on a protracted ramble round fisheries, ports and half our agricultural policy, none of which got us anywhere.

Why did we have a tie-up? The reason is that the rule reflects scientific advice. That is where we must begin this evening. It might be unpalatable, hon. Members may not like it and it might be unwelcome, but it is the fact of the matter and the only sound basis for fisheries policy. Scientists argued, first, that the North sea and west of Scotland roundfish stocks were under great pressure, and I see that the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe agrees with me. We are not in dispute about the facts.

Secondly, scientists advised that cutting quotas would not be sufficient to protect stocks. Reduced quotas cannot prevent misreporting—I do not wish to use an emotionally charged word, but everyone will know what I mean—and reduced TACs cannot prevent, and may even increase, discarding. Therefore a reduction in effort was needed—I notice that the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe again agrees with me—and, in practice, less fishing.

In the light of that, the Commission proposed that vessels which had caught more than 40 per cent. of cod and haddock during the reference period should remain in port for 10 consecutive days per calendar month. That proposal applied not merely to the United Kingdom, but to Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Ireland, which are all countries that have applied decommissioning schemes. It does not appear to have saved them from this regulation.

My right hon. Friend and I said that we could support the principle of effort reduction, but that the details of the Commission's proposal required amendment. As a result —as hon. Members know—the 10 days were reduced to eight. We could not escape that regulation as it was tabled in front of us and we had to deal with it in the Council. It would not just disappear or float away and therefore we had to respond to the matter. Vessels that caught less than 100 tonnes were excluded, reducing the number affected from approximately 700 to 450.

We undertook to try to obtain a gear option. I made that promise specifically. Immediately after the meeting I went to the Euroflats, the hotel that the fishing industry had made its base camp for the day, and said very plainly that I would try to obtain a gear option. I particularly remember the leader of the Shetlands fishermen's delegation telling me how important that was. We obtained the gear option—obtained it, moreover, before any other country did; we fulfilled the undertaking that we had given. There is an urgent need to protect the haddock stock. We have decided to allow the flexibility that will enable a monthly change between the gear option and the tie-up, which we think is the most sensitive policy.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Curry: No. I shall be winding up the debate, and I shall respond then to any points that are made.

Let me now turn to the three main criticisms of the eight-day rule: that it is unsafe, that it is ineffective and that it is enforced too rigidly. First, let me deal with the safety issue. The argument that financial pressures will oblige fishermen to use their remaining 22 or 23 days to the full, regardless of bad weather, seems to overlook the fact that the industry's earnings are not constrained by the time that vessels can spend at sea; they are constrained by the level at which quotas are set. That constraint is not affected by the eight-day rule. Without it, indeed, quotas might have been set at a lower level. Moreover, the inspectorate has been instructed to enforce the regulations with proper regard to safety.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Will the Minister give way on the question of safety?

Mr. Curry: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman allow me to finish my sentence? This is an important point, which has been made by many hon. Members.

The inspectorate has been instructed to enforce the regulations with proper regard to safety. No fisherman need fear proceedings if, because of genuinely severe weather, he puts into a different port from that notified, or arrives a few hours late. We are not in the business of forcing fishermen to take unnecessary risks. It would be irresponsible for those who would hype up the industry to say that all that is being done will put safety at risk, and I hope that fishermen will have more sense than to listen to such talk.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Curry: I will not give way. I intend to speak briefly so that the maximum number of hon. Members can contribute to the debate. I shall respond to interventions in my winding-up speech.

Let me deal next with the question of effectiveness. I accept that fishing in the remaining 22 or 23 days may be somewhat more intensive, and that the fish may not therefore enjoy the full benefit of the eight days. I am, however, confident that there will be a significant reduction of effort, and that must help stocks. Those who argue that the tie-up will merely lead to more intense effort, and will fail in respect of conservation, should be careful not to argue the Commission's case for an even longer tie-up next time round.

I make no apologies for our policy of rigorous enforcement. I am frequently criticised by hon. Members on the ground that aspects of our regime are being undermined—always, of course, by fishermen from other

ports. One of the great advantages of the eight-day rule is that it can be enforced firmly and fairly, and that will be our policy.

I commend the regulations to the House, and invite it to reject the Opposition's perverse and wrong-minded prayer, which gives entirely the wrong impression. The Opposition's proposals would merely imprison the industry even more drastically in a fixed set of regulations, while denying all the flexibility that we have sought to introduce and that the industry deserves.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members to limit their speeches to five minutes. Although I confess that I have no authority to impose such a requirement, it would enable everyone to be called.

10.23 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): The regulations are a testament to our futility. We are debating an amendment to regulations that should never have been laid before Parliament—or, indeed, thought of in the first place. They show no knowledge of the industry, do nothing to achieve the desired objective, and damage safety and conservation in the fishing industry. We are debating the principle of the regulations weeks after they came into effect; we are debating them late at night, preventing the fishing industry from expressing its anger in the massive way that it should; and we are really debating only an amendment to them.

Ministers have put themselves in an impossible position by proposing the regulations. It is certainly true that the Minister has secured a gear derogation and we in Grimsby are grateful to him for that because it means that most Grimsby vessels, which would have been hard hit by the regulations, are exempted. But some of those Grimsby vessels should never have been included in the regulations in the first place. I refer to gill netters, which use 170 mm square mesh, and to long-liners. Even now, anomalies remain. I have written to the Minister about one Grimsby vessel, fishing in areas 6 and 7, which was catching cod and haddock in 1989. Now, it has changed everything and is catching prawns, but because of the date at which it changed over, it is caught by the eight-day rule.

Had the Minister not introduced the derogation for gear, he would have been legally vulnerable. Legal opinion, obtained by the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, suggested that there was a strong, and almost certainly successful, case for challenging the regulations. Had the derogation not been introduced, such a case would have been successful. The Minister is saving his own skin and defending his own position.

The basic daftness of the regulations is not removed by the gear derogation. It is as logical to use the present regulations as a method of conservation as it is to slim by weighing an arm and sawing it off, then weighing a leg and sawing it off. That is exactly the basis of the regulations. It is illogical to approach the matter by means of such expedients.

I am in a happy position. It is now the official policy of every party in the House, with the exception of the Ulster Unionists and myself, to hear no evil, see no evil and speak no evil about the Common Market. Yet the regulations are just the sort of daft, bland, cover-all measures—irrelevant to the circumstances of particular countries, fishing industries and stocks—that one would expect to emanate from such an organisation. They are blanket measures whose application to particular countries will be damaging. Total allowable catches—a bad method of conservation—are also blanket measures, which lead only to increased discards. An equally daft measure is the proposal for 120 mm meshes as a universal norm.

Such measures would not have had to be imposed from outside—by the Common Market—had Ministers taken a responsible position, pursuing research and advancing conservation by more reasonable methods over the years. Instead, they have allowed the industry to be restructured by market forces, liquidations and bankruptcies, and have not pursued proper conservation policies. As a result, we have a crisis. Measures have had to be imposed from outside because Ministers have not prepared the way by paying due attention to conservation by a proper decommissioning scheme—a much more effective way of reducing the effort bearing on the stocks. They could also have closed spawning grounds for certain parts of the year; that, too, is an effective method of conservation.

Ministers could also have pursued the valuable research that has been done into the effects of square mesh panels. I shall not go into that argument tonight, although others undoubtedly will.

The basic principles in favour of square mesh panels had been established at the Aberdeen laboratory by 1983. John Ashworth's paper, circulated to hon. Members, makes that absolutely clear. Yet for some reason the proposals have been held back by senior officials or the Department. Only now, with the industry itself financing and undertaking research into square mesh panels, are we in a position to demonstrate the value of the panels as an alternative and more effective method of conservation than blanket measures such as those contained in the present regulations. The Minister should be looking at a derogation for square mesh panels—whether 80 mm or 90 mm square mesh panels and wherever the panel is placed. Does it have to be placed differently for haddock or whiting than for cod? We should now be in a position to know all that. We should have undertaken the research and we should have in our possession the information to enable us to propose such alternative methods of conservation.

We should approach the issue with selective methods of conservation like that, not with this kind of blanket, crude measure which will damage the industry. We could have done that if Ministers had adopted a rational and reasonable attitude over the years and encouraged research into conservation. If they had done that, we would now have a good conservation record and regulations like the one that we are debating tonight would not be imposed on us from outside.

10.29 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): There are relatively few fishing vessels on the Solway firth and they are important to their skippers. I want to refer briefly to the north-east and to Morayshire in particular, which I know well from annual visits and from many hours flying over the Moray firth as a maritime pilot.

Knowing Burghead, Hopeman and Lossiemouth, I can appreciate how seriously the fishermen view the problems that they face. We all know that we cannot amend the

[Sir Hector Monro]

instrument; we can only reject or accept it. However, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider the interpretation of the regulations and be flexible. Having listened today to the important lobby on the subject, I think that my hon. Friend the Minister should consider the sea time between the port where the fish have been landed and the journey to the home port. A vessel may land fish at Peterhead while its home port may be Lossiemouth or Burghead. The journey back to the home port is dead sea time during which no fishing takes place, but that time must count towards the eight days.

After the fish have been landed, I cannot see why the vessel cannot be sailed back home without that time being counted against the eight days. After all, the fishermen must get home. They may also need to get home for repairs or to take on stores and equipment for the next voyage. To maintain that that journey time should be counted within the eight days is too rigid an interpretation of the regulations. When my hon. Friend replies, I hope that he can concede that point and be flexible.

I support the overall aim of conservation, but I am concerned about how we are going to interpret the regulations. If the Minister can make the concession for which I have asked, that would help some fishermen who want to take their boats home after they have landed their fish in another port.

10.33 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Many people with a great interest in the fishing industry who have been listening to this debate will have been disappointed by the Minister's response to the prayer. He began my making several cheap debating points. He said that the prayer relates to amending regulations and that if the prayer was approved, the amendment would not be part of the scheme. He did not mention the fact that we are not debating the substantive statutory instrument which implements the days in port regulations because that lies entirely in the Government's hands. The Leader of the House and the Government could have allowed us to debate those regulations. The Minister should not be allowed to pull the wool over the eyes of people who might be listening to this debate by using cheap political points.

I remember appearing before Lord Wheatley in the second division of the Court of Session, and he would say to me, after I had made a point like that made today by the Minister, "Is that your best point, Mr. Wallace?" After the Minister's speech today we are entitled to ask "Is that your best point, Minister?" It just shows how bankrupt and threadbare is this Government's policy.

I do not have time to repeat the arguments that have already been made on many occasions. I shall simply refer to the point about flexibility made by the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). Flexibility must be conceded in respect of the sailing time back to a home port after fish have been landed at the market. That particularly applies to several vessels from my constituency that might land at Mallaig or at the north-east ports and it may also apply to some vessels from Shetland which are not allowed to count as tie-up days and days when they are not fishing days when they are steaming back to their home ports.

In the debate of 14 February, the Minister of State, Scottish Office responded to the point by saying:

"Transit time certainly adds to the time not available for fishing, but the whole point of the scheme is to reduce fishing activity. That is endemic in it and it must be faced."—[*Official Report*, 14 February 1991; Vol. 185, c. 1092.]

What can that mean other than a concession of the point that we were trying to make? It underlines the fact that there is considerable scope. With those comments, the Minister would not pass the primary 7 test.

It must be recognised that the derogation of 110 mm is better than nothing. It will benefit many boats in the English ports and it will benefit several ports in the Shetland part of my constituency. However, there are two points related to that. First, even for those who enjoy a derogation, eight days may be seen as a precedent. When I visited ports in south-east England yesterday, especially Hastings, there was a fear that, although they will not be affected by the measure, we are creating a precedent that will be applied to and will affect other parts of the industry. Secondly, fishermen fear that because the 110 mm measure is included in the regulations, it will become par for the course in other size regulations. The 110 mm size will not be acceptable to the industry which has, for a long time, put to the Ministry scientific evidence on a number of mesh sizes, including square mesh and diamond mesh combinations, which are far more acceptable to the industry and which make a positive contribution to conservation.

The Minister gave the game away. He said that the safety argument does not stand up because it is not a question of the number of days of fishing, but of the quotas determining incomes and how much fish will be caught. If that is the case, what in the world have we been debating? Why do we need the eight-day tie-up if it is the amount of fish available and the quotas rather than the number of days that can be fished that are relevant? The Minister ruined his whole argument with the argument that he tried to turn on us. He has turned his mind against decommissioning. It is part and parcel of this debate because if we had had a well-managed and properly targeted decommissioning scheme, there would never have been a need for tie-up regulations.

The Government have failed the industry by refusing even to countenance a decommissioning scheme. Lord Strathclyde refused even to respond to proposals that the industry itself might make a contribution to pump-priming a decommissioning scheme. The Government have a bankrupt policy for bankrupting the industry.

10.37 pm

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): Everybody must accept the need for conservation. However, there will clearly be enormous argument about whatever methods are advanced. There is no doubt that it would have been wholly wrong if we had stuck to the original tie-up proposal. Few boats in the north-east, in my locality, were affected by the proposal, but it would have had a serious effect on those who were covered by it. There is no doubt that it was seen as a dangerous move and the Minister is to be congratulated on persuading Brussels to allow the option on mesh sizes.

There was considerable fear that the initial proposal would have spread eventually to the many smaller boats and there was great concern in the industry that the adverse effect would spread along the coast. Without question, it would not have been accepted by the fishing community. At one time, the fishing community talked

about breaking the law, but, quite rightly, it refused to do so. It decided that, whatever the circumstances, it would not break the law.

We have to face the fact that if we are to have effective regulations, they must carry the fishing community with them. That was not the case with the original proposals. My hon. Friend is to be congratulated on the way in which he fought, through Brussels, the option on net sizes.

I find myself in considerable agreement with the reference of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) to the stupidity of trying to find universal solutions to the problems of different countries. Following that path all too often leads either to no solution or to a draconian solution which can harm the future of the industry. We are all concerned about the long-term future of the industry as well as about the short-term problems of today, which are in everyone's mind.

We must deal with the problems of discards and of the indiscriminate slaughter of juvenile stocks. All hon. Members participating in the debate are conversant with the problems between different parts of the industry and the problems of mesh sizes as they apply to different stocks.

Industrial fishing seems to be a subject that, time after time, evades effective action from Brussels. We must keep on emphasising that in our discussions with the Community. There has clearly been a dramatic failure of Community policy on fishing, and criticism of Brussels by the fishing industry is self-evidently justified.

In the short time available, I wish to raise with my hon. Friend the Minister the issue of square mesh panels, which the hon. Member for Great Grimsby also mentioned. How does my hon. Friend the Minister see that proposal developing? We have all heard of the successful trials that have taken place. What will happen to ensure that the proposal is introduced? Many sectors of the industry believe that it could be an answer to their problems. What are my hon. Friend's views on derogation for whiting in the winter season? How does he respond to the suggestions made about that?

It is true that the industry is divided—north and south of the border and in different ports north and south of the border. Derogation adds to the divisions within the industry because something that helps one sector is seen as disadvantageous to another. In his wind-up speech, will my hon. Friend say what will happen to those boats that will not be affected by the current proposals? What will happen to the smaller boats which, in my part of the world, make up most of the fleet, but are not affected by these proposals? What does the Minister see as the future of the smaller boats which form such an important sector of the industry?

10.42 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): This is a serious debate. The reputations of Parliament and the Minister have not been enhanced by the Minister's tawdry opening remarks. That bodes ill for the future of an industry that faces a crisis and is seeking to put its view to the Government in a serious manner. The Minister clearly underestimates the enormous strength of feeling in the fishing industry, particularly in the north-east of Scotland. Its members are anxious to co-operate with the Government and arrive at a scheme that provides for conservation and structure and will give a decent livelihood to the people who go to sea.

Fishing is still one of the most dangerous industries, if not the most dangerous, in the country. The fact that that danger is being compounded by apparently stupid inflexibility—turning danger into daily peril—is astonishing. The Minister gave an assurance that instructions had gone out stating that the eight-day rule should be dealt with flexibly. Apparently, those instructions have not got through to the people enforcing the rules. The fishermen are clearly telling us that the rules are still being applied totally inflexibly, and making it dangerous. There is a failure of communication, which the Minister must put right.

The whole point of today's debate and the eight-day tie-up rule is that there seems to be a blanket refusal by the Government to deal with the issues on a long-term basis. There is a saying in Scotland, "Everyone is out of step except our Jock." It seems that everyone is out of step except our David. But clearly the Minister is absolutely out of step. I have never known such a cross-party unanimity of purpose and feeling as there is on this issue.

The Minister gave the game away to some extent when he said that if we did not deal with the problem now there would be a grave danger that the eight-day rule might be increased in future. That is a serious matter, and whether the Minister likes it or not, and whether he admits it or not, a precedent has been set. The Commission and the Government are proceeding on a dangerous course if they deal with fishing purely in terms of tie-up time. The eight days will become 12, and it will be said that we have won a great concession when the period is brought back to 10 days; a 16-day period will be suggested and it will be said that we have won a great concession when the figure drops back to 14. We have an increasing problem. As the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) said, the Minister gave the game away when he said that quotas would determine the matter. The shorter the time that is provided for vessels to be at sea, the greater the proportion of that time they have to spend at sea if they are to achieve their quotas. It is a circular argument.

The Government must address the problems of the industry. The industry has said quite clearly that it wants a decommissioning scheme, properly structured and properly worked out over a period. I am afraid that the Minister's remarks at the beginning of the debate make constructive debate much more difficult. There is no reason to create hostility, yet the Minister is doing that extremely well. Everyone believes that if we have a proper decommissioning scheme, some of the problems can be resolved. But not all the problems will be resolved. The industry needs some stability and some sanity. We cannot stagger on year after year, from crisis to crisis, never knowing where we shall be this time next year. It is just not good enough. We are concerned about the catching side of the industry—the one which, at present, is more severely affected. But the processing industry too will be affected. All sorts of people will be involved.

I want to adhere to the five-minute limit that we have been asked to observe, but there is a question that I must put to the Minister. It was originally proposed that the mesh size should be 120 mm. How was that size chosen? What scientific evidence was provided? I have not seen any, and I do not know anybody who has. Why was it suddenly decided that the size could be reduced to 110

[Mr. Robert Hughes]

mm? What was the scientific basis for that decision? I do not have time to go into detail about square mesh panels, and so on. Alternatives, coupled with restructuring of the industry on a proper basis, are being put forward—alternatives that would begin to tackle the problem on a long-term basis. We lurch from crisis to crisis; from danger to danger; from peril to peril.

It is not good enough that the Minister should dismiss the genuine fears of the fishermen. Some people say that the fishermen brought their difficulties upon themselves. That is not necessarily wholly true. No doubt the fishermen would accept that, in days gone by, they contributed to over-fishing. But they all want stability. They want to deal with the problem, and the Minister must not set his face against constructive dialogue with the industry. If he does so, the Government will pay a very heavy price. Whatever else we may want, we do not want to see that price paid in terms of fishermen's lives.

10.47 pm

Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith (Kincardine and Deeside): I speak more in sorrow than anything else. I was slightly disappointed by the remarks of the Minister at the beginning of his speech. I beg him to be under no illusion about the strength and depth of feeling among fishermen in Scotland about this matter. This is demonstrated by the number of fishermen who are attending this debate and by the support that they have had from councillors, fish processors and others.

My views on this scheme have already been made clear, and I do not intend, in this short debate, to elaborate on them. I have to say, however, that I believe that this tie-up scheme is crazy. It is nonsensical, and seems to have been devised in Europe by people with no practical experience of the fishing industry or of what fishermen have to face every day in the waters around the country. The fishermen's discretion as to when they should go to sea, and whether they should stay at sea, is being interfered with. This could be downright dangerous. I can only hope that that will not turn out to be the case.

Moreover, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) made clear, the regulations are riddled with anomalies and injustices. What exactly constitutes a day at sea? What we have here shows a lack of understanding of the practicalities of the industry—quite apart from the wider issues of the intrusion on social and family life.

We now have the alternative of the 110 mm net. As I said in the last debate on this subject, I welcome the introduction of this alternative. It is a practical proposition. It shows that action should be possible on other sizes. What I hope to see in future is an extension of the use of mesh sizes to achieve conservation as an alternative to the nonsensical tie-up scheme.

As other hon. Members have made clear, the 110 mm mesh is not an alternative for Scotland. We have a mixed haddock and whiting fishery, unlike the cod fishery in the south. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) said, it is of benefit to his fishermen, but it is not of benefit to Scottish fishermen. I assume that it is hoped that the 110 mm mesh as an alternative will achieve the one third reduction in fishing effort which was referred to in the last debate.

On the point made by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), what is the genesis of the 110 mm mesh? Why was that mesh size chosen? On what scientific advice was it chosen? What scientific research took place to justify that measurement as opposed to another measurement which might have been more relevant for the Scottish fishery? The question needs to be answered because it is directly relevant to the debate. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will answer it.

This is not just a negative debate. The fishing industry has alternatives. It is not just saying no to the tie-up scheme. It accepts that there have to be changes in the net, and it accepts the square mesh alternative. It accepts the need to reduce fishing effort.

In that context, the decommissioning scheme is relevant. I must impress on the House and on my hon. Friends on the Front Bench that that measure is available to us and is supported by the industry. It will not be without cost. The adjustment will be hard on certain sections of the industry, particularly as I believe that it has to be combined with a tight licensing scheme to control the fishing effort.

The measure is available to us. It is an integral part of the common fisheries policy. It was supported by British Ministers in the renegotiations in the early 1980s. I was there. I negotiated it as part of that policy, with the total support of the Government and of fellow Ministers.

For all those reasons, I am deeply saddened that I am asked tonight to approve a measure that is not soundly based, that is impractical and that could be dangerous, particularly when other alternatives, supported by the fishing industry, are within the gift of the Government. I certainly cannot approve the statutory instrument, and I shall not support it.

10.52 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I note that the Minister responsible for fisheries is opening and closing the debate. Perhaps after the lamentable performance of the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Minister of State, Scottish Office in the previous two fishing debates we should not be surprised that this time they have been left in the pavilion. None the less, given that the regulations affect more Scottish fishing boats than those of the rest of the European Community put together, we might at least have had a Scottish Office Minister at the Dispatch Box attempting to defend this miserable statutory instrument.

It is about three weeks since the previous fishing debate and we have had three weeks' experience of how the eight-day tie-up is affecting the economic and social fabric of the fishing communities. It is not just affecting livelihoods but is in danger of affecting lives.

The measure is being enforced not so much as a tie-up but punitively as a curfew. In the Lobby today we heard three specific examples of the hardline enforcement of the rule. We heard of how a boat going for repairs from Whitehills to Macduff, a distance of two to three miles, was considered to be in breach of the tie-up regulations.

We heard that boats going out from Macduff for engine trials, within sight of the harbour, are considered to be in breach of the regulations. And, thirdly, we heard that boats returning to home ports, for example, from Peterhead to Fraserburgh, are considered to be in breach of the regulations, greatly to the detriment of the businesses and traders in Fraserburgh. That is economic dislocation of the fishing communities to no point or purpose. Opposition Members will be surprised if the Minister can tell us any way in which any of those examples are contributing to the conservation of fish. Why cannot the activities that I have described be considered as a "reasonable excuse" as defined under the statutory instrument?

The great concern of all representatives of fishing communities is safety. Ministers'—indeed, the Government's—comments on this matter are, at best, disingenuous and, at worst, dishonest. On 13 February the Secretary of State for Scotland wrote in the Aberdeen *Evening Express*:

"Fishermen should never be forced out in bad weather and I don't believe it will be necessary—".

In the previous fishing debate, the Minister of State said something similar, and Lord Strathclyde wrote to me on 14 February stating:

"safety always remains the responsibility of each individual skipper."

Those remarks display either total ignorance of the position or total cynicism on the Government's part. Of course, fishermen will be forced to sea in adverse weather conditions——

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Michael Forsyth) *indicated dissent.*

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: The Minister denies it.

Mr. Salmond: Last year, 38 of the first 90 available days were forecast as either gale force 8 or storm force 10. That is a natural constraint on fishermen's ability to put to sea. If one adds to that an artificial limitation and further constraints on the ability of fishermen to judge the best time to put to sea, the economic pressure will force fishermen out of port in adverse weather conditions. The Government say that that is somehow the skippers' "free choice", but that is the same as saying, "You have a free choice of registering for the tie-up scheme if you are prepared to face a penalty of £50,000 for breaching the regulations." The stark truth is that fishermen have been dragooned into registering for the scheme and are being pushed out to sea in adverse weather conditions.

The Minister said that there will be "flexibility" for people caught at sea in storm conditions. Exactly the same promise was made to me in the previous fishing debate by the Minister of State, Scottish Office, yet there has been instance after instance in the past three weeks of fishing boats in my constituency running for port in adverse weather conditions because they were frightened of the penalties under the tie-up regulations. When will that flexibility be detailed to the fisheries officers round the coasts so that they know that promises which are being made at the Dispatch Box will be put into force in our fishing communities? I should be happy to give way to the Minister of State if he would answer that specific question.

I do not wish to transgress on the time that is available to me and shall make only two final points. Opposition Members do not want any more excuses about how all this is to do with European Community regulations. We believe that if the Government took a reasonable line on decommissioning, all sorts of things would be possible within the European Community, including the scrapping of the eight-day tie-up and the introduction of 80 mm square mesh panels.

Above all, the message from this debate is that, although only a dozen Conservative Members have been present, no doubt when it comes to the vote, their colleagues will stagger out of the bars and restaurants round Westminster to vote through this measure. I do not believe that any Government have the moral right to impose on fishing communities a measure that will further endanger the lives of fishermen, and I certainly do not believe that any Government have the moral authority to whistle up their majority from the liquid dungeons of the House of Commons.

10.58 pm

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): The Minister has made great play of the scientific evidence and all his predecessors have done exactly the same. Scientific evidence clearly shows that we need conservation measures and hon. Members have talked about some of the measures that are available. The marine laboratory in Aberdeen in my constituency did research work into the square mesh and diamond mesh net panels. It is clear from all the discussions that I have had with the scientists and fishermen on the particular tests that there are appropriate conservation measures, but one must also bear in mind that fishing is an economic activity and try to obtain the optimum mesh size with the appropriate degree of conservation.

All the scientists have come to the conclusion that for the fishermen in the north-east of Scotland the optimum size of net is 90 mm diamond with an 80 mm square mesh panel. That scientific evidence has been accepted by the fishermen and it would lead to improved conservation. I gave the figures when we last debated the matter in the House. That is acceptable to the fishermen because it would offer them a reasonable standard of living and the possibility of a reasonable catch.

[Mr. Frank Doran]

The regulations effectively remove any option. The fishermen know that the regulations do not give them a viable economic option. The regulations will not be accepted by the fishermen in the north-east of Scotland because they have no prospect of a reasonable catch. They will be given no support, economic or otherwise, in the face of these draconian measures, so it is understandable that they see no alternative but to reject the regulations and face all the problems that have been so admirably discussed and presented today.

The processors also have to rely on a steady supply of fish. They are against the regulations because they may mean the interruption of their supplies which in turn will affect their businesses. That too seems to have been ignored by the Minister.

Hon. Members have already referred to the way in which the Minister has approached the debate. The Minister came to the previous fishing debate just over three weeks ago in what seemed to be a fairly excited state of mind because he had managed to wring a concession out of Europe and he expected the full gratitude of the House. He did not get that gratitude because hon. Members on both sides of the House have enough experience to be aware that he was not making any offer whatever.

I wish that the Minister would listen to the points being made and not try to score cheap party political points as he attempted to do earlier. The most serious points that have been made tonight have come from Conservative Members. The right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) used to occupy the position which the Minister now holds and has a vast experience in this area, representing a fishing area. I wish that the Minister would take some time to listen to him. What he said tonight was constructive and much more appropriate than the cheap political point-scoring in which the Minister indulged. It takes quite a lot for the Minister to turn the House against him in that way.

The Minister huffs and puffs, but at the end of the day there is a unanimity of purpose in the House. All hon. Members who represent fishing constituencies want the industry to thrive. We all accept that conservation measures are necessary to protect the fishing stocks. We all appreciate the problems that the fishing community is experiencing. The Minister is adopting an antagonistic approach to the debate. It would not take much for us all to speak with one voice and to march forward and to present to Europe a case which has the full support of the House. Instead the House is split. Even Conservative Members are split, as we have heard tonight.

I wish that the Minister would take a much more constructive approach and attempt to take a sounding. There is an arrogance about his approach which I find extremely disturbing in the context of this debate. We do not want to be divided on this. We want to see our industry prosper. The only way to do that is to find adequate conservation measures which are acceptable to the industry. Perhaps when the Minister replies he will consider what has been said by hon. Members on both sides of the House and attempt to deal seriously with the points, rather than to dismiss them as though he took no interest in them.

11.4 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Of necessity, I shall be extremely brief. I have found it difficult during this debate to contemplate the expressions of Front-Bench Members and members of the Treasury Bench in particular. They showed an attitude somewhere between smug complacency and total disregard for the fishing industry.

The Minister opened the debate by referring to comments which I made on 14 February. As a woman Member of Parliament who represents, and is proud to represent, a fishing constituency, I can tell the Minister that his comments will be read with disgust by not only the fishermen but their wives, sons and daughters.

Just before Christmas I and my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) experienced the tragedy of fishing disasters. We know the exact implications of fishing disasters for our communities. The Minister takes lightly the probability that dangers will be increased by the implementation of the eight-day rule.

I also emphasise to the Minister the implications of the tie-up for the whole society of many of our fishing communities around the coast of Scotland. Not only the catching industry but the processing industry and all the ancillary industries will be affected. The rule will affect the butcher, the baker and the candlestick-maker in all our communities. If the fishing industries disappear in areas like mine, where 25 per cent. of jobs are totally dependent on fishing, many other facilities in the community will disappear.

Another point that I should like to emphasise to the Minister was raised by a member of Highland regional council. The eight-day tie-up will force many people to break what they see as the Sabbatarian rule. I shall not go into people's religious beliefs, but I respect their beliefs. For many people, Sunday is also a family day. It is a day when they try hard to be with their family and to be involved in the community. Many fishermen are involved in various voluntary organisations such as the venture scouts or the boys' brigade.

I see the Minister yet again sitting smirking on the Front Bench and paying not a blind bit of attention to what we are saying about our communities in the north-east of Scotland. If he would pay attention to what we are saying about our communities, I would be grateful. I, for one, am fed up with Ministers saying, "Yes, we care about the rural, far-flung and peripheral communities," yet at the end of the day doing nothing to argue our case.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Does the hon. Lady agree with me that the eight-day tie-up is an amazing policy to come from a party which purports to be the party of the family? Does she conclude, as I do, that fishermen's families apparently do not count?

Mrs. Ewing: The hon. Lady makes a valid point. The Ministry has a great deal to answer for in terms of the distress caused to the wives and children of my constituents who are skippers and crewmen.

It is clear that again the Government are ignoring our arguments. There is a great deal of chat and smiling on the Front Bench. Ministers argue that somehow they will achieve flexibility on the eight-day tie-up, but as yet we have received no details. The fishermen who have come down from the north-east of Scotland, the Northern Isles, the Western Isles and all over Scotland to listen to the debate are still awaiting details of how the Government

intend to implement the so-called flexibility. I suspect that there is no flexibility. There is no flexibility in their attitude to the eight-day tie-up. There is no flexibility in their attitude to our communities and the problems which the Government are creating for them. The House of Commons is being brought into disrepute by the Government's failure to address the needs of our fishing communities.

11.9 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I hope that the Minister will answer two questions when he replies. I had not intended to speak in the debate until I came across David Gardner's article in yesterday's *Financial Times* concerning Mr. Marin's threat to withdraw the legal basis of the Community's fisheries policy. I hope that the Minister will respond to that threat.

The Fisheries Commissioner said that the Commission might apply the principle of subsidiarity

"which holds that the Community should not interfere in policy best developed at national level."

David Gardner went on to say:

"The Commission would also be making national fisheries ministers and governments responsible for whatever future the industry has."

That is a serious question and I hope that the Minister will deal with it. I believe that Mr. Marin has issued a real threat. I hope to meet him on Tuesday next week.

When I meet the Fisheries Commissioner next week, I intend to tell him that, in my view, article 13 of Council regulation EEC No. 3926/90 may be legally invalid. Furthermore, there may be some loose drafting in the regulations.

The policy objective is to reduce the fishing of certain commercially valuable species. The Community is allowed a degree of commercial discrimination. It is able to introduce regulations which may hit some elements of the Community more than others. The question of dubious validity arises. The regulations may affect common law principles that are recognised by the European Court of Justice. I hope that the Minister will deal with the question of proportionality and the administration of equal justice to all concerned. The measure may lead to unfair discrimination.

This turbulent Fisheries Commissioner claims that the European Community's fleet suffers from 40 per cent. overcapacity. He may be close to the truth, but a rigorous examination and overhaul of the total allowable catch and quota system is needed, as well as a new set of multi-annual guidance programmes. What is the Minister's view concerning the introduction of a new set of MAGPs for the different fishing fleets?

If some communities will be hit hard by the measures, should not we argue that the European Community should conduct a study to identify those regions that are likely to be worst hit by a reduction in fishing effort so that appropriate measures can be introduced in the forthcoming review of the European Community's structural funds?

The stay in port represents major hazards for fishermen. It places them under a terrible burden to fish in bad weather. Risky fishing is normally associated with fleets owned by trawler companies. Skippers are forced to fish in bad weather. If they did not do so, they could be replaced by many others who were members of a pool of skippers. We do not want that kind of dangerous fishing being introduced into this sector of the industry. This measure is a disgrace. I believe it to be invalid and it should be opposed.

11.15 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): There has been considerable unity in the Chamber tonight, not least among hon. Members who have spoken about the appalling nature of the Parliamentary Secretary's opening remarks. If there was any doubt about whether Opposition Members should have prayed against the instrument and forcing a debate on the Floor of the House, our action was clearly justified by the response of the occupants of the Government Front Bench, not only in the substance of what they have said but in the manner in which they have conducted themselves.

Considering that, of the 450 vessels affected by the statutory instrument, 384 are registered in Scottish ports, we are disappointed, to say the least, that in the remaining minutes of the debate we shall not hear even from the Scottish Office Minister who has nominal responsibility for the fishing industry.

Other matters aside, Scottish fishermen and everyone concerned with the Scottish fishing industry are fed up with that nominal Minister for the industry not being answerable to the House but being yet another stooge hired from an agency apparently run by Debrett's—*[Interruption.]* Those people are put up to answer for the Scottish fishing industry but are not answerable to the House; they are known to nobody in the Scottish fishing industry and are accountable to no democratic electorate.

When dealing with matters such as this, it is unacceptable not to have a Scottish Office Minister at the Dispatch Box. Perhaps in the previous debate the Minister of State gave away so many hostages to fortune that we should understand why he is not addressing us tonight.

Tonight we got from the Parliamentary Secretary an arrogant performance. He thought it was a gross inconvenience, beyond anything that was reasonable, that he should be called back to the Dispatch Box to speak on the measure. He was utterly dismissive—*[Interruption.]* Does the Government Assistant Whip, the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), wish to intervene? He is not the only Conservative who is a little overtired and emotional at this time of night. That has been evident during the debate.

In his remarks, the Minister made the extraordinary statement that the whole matter was governed by quota. As the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) asked, what is the point of the eight-day tie-up rule if the quota is designed to impose precisely the control the Government are seeking?

As the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) and several of my hon. Friends asked, from where did the magical 110 mm figure come? In the previous debate the Minister appeared triumphantly to give the impression that the figure had been put forward by Her Majesty's Government in Europe. Is that a fact? Where did the 110 mm figure originate and why is it so inflexible in dealing with the different and comprehensible needs of the Scottish fishing industry and the mixed fishery that it pursues?

Much has been said about the need for flexibility. It is unfortunate that the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), is not replying to the debate

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

because, somewhat uncharacteristically, he introduced the word "flexibility" into it. We can call him the flexible hon. Member for Stirling. In the debate on 14 February—St. Valentine's day, as the Under-Secretary touchingly, though patronisingly, pointed out—the hon. Member for Stirling said:

"Under the scheme . . . there is a requirement to give 12 hours' notice of the port where the tie-up will take place. That does not have to be the port of normal location. If it were not sensible, because of weather conditions, to make for port, we should expect the fisheries inspector to take a flexible view. No one is suggesting anything to the contrary.—[*Official Report*, 14 February 1991; Vol. 185, col. 1091.]

Can the Under-Secretary of State tell us whether anyone is now suggesting anything to the contrary? Will he assure us that the flexibility mentioned in the previous debate will obtain for a vessel caught in a storm while in transit? Will it be prudent for such a vessel to make a run for port, as happens already? It is common in the Scottish fishing industry, although I would not expect the Minister to know it, for vessels to be based on the west coast while their crews have their homes on the east coast. Will the time taken to sail from west to east be included in the eight-day tie-up, or will that time be counted as additional? Will the time taken for fishermen to sail from one port to another to have their vessels maintained or repaired be included in the eight-day period?

Those are practical questions which the Minister, with some assistance, should be able to answer. There is no need for arrogance or for a dismissive attitude. There is an audience inside and outside the House, and it wants answers to those questions. A decommissioning scheme is relevant to the debate. Because of the folk memory of the failure of the Humber decommissioning scheme in the early 1980s, which appears to hang like a limpet to the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, there is a repeated incantation that the Government will not have a decommissioning scheme.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office spelt out the rationale for that. He said:

"A decommissioning scheme would not help to conserve stocks. It would be most attractive to the least efficient vessels which exert a little pressure on the stocks."—[*Official Report*, 14 February 1991; Vol. 185, c. 1092.]

That is not correct. The Minister of State, Scottish Office cannot speak but he can sneer, and spends all his time doing it. If he has anything to say that does not come from the corner of his mouth he should come to the Dispatch Box and say it. If the Government are telling us that they are incapable of conceiving or administering a scheme that does not overcome the difficulties mentioned in the excerpt that I read from the Minister's speech, it is an admission of defeat, like that of every other European Government except the Government of the Irish Republic.

We should consider not only the 384 vessels that will be directly affected by the tie-up, but the knock-on effect on the east coast fishing industry and that of the Orkney and Shetlands. In parts of Scotland that are not subject to the tie-up regulations, notably the prawn fisheries which are not subject to quota, the pressure from the measure is already being felt and the bottom has been knocked out of the livelihoods of fishermen.

Conservative Members laugh and sneer and obviously think that such a debate has no political cost. Last week Scottish Tories visited the north-east of Scotland and spoke about winning seats there at the next election. People from the north-east will have watched their performance in this debate. Conservative Members might as well have visited China because the debate has shown their contempt for and lack of interest in the issues that have been presented.

Mr. Curry *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the hon. Gentleman have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Curry: It is as well at this point to appreciate where we are. We have a major conservation problem on fisheries and it will not go away. There is a major problem about haddock and cod—the two stocks that are of predominant interest to British fishermen. Haddock in particular is the backbone of the Scottish fishing industry. Therefore, to deal responsibly with fisheries, we must take measures to conserve the stocks of haddock. That is the point from which we start and the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) starts from the same point, because I know that he appreciates the dilemmas that we face in trying to formulate policy in the industry.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Curry: No, I shall not give way. I shall try to answer the questions that have been asked as I have only a few minutes.

Many hon. Members mentioned technical conservation and the square mesh. We all hope that we can reach the point at which we can tackle conservation through selectivity of gear. That is where we want to be. It is true that positive work has been done. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) is not correct that that work has been suppressed, or that we have not taken it seriously. Trials are taking place at the moment, and we have carried out extensive trials.

We have managed to persuade Brussels to accept the principle of square mesh. However, as I have said frankly in the past to fishermen, if they are merely offering a 90 mm diamond mesh with an 80 mm square mesh panel, we will be unable to get that accepted in Brussels. We tried. I argued throughout a Fisheries Council for that, but it is not sufficient to be accepted in Brussels, and that is the fact of the matter. It does help. It is a conservation measure which takes us forward, but it does not take us far enough. That is the political reality. However, we shall continue to press ahead with that cause.

There will be a new Fisheries Council meeting in mid-April at which we shall yet again seek Community-wide measures, based on technical conservation, because that is the key to fisheries. No doubt at that Council I shall be able to explore the matters about which the vice-president was talking. The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) mentioned Mr. Marin's speculations. In one breath, Mr. Marin appears to be saying that we should not have national quotas, but a single Community sea, with a sort of free-for-all, which is entirely unacceptable to us. I am delighted to be able to say that it is unacceptable to a sufficient number of other countries for us to be able to defend ourselves from that proposal.

I have also heard Mr. Marin say that we should accept a not very well defined principle of subsidiarity. Does that mean that we pass fisheries policy back to member states? We have to know what he is talking about.

Clearly, our aim, if we are to have a Communitywide policy, is to try to preserve the status quo, in so far as it gives the United Kingdom a major proportion of its fisheries and allows us to manage our fisheries policy, because we believe that we will do it better than anyone else.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: What about tie-ups?

Mr. Curry: I am answering questions asked during the debate. Hon. Members queried whether there would be flexibility when boats moved from one port to another. May I be quite specific—boats have done so in the past. They have moved from one port to another to have an engine repaired or for some other purpose. The regulations state that they must remain in port, not merely refrain from fishing. The purpose is to reduce effort. In other words, it is different from ordinary practice. Therefore, we shall enforce the rule.

In the first part of his remarks the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) asked whether we would consider genuine safety problems and bad weather. The answer is yes, and we can prove it, because in the past few days the fisheries inspectorate has accepted bad weather as a reason for fishermen arriving late at a port where they have nominated to tie up. That is perfectly clear, and we are on record as saying that. We have implemented that and it is perfectly clear to fishermen.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Curry: No, because I have only three minutes left.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) asked why, if quotas limit the amount that fishermen can catch, we need a tie-up. The reason is that if there is a quota alone, more fish are caught than are landed, and there is a high rate of discard. Therefore, we need to bring effort more into line with the quota to reduce discards.

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) will agree that discards are a major problem. We have to tackle that problem because the trials, to which several hon. Members referred, demonstrate that in some cases the rate of discard is higher than the number of marketable fish caught. That is why square mesh is so important, because it eliminates discards of roundfish. Square mesh suits certain species, but not necessarily others, and the sort of rigging used is also important.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) talked about 120 mm square mesh, which was a Commission proposal. Our experiments showed that it would catch practically nothing, which is why we rejected the proposal, and even the Commission is no longer pressing for it. I have a strong suspicion that when we go back to the Council the Commission will be pressing for 110 mm.

The origin of the 110 mm option lies in the fact that that mesh size was calculated to deliver a reduction in effort equivalent to the 30 per cent. effort reduction. Also, we had to get the Commission to accept the proposals. We cannot escape our obligation to respond to propositions put to us by the Commission. There is no alternative; we must deal with the circumstances presented to us.

That means, however, that we must take conservation seriously. There is a serious problem which we must tackle. I resent any suggestion that we have no dialogue with the industry. There is no hon. Member in the House—

It being half-past Eleven o'clock, MR DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)):-*

The House divided: Ayes 51, Noes 75.

Division No. 87] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Haynes, Frank
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Livsey, Richard
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morley, Elliot
Nellist, Dave
Prescott, John
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wilson, Brian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Home Robertson
and
Mr. Calum Macdonald.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bellingham, Henry
Boswell, Tim
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'r's)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Freeman, Roger
Goodlad, Alastair
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Miller, Sir Hal
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann

Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Neil Hamilton.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The House is aware that the previous debate related to the amending regulations to the original Sea Fishing (Days in Port) Regulations 1991 (S.I. 1991, No. 139). Having regard to the fact that some Opposition Members and other hon. Members were extremely dissatisfied, and continue to be less than satisfied, about the ministerial response, will you confirm, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is within the Government's power to allow time for debate on the original statutory instrument? It would be in the interests of the fishing industry if we had an opportunity to debate the original regulations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I confirm nothing. Doubtless what has been said will have been heard by the usual channels.

CROFTER FORESTRY (SCOTLAND) BILL

[Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Crofter Forestry (Scotland) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Crime Prevention, Norwich

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

11.42 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I welcome this opportunity to discuss crime prevention in Norwich, and I am grateful to the Minister of State, Home Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), for being present at this late hour to reply to the Adjournment debate.

I was in touch recently with the crime prevention panel in Norwich and with the chief constable of Norfolk to ensure that my remarks are completely up to date.

The fight against crime in any part of the country is an on-going struggle. It involves the public just as much as it involves the Government, Parliament, the police and the courts. We all agree on the need to deter potential criminals, on the duty of catching those reponsible for crime and on the need for appropriate punishment. There is a continuing debate in Norwich about how to achieve those objectives.

The 1989-90 crime statistics for the county of Norfolk reveal a worrying upward trend. There are particularly marked increases in the figures for burglaries from dwellings which are up 29·5 per cent. Thefts from motor vehicles are up 45 per cent. and criminal damage is up 41 per cent. By contrast, crimes of violence are stabilising and were up only 3 per cent. over that period. Crime statistics in Norfolk show a deterioration in the record. In 1980, the figure was only 35·3 recorded crimes per 1,000 population, but in 1990 it was 71·7. The average national annual increase in the crime rate in the 1980s was 5·2 per cent., but in Norfolk it was higher than that average at 8 per cent.

Norfolk is steadily falling down in the league table of crime. I am informed that Norfolk is the second lowest funded of all the 31 non-metropolitan forces in terms of gross revenue expenditure and lowest of all in terms of capital expenditure per 1,000 population. My right hon. Friend may wish to comment on those facts later.

There is great pressure on uniformed police officers and on the CID in Norfolk. My attention was drawn yesterday to an article in the *Eastern Daily Press* by Canon David Sharpe of St. Peter Mancroft church in the centre of Norwich. He referred to the increasing problem of vandalism. Almost two dozen insurance claims have been made by his church in the past two years, and in the past fortnight his stained glass windows have been damaged on three occasions at a cost of more than £1,000. It is no wonder that he is worried.

I am aware that the Government have responded positively to calls from Norfolk for extra resources to fight crime. An additional 155 police posts have been authorised since 1979 and 67 police officers have been released through civilianisation since then. An extra 12 police posts were authorised last December, with effect from 1 October 1991. However, the rise in police manpower is significantly less than that sought by the police authority in Norfolk. Only 102 of 188 posts sought since 1988 have been granted and I gather that the decision on 25 additional officers requested for 1992-93 may still be some way off.

I ask my right hon. Friend whether his Department realises that the special needs for policing of the rural areas are greater than is recognised when compared with the metropolitan areas. From my studies, it seems that the

metropolitan areas are treated more generously in terms of the number of police officers. That case is put to me regularly and I should be grateful if my right hon. Friend could respond to that point.

There has been a concerted effort to win the support of the Norwich public through the establishment of the Norwich Crime Stoppers in 1987. Crime Stoppers began in 1983 in Great Yarmouth and since then it has been a great success. It offers direct telephone access to Norwich CID for members of the public with information on serious crimes. Callers are able to remain anonymous and they are given a code number. If a criminal is convicted by the courts on their information, they become eligible for a reward. The success of the Crime Stoppers scheme is clear from the figures. In 1987-89, 145 serious crimes were publicised in local newspapers. Some 191 calls from informants were received by Norwich CID and 35 arrests were made. Attacks on six elderly ladies, a bank robbery, cases of robberies from business premises and arson and burglary at a Norwich school, advertised through Crime Stoppers, have all recently ended in arrests.

The value of the scheme is clear but, unfortunately, the flow of donations from local businesses is drying up. I am not sure whether more direct Home Office support is available to Crime Stoppers campaigns. Again, I am thinking of the metropolitan areas and of London, where such support is forthcoming. Does my right hon. Friend agree that this excellent scheme needs support not only from the local community, but perhaps from the Government? There is no doubt of the success of the Crime Stoppers campaign in crime prevention and detection in Norwich.

Better intelligence on crime and detection are only part of the struggle. There is considerable concern in Norwich about the lack of secure facilities for young offenders, about the policies of the courts on bailing accused persons and the apparently lax punishment of those convicted.

My right hon. Friend may know of criticisms of the social services department of Norfolk county council expressed by the senior Crown prosecutor, Mr. Nicholas Methold, at Yarmouth magistrates court last August about the department's failure to provide secure accommodation for two juveniles remanded to the council's care. The county's social services department had to telephone other authorities across the country to find places for the boys, but that problem is likely to end when the secure accommodation unit at Kerrison school in Eye, Suffolk, opens next October. But that unit has only 10 beds to serve the whole of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, so I hope to hear soon from the authorities that an expansion to a total of 30 beds will follow rapidly.

I realise that the absence of suitable secure accommodation is a partial explanation for the bailing practices of the courts. I appreciate that, under the provisions of the Bail Act 1976, a decision on the release of accused persons is a matter for the courts alone. Presumption in favour of bail, unless there are reasons to fear absconding, interference with witnesses or further crimes, is right. However, my doubts are raised by the current position in Norfolk where four people accused of murder, two of attempted murder and one of armed robbery of a bank are currently on bail. By any standards, those are serious and violent crimes, and there need to be good reasons to justify bail in those cases.

There is also concern about some of the courts' sentencing policies. It is sensible for those guilty of minor crimes against property and, in some cases, against persons to be kept out of gaol. I welcome the Government's recent initiatives ensuring that mentally ill people are not unnecessarily kept in prison. I think that it is true—my right hon. Friend can correct me if I am wrong—that one fifth of sentenced prisoners are, at present, mentally ill. I am sure that it it right to try to reduce the numbers of some categories of prisoners. But in more serious cases, criminals should go to prison, where they can be contained and the public protected.

Without the intervention of the Court of Appeal in January, brothers who lured pizza delivery boys into traps for the purpose of robbing them would have escaped with a suspended prison sentence of 21 months and community service of 180 hours but now, as a result of the appeal, they are doing three years in gaol and 18 months in a young offenders institution.

Serious questions are being asked about these matters, and serious questions have to be asked about the supervision that probation officers can give to offenders under community service orders. Doubts about the value of community service were expressed by a former senior probation officer, Peter Coad, in the February edition of the police magazine. Those doubts are shared by some police officers in Norwich and by the crime prevention panel chairman, Mr. Norman Potter.

It is all too easy for persistent minor offenders to regard community service as an easy alternative to prison and to fund payment of fines through further criminal activities. Therefore, I hope that my right hon. Friend will in the near future be willing to meet representatives of the organisations interested in crime prevention and detection in Norwich to discuss the issues further.

For the reasons I have explained, there is a need in Norwich to enlarge support for the Crime Stoppers scheme, increase the numbers of police in Norwich and the more vulnerable rural districts, ensure that courts are more careful in their operation of bailing procedures and send those convicted of serious crimes to prison to protect the public. I support the general Home Office policy of reducing the overall number of prisoners. But I have made clear where the problems are arising, and I have outlined the points raised by my constituents and others in Norwich.

I have drawn my right hon. Friend's attention to some of the issues of concern among responsible people in Norwich. I hope that he will respond positively, bearing in mind the commitment of all those involved in the local community and the police force.

11.53 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on taking this opportunity to raise the issue of crime prevention, particularly in Norwich. It is good to see the debate so well supported in the House tonight. I am particularly pleased to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris), the chairman of Crime Concern Trust, is present to show, not only his interest as a Member of Parliament, but the interest of that important voluntary organisation in trying to promote crime prevention.

My hon. Friend's speech was very eloquent, but very sad. I have visited Norwich on a number of occasions, and

[Mr. John Patten]

I have to say that it is a very beautiful city. To hear of St. Peter Mancroft church—that great medieval edifice in the centre of the city—being vandalised, and some pieces of historic glass attacked, fills me with sadness. But I am saddened not just by the damage to the historic fabric of that church but also by the damage that must have been done by the young criminals—I guess that they were young—who indulged in the vandalism. We have to do more to encourage such people to grow straight rather than crooked, and they must be punished when they are caught—and I am sure that the Norfolk police are trying to catch them.

Of course I shall meet my hon. Friend and any representatives from Norfolk that he wants to bring to talk about crime prevention. My door in the Home Office is always open. I shall do my best to meet people's concerns. For the purposes of the reply to my hon. Friend, may I say that much of the Home Office has been turned over this week to looking at what goes on in Norwich. In crime prevention, many good things are happening in the city.

Norfolk is a predominantly rural county. It is not comparable with the large conurbations, and it certainly does not have the same priorities and problems as the inner city areas. I realise that in rural areas distance is a problem. Some villages suffer from isolation. On the other hand, many towns, such as Great Yarmouth, with a lively night life experience trouble. I am certainly not saying that the county is an ocean of peace and quiet. However, Norwich has a great deal going for it in the development of safer communities. That is because in recent years people in Norwich have not turned a blind eye to what they can do to work with the police towards the prevention of crime. I pay tribute to them for that. The city is to be congratulated on what it has done in this respect—far more than many other provincial towns and cities. That co-operation is critically important.

I should like to describe some of the ways in which the police are working on crime prevention in Norwich and the rest of the county of Norfolk. First, let me give some details of the size of the force. I can confirm that the authorised establishment of officers in the Norfolk constabulary is 1,408—an increase of 143 on the 1979 figure. An additional 12 police officer posts have been approved, with effect from 1 October 1991, making a total of 1,420. But raw figures do not tell the whole story. Training and specialism are very important. More than 200 uniformed and CID officers in the county are trained in crime prevention techniques. More than 270 officers throughout the county, including Norwich, are designated as schools liaison officers to carry out programmes in primary schools. It is very good to have that intensity of police presence in schools. Let us face it: in my hon. Friend's constituency, like mine, teachers, doctors, health workers and vicars together could probably identify most of the potential criminals when those people are between the ages of four and seven. In this regard, the Norfolk police are on to a very good thing.

The police plan and organise a number of activity schemes in Norwich during the school summer holidays, under the banner of SPLASH—schools and police liaison activities for summer holidays. Last year, 700 youngsters in the 11 to 15 age group took up places on this scheme—a take-up rate of 96 per cent. What a popular and successful scheme it has been. It has taken children, some of whom may be at risk of offending, off street corners, out of pubs, and out of areas where they might get into trouble, and has put them to useful activities. That is very constructive policing, and we want to see more of it in the country. Staffordshire has it, Humberside has it, Avon has it and Norfolk has it. I should like to see every county force in the country model its programme on the successful summer diversionary schemes. That is the kind of preventive activity that stops children getting into offending habits at an early age. Plans are being made to rerun the scheme this summer on an even bigger scale. I hope that my hon. Friend will do all that he can to encourage local people in that endeavour.

The police have also established a new schools liaison scheme in Norwich and elsewhere for primary schools. Those schemes and activities help to reduce crime in the target age groups. They also play a vital part in promoting understanding and better relations between the police and young people. I wish the police in Norwich every future success with them.

There is another advantage of the summer schemes: neither my hon. Friend nor I want the pressure to be taken off parents to face up to their own responsibilities. The Criminal Justice Bill, now in another place, puts emphasis on parental responsibility.

I said at the beginning of my remarks that we need to promote the safest possible community in Norwich. My hon. Friend, as an active and persuasive constituency Member, has taken a leading part in that respect in recent years. Perhaps it is partly due to his endeavours that we have seen an explosive growth recently in neighbourhood watch in Norwich. From inquiries I have made in the Home Office this week, I find that in the Norwich police division there are now nearly 400 homewatch schemes. Local schemes are increasing at the rate of two per week. That is remarkable. Of course, neighbourhood watch and homewatch are being promoted very much by Crime Concern, which acts as a liaison and link organisation for neighbourhood watch across the country.

I am also very pleased that the probation service is taking a tough attitude with young offenders. It is getting some of them on to the streets to put up neighbourhood watch signs. That is visible evidence of community service. My hon. Friend wondered whether community service was a tough enough penalty. It can be tough going out to do manual labour. It demonstrates to the community that young offenders are putting something back by putting up these signs.

Much crime prevention work involving other agencies is being done in Norwich. I pay tribute to the local crime prevention panel, a great organisation. I think that it is one of the most active in the south of England. I will be happy to see its representatives when my hon. Friend leads a delegation to see me.

The crime prevention panel has set up a pub watch and night club liaison scheme to try to deal with the problems of getting young people who have had a good evening away from the streets outside night clubs. Very often that is when trouble happens, when they are waiting for public transport.

The panel has also worked hard to set up the Crime Stoppers initiative, the confidential telephone line which has been successful in Norwich and also in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss). The scheme has been funded not

from public resources but from resources raised by a charity and from local sources. That is the way in which we should like to see it continue to develop.

Something which has also concerned people in Norwich, as in other parts of the country, is burglary. My hon. Friend quoted burglary statistics. Last year, Norfolk police, with the co-operation of local authority departments and other agencies, organised an anti-burglary campaign throughout Norwich and the county. What happened? There were different laudable initiatives. Property-marking kits were made available in libraries in the county. Housing departments issued leaflets on door security to sheltered homes. The social services department also arranged for home care assistants to distribute them. The planning department issued good advice to would-be developers about how to make their property more secure. Finally, the Association of British Insurers lent a hand by distributing large numbers of leaflets on home security, free of charge, I believe. It is always good to get such help from business. Those are good examples of co-operation between the public and private sectors.

Before I turn to the more difficult area of the bad news, one final bit of good news about Norwich relates to crime prevention week in April. I should like to report what will happen in the Norwich area so that my hon. Friend can make his constituents better aware. Norwich will be playing a full part in crime prevention week—the first ever in this country. Up and down the land, in places as far apart as Dawlish in the south-west to Derby in the east midlands, people will be playing an active part in promoting crime prevention week. In common with the rest of the country, car crime is a major concern in Norwich. In the six weeks leading up to crime prevention week, a car alarm discount scheme, involving many local companies, has been arranged. I advise people who can afford it and who wish to have that equipment fitted to their cars to do so. I know that this has always been of great concern to my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest.

In conjunction with the probation service and young offenders on community service, the police in Norwich have also arranged a cycle coding scheme in local schools. In other words, local offenders on community service will go out to schools where the fact that they are offenders will be known and where they will code the bicycles. They will have to do that work themselves. They will be undertaking preventive work while undergoing punishment in the community. That is an important way of driving home to them the fact that they have offended, of making them face up to the consequences of their offending behaviour, and of doing some good in the community. That is the right way to proceed.

The Wednesday of crime prevention week will be a training day for shop staff on the subject of shop theft and credit card fraud, which is a major problem. Friday will be a "stay safe" day concentrating on homewatch schemes and road and home safety in Norwich. Once the Home Office began to look, we found an enormous amount going on in Norwich, which is commendable, and certainly much more than in many other areas.

I doubt whether I shall be able to deal tonight with all my hon. Friend's points about the criminal justice system, but I guess that I shall get the chance to discuss them at greater length when he and his friends and colleagues from Norwich and the Norfolk area come to see me in the Home Office.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North referred to sentencing, in which the Government's role is to provide an adequate framework of powers within which the courts may act. My hon. Friend is probably aware of the fundamental and significant changes made in the Criminal Justice Act 1988 which allow my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to refer to the Court of Appeal sentences that are allegedly over-lenient. If my hon. Friend's constituents say to him, "It is a disgrace; that person should have got more"—that may be right or it may be wrong—he can tell them that we have armed the Attorney-General with the power to go back to the Court of Appeal. He has done so on 25 occasions, on 22 of which the Court of Appeal increased the sentence. That should be of some recompense to those people who have suffered from injury or loss, and is important for public confidence.

There is also the issue of bail. I cannot and must not attempt to comment even in broad categorisations on the particular cases that my hon. Friend raised. Suffice it to say two things: we regard the Bail Act 1976 as finely balanced between making sure that no one who has not been convicted is denied his or her liberty before trial unless that is really necessary. Let us imagine how any of us would feel if we were denied our liberty when innocent and were on remand for a long time. On the other hand, we are also convinced that the Bail Act gets the balance right in the other way, in ensuring that those people who are a danger, or a potential danger, to the community are remanded in custody.

I have heard the sort of complaints made by my hon. Friend about this issue consistently since I went to the Home Office in 1987 and that is why, during the passage of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, I took the opportunity to suggest to the House, and the House agreed, that we should toughen up some aspects of the working of bail by requiring learned judges who give bail in the face of police advice to the contrary to give their reasons for so doing in open court. That is an important safeguard.

It is also important that we advise ourselves of the full facts of each case. I am not one of those who criticise the media easily, but it is important that the local or national media should report the full facts when someone is bailed. Sometimes, on examination, they are less serious than one might have thought.

Bail decisions are often the most difficult that magistrates and Crown court judges have to take, and I accept that there is a legitimate public concern from time to time when people are granted bail, particularly when serious offences are involved such as those referred to by my hon. Friend. But it is for exactly that reason that the House decided that section 153 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 should stand.

Whether penalties in the community are tough enough is a matter for sentencers, the probation service and those who work with it. It is for them to deliver that tough caring authority that is necessary not just to punish people but to make them face up to the effects of their offending behaviour.

A number of points have been left unanswered by me because of lack of time. I look forward to discussing them further with my hon. Friend when he comes to see me in the Home Office. I congratulate him warmly on initiating this debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eleven minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 6 March 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Mortgage Arrears

1. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland are in arrears with mortgage payments; and how many houses have been repossessed as a result of mortgage default during the last year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): Information on the level of mortgage arrears and the number of repossessions is not available for Scotland.

Mr. Home Robertson: How convenient for the Minister. Does he accept that mortgage default is now one of the major causes of homelessness in Scotland and that 130 people in East Lothian became homeless last year because of mortgage default? That is about 15 per cent. of the official homelessness figure in my constituency. Is he further aware that a significant proportion of such folk bought their district council houses at a discount and are now having to be rehoused by the same local authority? Will he please admit that the Government's cockeyed housing policy has now made a crisis into a disaster of homelessness for many people?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that only 4 per cent. of homelessness applications were attributed to that cause by the applicants. I stress that Clackmannan district council operates a scheme for tenants who are aspiring owners but find themselves in difficulty. Any other district council may operate that scheme if it so wishes. We have also developed a cash incentive scheme for housing associations to assist homeless families. Few people become homeless because of mortgage default and the figure is well below the number in England.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that figures from the building societies show that about 96 per cent. of those with mortgages in the United Kingdom are not in default of any kind? Every trader would love to be able to present such figures. Does my hon. Friend also agree that there has been considerable interest in the extension of the rents-to-mortgages scheme, and can he tell me something about it?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes. First, 0·47 per cent. of all mortgage holders in Britain have been subject to repossession. That is well below 1 per cent. and the percentage in Scotland is lower because market values are lower. My hon. Friend asked me about the rents-to-mortgages scheme. We launched our publicity on the scheme on Friday, and there have been more than 4,000 expressions of interest from local authority tenants throughout Scotland. That shows that many people believe that this is the bargain of the century.

Homeless Youngsters, London

2. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assistance his Department has given to agencies catering for homeless young Scots in London.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for homeless persons in England, including the funding of voluntary agencies, rests with the Department of the Environment, the Department of Health and the local authorities concerned, but the Scottish Office is making available £50,000 a year for three years to voluntary bodies to assist projects to discourage young people from Scottish cities moving to London.

Mr. Watson: That is a pathetic response. There is a problem here and now, involving hundreds of young Scots in London, of which the Minister should be aware. Half of them come from Glasgow and many of them have a social work care background. The Minister should have read the booklet that was sent to him called, "Living on the Borderline", which was published last week by Borderline, Centrepoint and Shelter (Scotland). It tells a tragic tale. The Irish Government provide £500,000 to London agencies to deal with their young homeless. When will the Scottish Office take similar responsibility for young Scots in London?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The £50,000 is designed, exactly like the Irish scheme, to discourage young persons from leaving home. The scheme's purpose is to encourage people to obtain accommodation in their home areas. We have other initiatives. Some £72,000 has been allocated to the centre for housing research in Glasgow, which will carry out a study to see how social work can prevent homelessness. We have also provided £48,000 to the Scottish Council for Single Homeless. Over and above that, we have made an additional allocation to the four cities of Scotland and we have invited bids from the towns which have most homelessness—Renfrew, Dumbarton, Falkirk and Kirkcaldy. We think that that will be of substantial assistance.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Does my hon. Friend agree that if the cities in Scotland were to allocate their empty council houses, that would help homelessness in Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If a substantial proportion of the 26,000 empty houses were brought back into use, that would be of assistance. The code of practice that we will issue shortly takes into account the £50,000 project which seeks to discourage young persons from leaving their home areas.

Local Government Finance

3. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the recent meetings he has had with political parties in relation to the reform of local government finance.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I had a meeting on 12 February with representatives of the Scottish National party at which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment was present. I will meet representatives of the Scottish Liberal Democrats later today. Proposals made at those meetings will be taken into account in the current review of community charge matters.

Mr. Douglas: Is not it now becoming increasingly clear, as a result of those meetings and others, that local government finance in Scotland is in a state of crisis and that the indebtedness that has resulted from the past two years of the poll tax is well in excess of £500 million? Is the Secretary of State so sanguine as to think that he can persist with the concept of the poll tax in Scotland, or will he face up to his responsibilities and recognise that, if he does not rule it out, the electorate will rule him out?

Mr. Lang: The term "crisis" is hardly appropriate to a system in which 98 per cent. registration has been achieved and in which 95 per cent. collection is anticipated for the first year of the charge. Nine out of the 12 levying authorities have already collected 95 per cent. Their task would be eased considerably if Scottish National party Members would adopt a more responsible approach to the funding of local government. It is disgraceful that those who seek to make laws in this place should seek to break them when it comes to funding local authorities.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the additional support for capital allocation projects that he announced yesterday and which was welcomed by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities will be extremely beneficial and will allow many local authorities to get ahead with valuable projects in the coming financial year?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. I was particularly glad to be able to allocate more than £500 million in capital allocations to local authorities with particular emphasis on the improvement of school buildings, on general services, including the provision of factories where they are needed, and on the improvement of water services and sewerage, in respect of which we plan to increase funding by almost two thirds during a three-year period.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Will the Secretary of State acknowledge the growing problem caused by people who have hitherto paid the poll tax but who say that they intend to deduct from next year's poll tax the amount that is attributable to non-payment? In those circumstances, and bearing it in mind that my party has encouraged its members to pay, will he further acknowledge that the sooner the Government announce the abolition of the poll tax, the easier it will be to remove the problem of non-collection?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that it is grossly unfair that those who have paid their community charge should be expected to pay an SNP surcharge to cover non-payment by others. I urge everybody to make a full contribution to local government and not to break the law. We are reviewing the community charge and considering possible methods of funding local government and I look forward to my meeting with the Liberal Democrats later this afternoon to carry those discussions further.

Mr. Norman Hogg: Will the Secretary of State join me in congratulating both the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on coming to the conclusion that a property tax is a better idea than a poll tax? Is not it the case that the property tax is electorally attractive, as was demonstrated in last year's regional elections when the Labour party won a considerable victory, and that if we introduce such a tax it will leave the Minister of State looking something of a lulu?

Mr. Lang: I do not know how it will make the hon. Gentleman look when I remind him that, according to the opinion polls, the Labour party's roof tax proposal was more unpopular than the community charge has ever been and that fewer than 20 per cent. of the Labour party's own supporters supported it.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the lesson of councils such as Eastwood is that Conservative councils provide efficient services with a relatively low community charge? Is not it a great pity that not more councils in Scotland are controlled by the Conservative party so that the poll tax could be lower?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right, for that is the lesson to be learnt from the outrageously high tax that is imposed in places such as Edinburgh, where the community charge is £584. The lesson for Edinburgh's residents is to vote for a Conservative administration in next year's district council elections, which will produce better government and a lower community charge.

Mr. Dewar: Did the Secretary of State have time this week to study the admirable article by the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), who was until recently Chancellor of the Exchequer, in which he argued that the poll tax

"is a tax so fundamentally flawed that no amount of tinkering or refinement, of amendment or reform, can make it acceptable. Abolition is the only course."?

He went on to argue trenchantly for a radically reformed rating system as the answer to local government finance. Does not the Secretary of State accept that there is a growing body of support—which includes the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), the Secretary of State for the Environment—for a property-based system and that the Secretary of State's intemperate attacks on that proposal are making him look silly? Is not it time that the right hon. Gentleman started to eat his words and to admit that he has got it wrong?

Mr. Lang: I remember when the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) were used almost verbatim to criticise the domestic rating system, which led us to introduce the community charge when my right hon. Friend was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and therefore a senior member of the Government. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) invites me to speculate on the outcome of the review. I will say only that we are considering carefully all the options and will present our solutions in due course.

School Repairs

4. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the level of education funding within Highland region, with specific regard to the needs of building repair and refurbishment.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Michael Forsyth): Schools throughout Scotland will benefit from a 19 per cent. increase in resources for building and repair, making a total of more than £73 million. Highland region's share will be £3·8 million—an increase of 36 per cent.

Mr. Kennedy: Will the Minister acknowledge that, based on the region's submission to the Scottish Office last November, that increase—however welcome—is still less than half the amount that the region identified as the bottom line expenditure required over a five-year period, to bring the condition of its schools up to a tolerable standard? The funding provided does not take account of population growth and higher new-build costs on the west coast—which is of particular concern to my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). Does not he accept that the overall expenditure pattern will fail woefully to provide schools in the Highland region that are protected against the wind and rain? What will he do to change that?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman is experienced enough to know that if Highland region wants to spend more, it is free to do so. Although I do not carry figures around in my head with great accuracy, I believe that I am right to say that the funding provided is almost £1 million more than the region was expecting and represents a substantial increase in resources. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has acknowledged the failure of some local authorities to tackle such problems in the past and they are now being tackled as a consequence of the priority that he set.

Housing

5. **Mrs. Irene Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss housing in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I expect to meet representatives of the housing committee of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities in September.

Mrs. Adams: When the Minister meets COSLA's representatives, will he listen to them this time, and reinstate housing support grant in Scotland? That would give Renfrew district council in my constituency a grant of £16,289,000 at 1979 levels, which would enable it either to reduce rents by £3 a week or to take on board a more extensive housing repair system.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: During the past 10 years, we have targeted housing benefit directly at the individual, rather than make huge sums of housing support grant available. We have made sure that the cost of hostel provision and the deficits are covered by housing support grant. A considerable number of councils have come into housing support grant as a result. Scottish Homes is undertaking considerable expenditure in Ferguslie park, in the hon. Lady's constituency, which will total at least £3·6 million next year. That will help.

Mr. McAllion: One housing item for discussion, which should be of interest to the Minister when he meets the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, is the level of house building. Does he realise that, had the Government maintained the level of house building which they inherited from Labour in 1979, there would be more than 50,000 additional new houses in which to house the homeless and with which to reduce waiting lists? Is not his failure to maintain that level of building absolutely disgraceful? Since he cannot possibly defend such a record, will he now take the only honourable course open to him and tender his resignation, along with the rest of that broken-backed crew on the Front Bench?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since 1979, 220,000 houses have been built in Scotland. If housing association units are counted in with the public sector, almost 60,000 units were built in the public sector. In 1989-90 more than 1,200 local authority houses were completed. If Dundee district council wants building more council houses to be a priority, it can be, provided that it is a priority within the council's allocation.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: When my hon. Friend meets COSLA to discuss housing, will he also discuss the needs of ex-service men and their families, who have had great difficulty finding accommodation—especially accommodation to buy—when they leave the services? Will he try to impress upon local authorities the fact that they should give more priority to them? If he cannot make progress in that direction, might he be prepared to involve housing associations more?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am in touch with the Ministry of Defence on that matter at present and I am interested in the suggestion that my right hon. Friend has made. I shall certainly follow it up in discussions with the Ministry.

Health Boards

6. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which bodies were consulted before appointments were made to the 15 reconstituted health boards in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The bodies consulted on appointments to the reconstituted health boards were all health boards, local health councils and local authorities, various trade unions, universities, health service professional bodies, voluntary bodies and a number of leading Scottish firms.

Mrs. Michie: It seems from what the Secretary of State says that democracy has gone out of the window for the health service in Scotland and that there is a clear and urgent case for a portion of health board members to be directly elected. What criteria were used for the election of health board members to the reconstituted boards? Was election based on ability or knowledge of the health boards, or was it—as it appears to us—based on affiliation to the Conservative party? Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House how many members of health boards are card-carrying members of the Tory party or hold office in that party?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Lady demeans herself. It is absolutely outrageous to suggest that appointment is based on political affiliation. In the vast majority of cases the political affiliations of members of health boards are not known. They are chosen for what they can contribute to the good running of the health boards and that is why we consult so widely with all the bodies that I mentioned.

Mr. Canavan: Is the Secretary of State aware of the widespread anxiety felt throughout Falkirk district council about the absence of any residents of Falkirk district on the new Forth Valley health board, and that that anxiety is shared even by leading Tories such as Bill Hughes and Councillor Malcolm McNicol? In view of the blatant political bias, as well as the geographical bias, will the Secretary of State now take steps to try to achieve a better balance, instead of allowing his colleague, the Minister responsible for health, blatantly to abuse his political power to appoint his friends, such as Mrs. Isbister and a lot of other Tory party hacks who seem hell-bent on trying to wreck the national health service when they should be defending and improving it?

Mr. Lang: As I have already said, members of health boards are not chosen for their political affiliations, which are not known in most cases. They are chosen for what they can contribute to the work of the health boards, based on the advice of a wide range of bodies. Geographical representation is not a relevant factor in the appointment of health boards. The proper means to represent interests of that type is through health councils.

NHS Patient Care

7. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what initiatives are planned to improve patient care in the national health service in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: New initiatives such as heart-lung transplant surgery, the helicopter ambulance service, the provision of nuclear magnetic resonance scanners and the introduction of a cochlear implant service are some of the examples of innovation in the health service to build on the Government's outstanding record.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that the substantial extra funding awarded to the Dumfries and Galloway area health board will enable it to improve patient care substantially in the coming year? Will he congratulate the board—and, in particular, Dr. Christopher Isles—on the introduction of a new renal dialysis unit in Dumfries, which will benefit local patients enormously?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with my hon. Friend and pay tribute to the work being done by the board. I had the opportunity to meet some of its staff recently. My hon. Friend is right to highlight the progress being made in bringing kidney dialysis to patients in rural areas. That is part of a general policy that has been implemented in the Borders, preventing patients from having to travel long distances.

When we conducted a survey of patient satisfaction a couple of years ago, the Dumfries and Galloway health board emerged with one of the highest scores. I am sure that that is because management, doctors and staff are so committed to its purpose, which is to improve patient care.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I welcome the medical innovations described by the Minister, but why is he putting all that at risk by persisting with the completely discredited policy of allowing hospitals to opt into the NHS trust system? Will not the finances of trusts effectively be controlled from the centre? Their only freedom will be to seek permission to spend money from the Scottish Office, rather than deal with the matter locally through the health boards. Why, despite the widespread and total rejection of the scheme, do the Minister and the Government persist in acting against medical and public opinion?

Mr. Forsyth: Every time the hon. Gentleman says that there is no interest in the scheme, we seem to receive another application. Six hospitals throughout Scotland have now expressed interest. The proposal for Forresterhill in Aberdeen has come from consultants and management, because they believe that it will result in improved patient care. Once the Scottish Office has received a proposal, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will examine it and decide whether to give it the go-ahead on the basis of whether it will improve patient care.

The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong about the ability of hospitals to spend money without Scottish Office approval. The whole point of self-governing hospitals in the NHS trust system is that they will be free to make decisions at local level that would otherwise have been made over their heads. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is so opposed to the idea of giving local communities a chance to run and manage their hospitals.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: I welcome any news from my hon. Friend about the extension of dialysis treatment for kidney patients. Is he aware, however, that a kidney patient on dialysis who is given erythropoetin will become almost as well as a normal man? Can he assure me that Scotland has enough funds to provide that drug for every renal patient who could benefit from it?

Mr. Forsyth: I know my hon. Friend's interest in the matter and I am happy to give him the assurance that he seeks. Notwithstanding reports that have appeared in some sections of the media, the position is clear: if a consultant believes that the drug should be prescribed, it should be prescribed, and the resources must be found to pay for it. I have corresponded with the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) about this, and the position is on record.

Mr. Galbraith: Was not the Minister entirely wrong to say that expressions of interest in trust status are coming from hospitals? In fact, they are coming from a small clique within those hospitals. Has the Minister not read what was said recently by John Cooper, chief executive of the Royal Free hospital, an opting-out hospital, in London? He said:

"All elements of financial management are being effectively controlled centrally. The only freedom we have is freedom to ask permission, and we can do that already."

Opting-out hospitals are run not by the health boards but by accountants in the Scottish Office.

Mr. Forsyth: I am interested by the implication of the hon. Gentleman's question. I take it that, if self-governing status indeed means that decisions are made at local level, the hon. Gentleman will support it. I am happy to assure him that there is no question of self-governing hospitals'

being managed centrally. The whole point is that they will have contracts with the health boards and will remain a part of the NHS, and that doctors and management will have an opportunity to run them locally. What I said earlier was that the proposals for NHS trusts were coming from doctors and management who believed that it would improve patient care. I believe that those proposals should be evaluated on the basis of their merits, not on the basis of Labour party dogma.

Development and Enterprise, Borders

8. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to promote development and enterprise in the Borders.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government are putting in place specific arrangements to give local control to the promotion of development and enterprise in the Borders.

The Borders local enterprise company will work in partnership with the private sector, local authorities and other agencies in the area to deliver the Government's economic development, training and environmental improvement programmes in the manner best suited to the needs of the area.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Minister think that adequate cash or investment programmes are available to local and statutory authorities in the Borders? Is he aware that the Borders local enterprise council made a bid for £12·6 million, to invest in capital developments but was awarded only £8·5 million which represents the biggest cut for any local enterprise company in Scotland? Is he further aware that Borders regional council asked for £4 million for future capital development but was awarded only £1 million? How can statutory authorities buy the necessary sites, set up advance factories and support local industry if they have inadequate resources to enable them to do so?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The allocations represent a significant increase. The allocation to Borders Enterprise represents an increase of 27 per cent. over comparable spending in the area this year and Borders Enterprise will have grant powers to encourage the provision of advance factories. It is keen to use those powers rather than to provide the property itself. District councils in the region received capital allocations totalling £1·8 million, an increase of £260,000, and Borders regional council received an allocation of £1·2 million, which was an increase of £350,000. I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman and we recognise the need to provide premises for alternative sources of employment to diversify the local economy. The increased allocations reflect that. In addition, local enterprise companies will have authority to commit up to £250,000 on any project and discretion to devise specific initiatives to reflect local circumstances. Those matters can be followed up with the companies.

Beer

9. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the implementation of the reforms to the licensed trade following the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of beer.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): Implementation of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission recommendations is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I confirm, however, that the orders made by him under the Fair Trading Act 1973, in response to the MMC report, apply to Scotland as well as to the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Colvin: Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that although the MMC report and the subsequent legislation cover the United Kingdom, the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 does not cover Scotland? As a result, licensed trade tenants in Scotland are dealt with less favourably than those south of the border. That is particularly serious in view of the haste with which brewery managed and tenanted houses are being exchanged in order to fulfil the MMC's requirements. Will my hon. Friend undertake to meet representatives of the licensed trade in Scotland to hear how, in practice, the MMC report is leading not to increased choice and competition or cheaper beer but to a raw deal for licensed house tenants?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend, who is knowledgeable on these matters, rightly says that there is a legislative difference between north and south of the border. The purpose of the Landlord and Tenant Act was to bring pub tenants in England and Wales in line with other business tenants. It does not apply to Scotland, but Scottish licensees are on a par with other business tenants under the Tenancy of Shops (Scotland) Act 1949.

The Scottish Licensed Trade Association is an extremely responsible body, the president of which is a resident of Eastwood. I assure my hon. Friend that either my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for home affairs or I will be happy to meet a delegation to discuss the matter.

Labour Statistics

11. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are currently unemployed in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: In January 1991, seasonally adjusted unemployment in Scotland was 201,300. Despite the small upturn during the past quarter, unemployment in Scotland has fallen by almost 140,000. It is now 40 per cent. lower than four years ago.

Mr. Brown: Does the Secretary of State realise, despite his phony figures, that Scotland has been devastated by unemployment? In my constituency, for example, GEC Ferranti has closed a plant and is paying off many of its employees, and the same thing is happening at the Rank Hovis McDougall Caledonian mill. On top of that ICI is closing, or intends to close, Scottish Agricultural Industries, which produces fertilizers, because of Government opposition to the Kemira takeover bid. That is clearly a tragedy for the Scottish economy and for the local economy of Leith. Will the Secretary of State ask his Tory friends at ICI to hold fire in the meantime? Will he meet me to discuss the local problems of my constituents who clearly want to defend local skills and local industries, which the right hon. Gentleman's Government do not intend to do?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman cannot have heard the answer that I gave to the main question when I explained that unemployment, far from rising, had fallen by 140,000 in the past four years. In the year to September 1990, manufacturing employment in Scotland increased by 9,000, and the civilian work force has increased by 200,000 over the past three years. In the hon. Gentleman's constituency, unemployment has fallen by no less than 43 per cent. in the past four years, with a total fall of 3,000.

Mr. David Marshall: On behalf of Glasgow Labour Members, I wrote to the Secretary of State seeking a meeting with him to discuss unemployment in the city of Glasgow, where more than 48,000 people were idle in January. Does he accept that his reply, which was received today and stated that the level of unemployment in the Glasgow travel-to-work area—not the city of Glasgow—is better than that of many other areas in Scotland and that the time is not appropriate to meet us to discuss unemployment, is an unbelievably callous answer? Just what level does unemployment have to reach in the city of Glasgow before the right hon. Gentleman will agree to meet us? Is he still not aware that the eight constituencies with the highest levels of unemployment in Scotland are all in Glasgow?

Mr. Lang: Of course unemployment in Glasgow is still too high, but the hon. Gentleman should acknowledge that it has fallen substantially in the past four years—by between 2,000 and 3,000 in every constituency in Glasgow. That is reflected in the overall figures which show, as I have said, that unemployment has fallen by almost 140,000 in the past four years. What I look forward to seeing in Glasgow, as elsewhere throughout Scotland, is Scottish Enterprise and the new local enterprise companies getting down to tackle the problems in each local enterprise company area and going about their business with their budgets which, in total, including Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, exceed £0·5 billion, to tackle the problems in ways which relate directly to the individual problems of each area.

Mr. Holt: I wonder whether my right hon. Friend heard the reply that was recently given in the House by our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when I asked a question about the activities of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which are leading directly to the closure of the factory in the constituency of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown), and which could have a knock-on effect in my constituency by bringing to an end the viability of the only potash mine in this country. That would adversely affect the country as a whole, our balance of payments and unemployment in both Scotland and England. It is still not too late to pull this one round, but it would mean a Secretary of State who arrogantly said that no Minister had ever gone against the recommendations of an MMC report for the first time standing up, being a man in his own right and refusing to accept the MMC's recommendations.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend may wish to pursue that with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, but I am sure that he will agree that one of the merits of the MMC is its arm's-length method of operation. The MMC looked closely at all the implications of the decision before reaching its conclusions.

Mr. Worthington: All Opposition Members are deeply cynical about the way in which the Secretary of State uses dates. I remind him that the Government have been in power for 12 years, not four, and that unemployment has mounted over that time and is rising again. As we enter a recession which is affecting Scotland, why are local enterprise companies being faced with a cut in their budgets which means that less will be spent in each area in Scotland this year on the functions of the Scottish Development Agency and the Training Agency than was spent last year? Why is it that in Lanarkshire, of all places, when a bid was put in for £50 million, in real terms only £30 million was allocated?

Mr. Lang: With regard to the budget for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, as I pointed out to the hon. Gentleman, whose figures are largely speculative and widely inaccurate for the most part, the combined budget of the two new bodies will exceed £500 million. On training we are spending about six times what the Labour Government spent 12 years ago. Far from the Government having a bad record on unemployment, we have seen a dramatic improvement in the last few years as we got away from the after-effects of the Socialist Government and all the damage that they did to the Scottish economy. Unemployment in Scotland is now below the EC average. Long-term unemployment continues to fall; it fell by 12 per cent. last year—the sharpest fall anywhere in the United Kingdom—as a result of the improvements in the economy brought about by the Conservative Government.

Warrant Sales

12. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of warrant sales to enforce poll tax payments in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I am satisfied that the powers available to local authorities in Scotland for the collection of community charge arrears are adequate for that purpose.

Mr. Wray: Will the Minister explain why he is always misleading the House on percentages? He has referred to a collection rate of 92 per cent. in quite a number of local authorities throughout Scotland. He knows very well that since 31 January Strathclyde regional council, the largest local authority in Scotland, has collected only £247 million—less than 60 per cent. of the £457 million for which it sent out poll tax bills? It has cut the final notices to 38,000 and sent out 754,000 warrants. Surely the Government must recognise that the poll tax will not work. Local authorities are still jackbooting the most vulnerable people in society by operating warrant sales.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense. Local authorities have collected, or expect to collect, 95 per cent. of their budgeted income for last year. Strathclyde has failed to use warrant sales so far and the comptroller of audit has rightly criticised the performance of authorities in failing to implement collection procedures in accordance with the statutory timetable.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: As has already been mentioned, there is a deep resentment among those who pay and obey the law as regards those who will not pay. Is my hon. Friend aware that the resentment is compounded in areas

such as Kincardine and Deeside, where the percentage collection is good, but where next year people will have to pay more than a proportion of what is uncollected in that area because other district councils, such as Aberdeen, have collected a lower proportion of the community charge that is due? Is it fair that community charge payers in Kincardine and Deeside will have to pay more, not just to compensate for those who fail to pay in their own area?

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. A tide of outrage is sweeping Scotland among law-abiding citizens who have to pay the SNP surcharge. I can perhaps reassure my right hon. Friend about the position in Grampian. He may have seen an article recently in *The Scotsman* headed,

"Labour rift as warrant sales approved".

In the article it was announced that Grampian region had decided to go ahead with eight warrant sales for non-payment. The article stated that the Labour leader, Councillor Jurgen Thomaneck, said:

"It would be asking too much of us to condone illegal acts by people who evade the poll tax in a way that is to the detriment of other poll tax payers."

I am sure that my right hon. Friend would agree with that. I hope that those sentiments will get a ringing endorsement from the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. Wilson: In the last months of the poll tax, will the Minister finally seek to bring some common sense to at least some parts of its operation? Will he relieve local authorities of the need to pursue this blunderbuss approach in the legislation which means that the poorest people in the land, who are in arrears on a proportion of the poll tax of up to 20 per cent., have to be pursued in exactly the same way as the wealthiest people in the community who default voluntarily, with which I have no truck whatever? Will the Minister bring to the attention of his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State the possibility of getting rid of the 20 per cent. minimum payment? Does he agree that if the poorest people in Scottish society, who are being hounded for 20 per cent. of the poll tax, were taken out of the equation much of the administrative shambles, chaos and misery that surround the poll tax would disappear with them?

Mr. Stewart: There will be no amnesty. The community charge benefit is widely available to assist those on low incomes. Some of the people to whom the hon. Gentleman refers may have built up a large level of debt. In many cases, the fault lies not with the Opposition Front Bench but with many of the hon. Members behind him and with the Scottish National party.

Mr. Oppenheim: Surely the effectiveness of warrant sales must be called into question, bearing in mind the large number of Scottish Members of Parliament who still have not paid their poll tax. What does my hon. Friend the Minister think of a party which aspires to law-making but condones so much law-breaking in its own ranks?

Mr. Stewart: I am not sure whether my hon. Friend was referring to the Labour party or to the Scottish National party. Almost certainly, he was referring to both. Of course, he is absolutely right. Scottish local authorities have failed so far to use warrant sales and they have been consistently criticised for the delay. In some authorities, such as Borders and Fife, payment levels are extremely high. If Borders and Fife can do it, so can Lothian and Strathclyde.

Special Educational Needs

13. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he is giving to the educational pack "Taking Up The Challenge", funded by the Scottish Education Department, and published by the Committee on Special Educational Needs in January 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: "Taking Up The Challenge" is part of a concerted effort by the Government to provide additional help and support to children with moderate learning difficulties.

Mrs. Ewing: On two occasions in the past 10 days the Minister has said that he will make available additional funding for learning support in primary schools. Will he spell out exactly what he means by that increased level of support? Will it mean additional teachers or additional resources? How much money is involved? When will it happen? Or is this just a smokescreen to draw attention away from national testing?

Mr. Forsyth: Far from being a smokescreen, it is a response to the representations that we have received as a result of the introduction of national testing, including representations from the hon. Lady. We are currently considering how we can target resources to help children in primary schools who are having difficulties with the three Rs and who have been identified as a result of the introduction of national tests and the new five to 14 programme. We currently have a pilot scheme under way. Once it is concluded, we shall be in a position to assess the level of response and the most appropriate form of response.

Hospitals, Glasgow

14. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement regarding the future of general hospitals in the Greater Glasgow area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Greater Glasgow health board's proposals for rationalising and improving its acute services have been approved by my right hon. Friend following consultation.

Mr. Martin: Is the Minister aware that there is anxiety in the north of the city about Stobhill? He will know that new maternity facilities are to be built at the royal infirmary. Many people in the north end of Glasgow believe that that could be the end of Stobhill as a general hospital. Will the Minister give the House an assurance that there is a future for Stobhill and that it will continue as a general hospital?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman has been a doughty fighter for Stobhill. The proposals in respect of the maternity services are before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and are still under consideration. As the hon. Gentleman said, they include building a new maternity hospital at the royal infirmary. I can certainly give him the assurance that he seeks. Stobhill will gain additional facilities, including renal services and an additional 15 accident and emergency beds. I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that I know of no future proposals for changes at that excellent hospital.

Mr. Dewar: As the Minister knows, in Glasgow there are hospitals which are on the hit list for the opting out procedure. I remind him that, in approaching this matter, he said that one of the tests would be a substantial commitment of those likely to be involved in the new management. Does he agree that that does not mean six persons—any six persons in any hospital? The consultants in South Ayrshire hospital voted by 50 to nine against opting out, and those in Aberdeen Royal infirmary voted by 82 to seven against. Does the Minister agree that, even in his Looking Glass world, that cannot be equated with a substantial commitment on the part of those who will be involved in new set-up? He talks about local choice and local democracy. Does he agree that forcing opting out through on that basis would be offensive and indefensible?

Mr. Forsyth: No Government—not even any previous Labour Government—have taken decisions concerning the future of hospitals on the basis of votes or ballots. The criteria for the approval of applications for self-governing status are set out in the working paper, which the hon. Gentleman has seen, and they are perfectly clear. The hon. Gentleman referred to a "hit list". I regard that as a fairly offensive term. In hospitals throughout Scotland, people are looking behind the Labour party's rhetoric and seeing the opportunity to improve patient care. In the case of the South Ayrshire hospital, in respect of which an application is coming into the Scottish Office, the leading person responsible is a consultant with a distinguished history in the national health service. I do not believe that people of that calibre would do anything other than go forward with proposals that they thought were in the best interests of patients. That is the sole criterion on which my right hon. Friend's decisions will be based.

Forestry

16. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans his Department has to develop forestry within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lang: The Government remain fully committed to the expansion of forestry in the United Kingdom, and are providing substantial grants to encourage tree planting. Woodland management grants will be introduced from 1 April 1992.

Mr. Bruce: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his reply. I wonder whether, in his busy programme, he could find time to come and visit the forests in south Dorset, for which he is responsible in terms of policy. Can he given us some indication how forestry has developed in the past 10 years, and whether any changes in policy have been brought about by the farm woodland scheme and other schemes intended to take farmland out of food production?

Mr. Lang: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind invitation to visit south Dorset. I should certainly like at some stage to take it up, as my responsibilities for forestry stretch throughout the United Kingdom. I am glad to be able to assure my hon. Friend that there has been a major expansion of forestry in the past 10 years, with about 250,000 hectares of new planting. In addition, the processing industry has been revitalised, with investment of about £1 billion. The farm woodland scheme, which we are currently reviewing, has led to about 2,200 applications to plant about 15,000 hectares—a high proportion of the trees being broad-leaves. The forestry industry is in good heart and in good shape.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Secretary of State recognise that the timber industry based on planting in the northern part of the Highlands has been set back by the designation process of the Nature Conservancy Council? Will he ensure that the regional council gives impetus to the review of policy? Its first intervention has not produced the resolution of the dispute between the parties that was hoped for.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman knows that my predecessor as Secretary of State for Scotland gave this matter very close attention and sought a solution that would reconcile the conflicting interests of land use in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, having regard in particular to the important environmental aspects, but also to the need to generate employment through tree planting and in other ways. I hope that these matters will proceed more satisfactorily and more effectively once Scottish Natural Heritage is fully established. Indeed, our proposals on natural heritage areas, which we shall make clear very shortly, may well have considerable application to the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Smoked Salmon

17. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to introduce temperature controls on the distribution of smoked salmon produced in Scotland and posted from there.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We propose that food delivered by mail order, including smoked fish, will be exempt from the regulations requiring temperature controls for the distribution and storage of specified foodstuffs.

Mr. Steen: I congratulate the Secretary of State on making regulations after research has been done and not, as happens in England, making regulations first and then conducting the research to see whether they were needed. Does the Minister agree that the Government seem to be getting more and more neurotic and hysterical about food hygiene? Are there any known cases of food poisoning from smoked salmon, smoked cheese or any other smoked products? Will he confirm that he will ease off making regulations until thorough research has been done showing that there is evidence of food contamination or food poisoning?

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome to my answer. The Government are completely committed to food safety. Such issues are never entirely black and white; we must ensure that we have controls that are practical and not disproportionate to the risk. My hon. Friend will be aware that the Government have commissioned research at Torry and we shall be able to review the matter once that research is to hand.

Scottish Economy

18. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss the Scottish economy and unemployment.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has received no request from the convention for a discussion of economic issues.

Mr. Clarke: Is the Minister aware that my constituents are outraged at the decision to postpone yet again the upgrading of the A8 from Baillieston to Newhouse, with all the job implications that that entails? Does not he feel that his new role of looking after Lanarkshire has been specifically undermined? Does he accept that, in the past 99 days, yet another appalling decision under so-called new management means the same old story of job losses and lost opportunities for my constituents, who are anxious to get rid of the new management as quickly as possible?

Mr. Stewart: Perhaps I may point out to the hon. Gentleman the progress that has been made with the M74, which is crucial to the hon. Gentleman's constituency. Preparation work on the Shawhead-Newhouse scheme is continuing and is expected to be completed by 1994. I share the hon. Member's concern about jobs in Lanarkshire and throughout Scotland. That is more than can be said for the Leader of the Opposition, who seems to be going to extraordinary lengths to find some overseas appointment to enable him to avoid attending the Scottish Labour party conference at Aberdeen—but who can blame him?

Primary Testing

19. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has had *(a)* in favour and *(b)* against primary testing.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Some 400 representations have been received covering a complete spectrum of views on testing.

Mr. McAvoy: Is the Minister aware that throughout Scotland, where parents have been balloted, an overwhelming number of decisions have been made against the tests? In my constituency, in the schools of St. Mark's, St. Columbkilles Hallside and St. Bride's, 70 to 80 per cent. of parents are opposed to the tests. It is clear that those tests are part of the Minister's promised bloody revolution for education in Scotland. Even at this late stage, will he consider withdrawing the tests and seeking consensus for the sake of our children's future?

Mr. Forsyth: The regulations on testing were approved by the House without opposition in debate from any Opposition Member. They place a clear duty on education authorities to administer the tests and——

Mr. Worthington: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It is the last two minutes.

Mr. Worthington: We prayed against the regulations on 26 October, they appeared on 25 October and we demanded a debate on them.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not responsible for answers given from the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Forsyth: The point——

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is unseemly behaviour.

Mr. Forsyth: The point that I made—that the regulations were not opposed in debate in the House—is correct. They place a clear duty on the education authorities to administer the test. Until now, the Labour party and the EIS have argued that parental choice and involvement should not extend to the curriculum and to professional matters. Their conversion is as rapid as it is unexpected. I have no doubt that, having released this genie from the bottle, education authorities will be reflecting on the implications. Are parents to be able to withdraw children from physical education, music, computer studies and the technical and vocational education initiative, for example, or to insist on the inclusion of their children in classes on a subject? Once the pilot testing round has been completed, we shall consider what further action is necessary.

Gulf Casualties

20. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the reception facilities in Scottish hospitals for service personnel returning from the Gulf.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: With the rapid and successful conclusion of the ground offensive to liberate Kuwait, the need for Scottish hospitals to maintain special arrangements to receive service personnel injured in the Gulf conflict has now passed. I am sure that the whole House will wish to join me in thanking all NHS staff involved for the admirable way in which they have responded.

Mr. Dalyell: Before the Minister rises to answer the debate on 15 March on health problems in the middle east, will the Scottish Office submit some kind of memorandum offering advice as to what it can do about the appalling problems of typhoid, cholera, hepatitis and other diseases, in which we have an expertise that is desperately needed in the middle east?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman is right to highlight the expertise in Scotland on tropical and contagious diseases. I shall be happy to discuss with him how we can be of assistance.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, of which I have given you notice. On page 2426 of the Order Paper today, you will see that the first question is in my name. This question has been transferred from the Department of which I originally asked the question to another. In the process, it has been rewritten, and as a consequence of that rewriting, nonsense has been made of the original question. I asked the question originally of the Attorney-General, and if he had answered my question I might have been enabled to put a supplementary question to him concerning the scandals on the Isle of Man and the way in which people have been defrauded by those who run that island.

By virtue of what has happened, I am once again denied that opportunity. If every time I table a question to the Attorney-General it is automatically transferred to the Home Secretary, I shall never get an answer to the question that I am tabling.

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is the point of order?

Mr. Holt: I am asking you, Sir, whether it is in order not merely to transfer questions but to rewrite them so that the consequential content of the question is changed. I asked the Attorney-General what contact he had had; I did not want to know what contact the Home Office has had. If I cannot ask that question, the people whom I represent will be denied the opportunity for justice.

Mr. Speaker: In answer to the first question, it is in order to transfer questions. I refer the hon. Gentleman, as I have done before, to page 286 of "Erskine May", which says:

"It is a long established principle that decisions on the transfer of questions rests with Ministers and it is not a matter in which the Chair seeks to intervene."

I am afraid that I cannot help the hon. Gentleman on that.

As to the question whether his question has suffered a material change, I shall look into the matter, but if it simply directs the question from the Attorney-General to another Minister, I am afraid that that would be covered by the ruling that I have already given.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Now, Mr. Ewing.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise if you feel that this is boring. I accept that you are not responsible for ministerial answers, but surely the time has come to do something about the Minister of State, Scottish Office, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who, not once but three times today—he must know this—deliberately distorted facts and deliberately misled the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would allow "distorted", but not "misled". Will the hon. Member please withdraw that remark?

Mr. Ewing: The Minister, unknowingly or accidentally, misled the House. Whatever approach he took, he is certainly guilty of leaving an impression with the House that is totally contrary to anything that the facts will bear out. This is becoming a regular feature of the Minister's approach to the House of Commons——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The whole House knows that no occupant of the Chair can be responsible for the answers given to questions. I thought that the matter had been put right for the Opposition by the point of order that was raised by the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington).

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask why, despite your earlier strictures, we continue to suffer lengthy exchanges between the Opposition and Government Front-Bench spokesmen during Scottish questions? May I ask why you continue to persist in calling English Members, which means that Scottish Members are ignored?

Mr. Speaker: As the hon. Member knows, he is frequently called on questions about Scotland and England. This is a United Kingdom Parliament. I well understand the hon. Member's frustration at not being called——

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I understand the frustration of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) at not being called on Question 7, but I must seek a balance in calling Back Benchers who have questions on the Order Paper. It seems to me—I hope that the House agrees—that if an hon. Member has been fortunate enough in the shuffle to have a question on the Order Paper, he should be given some precedence. I have tried today to ensure that that happened.

Mr. Ron Brown *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Member wish to raise a point of order or something else?

Mr. Brown: Trust me, Mr. Speaker. As a socialist and a Scot, I seek your guidance. Clearly the acoustics in this place are not good. Sometimes we do not hear what the Government say. As I understand it, the Government are offering, perhaps slightly hypocritically, to help the Iraqi people in their hour of need and are offering to send out medics and perhaps engineers and others. Are the Government really offering to do that? Whatever the politics of the situation, the Iraqi people suffered unnecessarily because of the Government's evil intentions——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must not use a point of order to make a political and debating point. That has nothing to do with me.

BILLS PRESENTED

Railway Re-Openings (Tribunal)

Mr. Robert Adley, supported by Mr. Peter Snape, Mr. Paddy Ashdown, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Sir Peter Hordern, Mr. Robert Sheldon, Mr. David Madel, Mr. Donald Anderson, Mr. Robert Boscawen, Mr. Bob Cryer, Mr. Tony Speller and Mr. Nigel Spearing, presented a Bill to make provision for the establishment of a tribunal to examine proposals for the re-opening of railway lines; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 5 July. [Bill 102.]

FORESTRY

Sir Hector Monro, supported by Mr. Calum Macdonald and Mrs. Margaret Ewing, presented a Bill to increase from 9 to 12 the maximum number of members of a regional advisory committee maintained under section 37 of the Forestry Act 1967: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 8 March. [Bill 101.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft High Court and County Courts Jurisdiction Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Employment Protection (Government Communications Headquarters)

3.38 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for persons employed at the Government Communications Headquarters to have the right to belong to an independent trade union of their choice; and for connected purposes.

The Bill would once again allow GCHQ employees to belong to an independent union of their choice. Just over seven years ago, on 25 January 1984, the then Foreign Secretary announced in the House that unions would be banned at GCHQ. Indeed, on 1 March this month, it was the seventh anniversary of the time limit given to the employees at GCHQ to sign what was described as an option form. That form states:

"I, . . . have read and understood General Notice 100/84 and wish to continue to be employed at GCHQ. I agree to resign from membership of any trade union to which I belong. I also undertake not to join a trade union or to engage in its affairs or to discuss with its officials my terms of employment or conditions of service or any other matter relating to my employment at GCHQ. I understand, however, that I may join a Departmental Staff Association approved for the time being by Director GCHQ."

That was an infamous document, and no British citizen should be forced to sign such a document. No one should be surprised to learn that 25 January, when the Foreign Secretary announced the ban, and 1 March, when everyone had to sign that form in order to continue as an employee at GCHQ, are well remembered. This state of affairs is totally unacceptable to trade unions and the labour movement.

At the time of the ban, much was made by Ministers about industrial action that had occurred at GCHQ, particularly in 1979 and 1981. It was argued that the ban on union membership would ensure that there was no more disruption. The then Foreign Secretary, however, when trying to justify the ban, conceded that no threat to the nation's security resulted from industrial action that had taken place at GCHQ. Sir John Nott, Defence Secretary in 1981, said that an industrial dispute had not in any way affected operational capability.

Hon. Members may argue that, as we have just been through a war, that justifies even more the ban on union membership.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Winnick: I note that the hon. Member believes that.

Union membership was allowed of course at GCHQ in 1982 during the Falklands war. Sir Brian Tovey, then director general at GCHQ, sent a telegram to all the employees in Cheltenham and the outstation after the Falklands war. That telegram read:

"High level praise. There can be no doubt that this praise has been well deserved. It has been earned by hard and dedicated work by you as individuals."

Less than two years after that telegram had been sent, the Government showed their thanks by taking away the basic right of those dedicated individuals to belong to an independent trade union.

It is no wonder that the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Sir C. Irving), who represents so many of the people who work at GCHQ and live in Cheltenham, was highly critical of the Government ban. He made a courageous speech in

[Mr. Winnick]

the House when he said that there was never a hint of disruption at GCHQ during the Falklands campaign, and that to imply otherwise had hurt and infuriated the staff. He also said that the slur that union membership at GCHQ involved the risk of putting people's lives in danger was completely beyond the bounds of decency and truth.

In December 1989, the certification officer made a decision on the application for a Government communications staff federation—one can imagine what type of organisation that is. He considered whether that represented an independent trade union, and, not surprisingly, he came to the view that it was not an independent trade union at all. He said that the staff federation functions subject to the approval of the director at GCHQ.

I am myself an active trade unionist, and I believe that it was an impertinence in the first place that any such application was made. How can a staff association that is bound by the organisation in which the employees work be described as an independent trade union?

The International Labour Organisation, which largely functions under the auspices of the United Nations and works closely with it, has repeatedly called on the Government to rescind the ban and to negotiate with the unions. In recent weeks, we have heard much about binding Security Council resolutions. The House knows that I believed that those resolutions had to be implemented, but when the International Labour Organisation has told the Government that the ban is wrong and that they should negotiate with the unions surely it is only right and proper for the Government to take notice. The Government have completely ignored all its requests.

I imagine that the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), when Prime Minister, was the most enthusiastic member of the Cabinet urging a ban on union membership. We are told that since her departure various matters have been looked at and that there is a different kind of Government who are more caring and less dogmatic. They are even looking at the poll tax, for which we are told that nothing is ruled in and nothing is ruled out. No doubt we shall know more about that after tomorrow's by-election. If they are really a different kind of Government, why have they not rescinded the ban on union membership at GCHQ? If the right hon. Member for Finchley was largely responsible for that ban, as I believe she was, why will the Government not do away with that dogma and prejudice, because that is what it is?

Anyone who thinks that the issue will go away and that, as it arose seven years ago, it is a dead issue could not be more wrong. We intend to keep the issue very much alive. We intend to ensure that people are reminded, as they are year after year by the demonstrations at Cheltenham, that in January 1984 a basic right of British citizens was taken away. I understand that no Conservative Member wants to oppose the Bill. *[Interruption.]* If the ban is right, I hope that a Conservative Member will have the guts to stand up and defend it.

The ban should be removed now. This Tory Government remain the same as they always were, regardless of who leads them. If they do not remove the ban, the next Labour Government will do away with it and will ensure that employees at GCHQ have the same rights as the rest of us to belong to an independent trade union. The sooner that that comes about the better.

3.46 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North) *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Member seek to oppose the Bill?

Mr. Walker: I do. I oppose the Bill because the record on this matter must be properly set straight so that the people of this country are able to understand it. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said that the trade unions at GCHQ had not merited the ban and that it was wrong. I shall give a history of the events. The trade unions at Cheltenham always knew, and were never in any doubt, that, because of the unique nature of their work, if they took part in any kind of industrial action, the Government of the day, of whatever complexion, would have no option but to bring in measures to remove the right to such action. That applied under Labour and Conservative Governments.

Mr. Winnick *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Walker: The hon. Member for Walsall, North shakes his head. Let me tell him that, for six and a half years, I was a trade union representative, and in the 1960s I represented the largest union at GCHQ. That was during the period of office of a Labour Government. I was an employee when sensitive and delicate work important to our security was being carried out. That required 365 days of work a year, 24 hours a day, and the civil service and the military were closely involved. Lives could have been put at risk in various parts of the world, and that was properly and fully understood by the trade unions and their representatives.

Government action was taken for two reasons. First, the trade unions took action at Cheltenham even though there was an unwritten agreement that they would never take such action. Secondly, the trade unions were exposed because of publicity generated by trade unions and political activists throughout the country who tried to make political capital out of the situation. They were prepared to put the nation's security at risk for purely political ends. Such action had not occurred in all the years that GCHQ had functioned so effectively and well looking after the nation's security.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North has obviously not made any attempt to study the history of the matter, nor has he spoken to the vast majority of the people who work at GCHQ. If he had, he would understand that they would have no truck with such a measure.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

Hon. Members: Aye.

Hon. Members: No.

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Winnick *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Pressure is being applied by the Government Whip to stop the Division.

Mr. Speaker: I am waiting for the Tellers to come to the Chair.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow) *(seated and covered)*: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It has been disgracefully suggested that pressure has been applied on me by the Government Whip. I can assure you that that is not the case. It never has been. Perish the thought.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is the type of Member who would allow any pressure to be put upon him.

Question agreed to.

Mr. Winnick: Conservative Members do not have the gumption to vote against my Bill.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. David Winnick, Mr. Terry Davis, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Harry Ewing, Mr. Michael Foot, Mrs. Maria Fyfe, Mr. Frank Haynes, Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Ray Powell, Mr. Ernie Ross and Mr. Gavin Strang.

EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION
(GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS HEADQUARTERS)

Mr. David Winnick accordingly presented a Bill to provide for persons employed at the Government Communications Headquarters to have the right to belong to an independent trade union of their choice; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 17 May and to be printed. [Bill 103.]

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As there has been a dramatic change of mood in the House since the ban on the trade unionists at CGHQ took place and there is now a universal desire to have trade union rights there re-established, and as the Bill will now go through the House unopposed and with the support of the Government, will you advise us how we can enable this simple and uncontrovercial measure to pass quickly through the House?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) has named 17 May. We cannot do much about that.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, when ten-minute Bills are spoken against, they should be followed by a vote. The principle is simple. If an hon. Member declares that he wishes to speak against such a Bill but does not vote, he could, in some circumstances, deprive another Member of the opportunity of opposing the Bill who wanted to vote.

When the two voices on the Conservative Benches said, "No," including that of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) who spoke against the Bill, it was noticeable to all hon. Members that the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), a Government Whip, went across to those two hon. Members and convinced them not to vote. It is almost certain, Mr. Speaker, that we would have won a handsome victory, which would have been clear in the Lobbies. I fear that, on the day set down for the Second Reading, a Tory Whip will rise in his place on the Government Front Bench, object to the Bill, and kill it. We need the power to carry the Bill through into legislation.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is wrong to say that opposition to the Bill must be carried to a Division. That is not so. However, if a right hon. or hon. Member seeks to oppose a Bill, he must say the word "No" when I put the Question, and that was done. It is not always necessary to have a Division, as the hon. Member knows from frequent occasions in the past. Furthermore, I cannot be held responsible for what is said in private conversations.

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that it is in order for a right hon. or hon. Member to enter the Chamber to hear the case that is being made for a Bill before making up his mind whether or not he should oppose that particular Bill? I listened carefully to the speech of the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), and anyone who listened to my own will have realised that I was opposing his Bill. That is exactly what I set out to do, on the basis of his remarks.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member is right. I would normally receive prior notification that a Bill was to be opposed, but I did not receive such notification today.

Mr. Winnick: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have often stated that the ten-minute Bill procedure should not be abused. On the last occasion that I raised a point of order on that subject, you confirmed that my remarks were correct. Is it right for a right hon. or hon. Member to oppose a Bill but not to force a vote? Even more important is the fact that we all saw the Government Whip approach the two Conservative Members concerned and tell them not to force a Division. Those two hon. Members are guilty of being spineless and behaved despicably.

Mr. Speaker: I do not know what the hon. Member is so concerned about. After all, his Bill obtained an unopposed Second Reading. What is he worried about?

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The incident to which the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) referred was not obvious to all. It seemed to me that my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) was merely seeking the opinions of my hon. Friends the Members for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and for Harlow (Mr. Hayes).

Mr. Speaker: I have no idea what happened.

NORTHERN IRELAND (EMERGENCY PROVISIONS) BILL *[WAYS AND MEANS]*

Ordered,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, it is expedient to authorise or require payments into the Consolidated Fund. —*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

NORTHERN IRELAND (EMERGENCY PROVISIONS) BILL

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding that such provisions could not have been proposed in Committee without an Instruction from the House, amendments may be proposed on consideration of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill to provide for the enforcement of orders and the punishment of offences outside Northern Ireland.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Orders of the Day

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 5

CONFISCATION ORDERS

'.—(1) Where a person is convicted in the Crown Court of a relevant offence the court shall, subject to the provisions of this section, make a confiscation order if it is satisfied that he has (whether before or after the coming into force of this Part of this Act) benefited from terrorist-related activities engaged in by him or another; and that order shall require him to pay an amount equal to what the court assesses to be the value of his proceeds of those activities.

(2) For the purposes of this Part of this Act—

(a) a person engages in terrorist-related activities if he engages in activities which consist of or involve the commissio . of one or more relevant offences;

(b) a person benefits from terrorist-related activities if he obtains money or other property as a direct or indirect result of those activities; and

(c) a person's proceeds of terrorist-related activities are the money or other property obtained by him as mentioned above.

(3) A court shall not on convicting a defendant of a relevant offence make a confiscation order against him unless—

(a) he is in the same proceedings convicted of another relevant offence committed on a separate occasion (whether before or after the coming into force of this Part of this Act) since the beginning of the period of six years ending when those proceedings were instituted; or

(b) he is shown to have committed another relevant offence as mentioned in paragraph (a) above.

(4) In subsection (3)(a) above the reference to an offence of which a person is convicted includes a reference to an offence taken into consideration by the court in determining his sentence.

(5) A court shall not on convicting a defendant of a relevant offence make a confiscation order against him unless it is satisfied that, at some time since the commission of that offence, the realisable property held by him has exceeded £20,000 or such other amount as is for the time being prescribed for the purposes of this subsection by an order made by the Secretary of State.

(6) A court shall not make a confiscation order if the defendant satisfies the court that the circumstances in which the terrorist-related activities in question were engaged in would make it unfair or oppressive for such an order to be made.

(7) If when making a confiscation order the court is satisfied that the amount that might be realised in the case of the defendant at that time is less than the amount which the court assesses to be the value of his proceeds of terrorist-related activities, the order shall require him to pay the amount that might then be so realised.

(8) For the purpose of assessing the value of the defendant's proceeds of terrorist-related activities in a case where a confiscation order has previously been made against him, the court shall leave out of account any of his proceeds of such activities that are shown to the court to have been taken into account in determining the amount to be paid under that order.'—*[Mr. Brooke.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Brooke): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider the following: Government new clause 6—*Provisions supplementary to section (Confiscation orders).*

Government new clause 7—*Relevant offences.*

Government new clause 8—*Realisable property, value and gifts.*

Government new clause 9—*Assumptions as to benefit and value of proceeds.*

Government new clause 10—*Statements, etc., relevant to making confiscation orders.*

Government new clause 11—*Assisting another to retain proceeds of terrorist-related activities.*

Government new clause 12—*Concealing or transferring proceeds of terrorist-related activities.*

Government new clause 13—*Enforcement and supplementary provisions.*

Government new clause 14—*Interpretation of confiscation provisions.*

Government amendments Nos. 18, 21 to 31, 15, 32, and 34 to 38.

Mr. Brooke: New clause 5 is the first of a series of 10 closely related new clauses. Together with an associated new schedule, they will, if approved, provide for the confiscation of assets belonging to persons who have benefited from terrorist-related activities. The new provisions are aimed at those persons who have involved themselves, or who may be tempted to involve themselves, in the financing of terrorism in Northern Ireland. If they become law, persons who are convicted of a range of offences—of a type known to be committed by terrorist financiers—will be liable to personal financial loss, as well as to whatever penal sanction the court convicting them may impose. I hope that it will be for the convenience of the House if, when introducing new clause 5, I also say something about the confiscation scheme as a whole—the background to it, its rationale and its main features.

You and other hon. Members, Mr. Speaker, will note that the 10 clauses and the schedule contain a good deal of technical legal language. You may therefore be somewhat reassured to know that much of this is necessary repetition, for the purposes of this Bill, of very similar language contained in comparable provisions of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, which provide in England and Wales for the confiscation of the assets of persons involved in drug trafficking, and the Criminal Justice Act 1988, which deals with the confiscation of the proceeds of involvement in other serious crime. Moreover, many of the paragraphs in the text now before us repeat, almost word for word, provisions in the Northern Ireland (Criminal Justice) (Confiscation) Order 1990, which reproduces, for Northern Ireland, the substance of the two Acts which I have just mentioned.

First, I will give some background. The Government are convinced that an effective strategy for the eradication of terrorism in Northern Ireland must be one which includes effective measures for tackling terrorism at its financial roots. Finance is the life blood of terrorism. It is required not simply for the acquisition of weapons, explosive and other terrorist material, some of it very sophisticated and expensive; it also pays the so-called

"volunteers"—those who carry out acts of terrorism on behalf of their organisation. The provisions before us represent an important additional element in what we intend should be a comprehensive range of measures for curbing the financing of terrorism, itself an increasingly diversified activity. There is, I suggest, little doubt that such measures are necessary.

It is well known that terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland and those who handle money on their behalf are becoming ever more sophisticated in the means by which they raise and launder funds. Increasingly, persons of substance, including business men and accountants, are involved. It is a particularly worrying feature of the current scene that persons known to be involved with terrorist organisations are involved in the running of what may be regarded as legitimate businesses, with the principal objective of using those businesses to raise or launder funds intended to finance terrorism. There is good reason to believe that some of these people have been involved in such terrorist-financing activity for several years and that they have derived substantial personal benefit from their involvement.

There is in the Government's view—a view which is fully shared by the Royal Ulster Constabulary—a serious risk that, unless effective action is taken soon, persons acting on behalf of terrorist organisations will succeed in establishing a commercial or business infrastructure capable of providing long-term support for terrorism. Perhaps just as much a matter for concern is the risk that, even after a cessation of political violence, such an infrastructure might remain in place, able to sustain a potential for more straightforwardly criminal racketeering. No one would wish to see the creation of a Mafia-style society anywhere in the United Kingdom.

It was against this background, and with the concerns that I have just outlined, that the Government considered how they might use the opportunity created by this Bill to strengthen the law to allow more effective action against terrorist financiers. There were two principal outcomes of this consideration. The first was the new investigative powers for non-police officers, which were introduced by my hon. Friend the Minister of State in Committee, and which are now to be found in clause 47 and schedule 4. An ability to invoke these powers, and to secure the involvement in a financial investigation of persons with the special skills required for this task, should considerably ease the task of the RUC in bringing to justice those involved in such activities.

The second main outcome of our consideration of possible new measures is the scheme for confiscation which is now before us. It addresses a gap in the existing law. As Lord Colville has pointed out in his recent report on the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989, the present law, while providing some machinery for the confiscation of money or property which it can be proved is intended for terrorist use, does not provide any means of depriving "terrorist financiers" of the personal benefit which they derive from their involvement in such activity.

It is a matter of regret to me that the very extensive and detailed work that was necessary before these provisions could be brought forward could not be completed quickly enough to allow them to be considered in Committee. They were, however, tabled at what was the earliest possible moment after the necessary preparatory work had been done, and I am grateful for the indulgence of the House.

Despite their length and technical complexity, the provisions that make up the new scheme have a simple purpose, and their intention can be expressed in straightforward terms. In essence, they provide that, if a person is convicted in the Crown court of a relevant offence as defined in new clause 7, and if certain conditions have been fulfilled, the court will be required to make a confiscation order. The amount of that order will represent either the value of the person's proceeds from terrorist-related activity during the six years preceding his conviction, or the value of his realisable property—as defined in new clause 8—at the time when proceedings are instituted, whichever is the less. The relevant offences will be the scheduled offences identified in new clause 7 from the commission of which persons are most likely to benefit or which are most closely related to terrorist finance.

There are five matters, identified in new clause 5, about which a court must be satisfied, after it has convicted someone of a relevant offence, before it can make a confiscation order. It must be satisfied first that the defendant has engaged in terrorist-related activities; secondly, that he has benefited from such activities; thirdly, that at some time since the commission of the offence the defendant has had realisable property exceeding £20,000 in value; fourthly, that, in the period of six years ending when the proceedings were instituted, the defendant has committed another relevant offence on a separate occasion; and, fifthly, that in the particular case, having regard to the circumstances of the offences, the making of the order would not be unfair or oppressive.

Terrorist-related activities are defined in new clause 5(2)(a) as activities that consist of, or involve the commission of, one or more relevant offences, and it will be provided that a person benefits from such activities if he obtains money or other property as a direct or indirect result of such activities.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): As my right hon. Friend has said, the wording of the new clause is somewhat extensive, and difficult for anyone to understand completely. Will one of the conditions to be met before the court can make an order be that the defendant must be given notice that, if he is convicted, an application for such an order will follow? Or will an order be made in any event against anyone who is convicted of such an offence?

Mr. Brooke: As I said a moment ago, the court will be required to bring in a confiscation order if the relevant circumstances obtain.

To assist the court in its task of determining whether the conditions have been fulfilled, the scheme will provide certain assumptions which the court, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, will be obliged to apply. They include the assumption that any property appearing to the court to have been held by the defendant at any time since his conviction, or to have been transferred by him at any time during the six-year period ending when proceedings were instituted, was received by him as a benefit from terrorist-related activities.

As with other confiscation schemes, such as the 1990 Northern Ireland order that I have already mentioned, provision will be made for restraint and charging orders. Those are required to enable assets to be frozen at an early

[Mr. Brooke]

stage so that they are available to meet any confiscation order that may be made if the defendant is convicted. There will also be provisions creating offences aimed at persons who attempt to avoid confiscation.

The power to make confiscation orders will be available only to the Crown court in Northern Ireland, but the funds subject to such orders may be held elsewhere. For that reason, the scheme will enable provision to be made by Order in Council for the enforcement in England and Wales, Scotland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man of confiscation and restraint—but not charging orders—made in Northern Ireland. The offences provisions in new clauses 11 and 12 will also be capable of application in those separate jurisdictions.

It is intended that restraint orders should normally be granted by the High Court in Northern Ireland. However, it will also be provided that, in certain closely defined circumstances, the power to grant such orders should be exercisable by the Secretary of State. The circumstances will be that the Secretary of State should be satisfied on all the matters on which a High Court judge would have to be satisfied before granting such an order, and that in addition it should appear to him that the disclosure of information that it would be necessary to provide to the judge in support of such an application would be likely either to place someone in danger or to prejudice the capability of members of the RUC, or an authorised inquiry, to investigate offences to which the scheme applies.

I readily acknowledge that these provisions appear severe. Indeed they are severe, which is their intention. They are intended to make people who have deliberately involved themselves in financial activity in support of terrorist organisations, or who may be thinking of so involving themselves, to think twice about that involvement. I remind the House that, in principle, the provisions are no different from or more severe than provisions that Parliament accepted for those who profit from their involvement in drug trafficking. The Government, and I hope the House, regard the deliberate financing of terrorism as an equally heinous activity. That is why I introduced the provisions and am commending them to the House.

The Government amendments are all consequential on the new clauses to which I have referred

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): To some extent, we welcome the new clauses. We question them not because of a lack of good will towards them—we welcome their purpose and hope that they will be speedily and readily effective—but because we believe that they should be part of the general law of the land. I understand that a Home Office committee is considering their provisions, but we would have preferred them to be part of the general law on preventing anybody from benefiting from criminal offences.

It is of the utmost importance that no one should be able to benefit financially from the proceeds of terrorist offences. It is important that such proceeds, whether they be from extortion, illegal rackets or bank robbery, do not find their way into the normal channels and thereby make it appear that they came from legitimate businesses. That is very dangerous because, if the criminal elements—the IRA, some Protestant paramilitaries or the mafia—were to gain control of our economy, it would make us a very sick society. We cannot allow that, so we welcome the new clauses.

We regard the Bill as proper anit-terrorist legislation. To deal with terrorism, we must get at terrorists' financial routes and cut their ability to finance their enterprises. It is perhaps not a spectacular way of dealing with it. It is not immediately emotive and it will require much hard police work, but in the long term we believe that it is far better than any knee-jerk reaction to terrorist offences.

The Secretary of State has said how the system will work and it seems to contain adequate safeguards to prevent abuse. Unless all the conditions are fulfilled, seriatim, no orders can be made against individuals. Again, we welcome that.

We should not wish a legitimate business to go out of existence merely because its financial control was in the hands of terrorists or terrorists' front people. Legitimate jobs may be placed at risk and many innocent people may suffer. One would like to think that there was some way of thinking this matter through so that those points were covered.

Finally, I turn to the tracing orders that will be made for the United Kingdom, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Is there any provision that would enable funds to be followed to other Community countries—because of the free movement of capital that now exists within the Community—or to countries outside the European Community where they could be used to buy arms? It would be a great benefit to terrorist organsiations to have apparently legitimate funds in such countries.

With those general caveats, we welcome the provisions. We believe that they will be effective and hope that they will form part of the general law of the land. As this is emergency legislation, let us hope that, when the Home Office inquiry is concluded, we see such provisions as part of general legislation and included in our ordinary Criminal Justice Acts.

4.15 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): It is gratifying for all of us who represent Northern Ireland constituencies to debate a Bill, not an Order in Council, because the benefits that will flow from that will enable people from all walks of life in Northern Ireland to feel that their views have been expressed both in Committee and on Report.

We hope that we can illustrate the inaccuracy of the advice that is sometimes given to the Secretary of State, to the effect that, if the Government legislated by Bills as a matter of course for Northern Ireland, that would place an intolerable burden on the time of the House. My colleagues on this Bench, and, I hope, all those in the House, will do our best to illustrate that that is not an accurate assessment. We can all help. I make a plea to my colleagues of all parties who represent Northern Ireland constituencies to help by making their contributions crisp, accurate and concise, and not to waffle on at great length on matters which, strictly speaking, have nothing to do with the provisions under discussion.

We are aware of the hurried introduction of some of the new clauses and the thinking behind them. If there had been a longer period for consultation—if the provisions had been tabled, even in outline, on Second Reading or earlier in Committee—we would all have had the benefit of receiving some input from interested bodies and

experienced persons in Northern Ireland. We might then have been able to assist the Secretary of State and his colleagues to improve the legislation still further.

I find it difficult to understand why we appear to have been caught on the hop. My hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) reminded the Committee—I put it on the record now—that some of us had read in *The Sunday Times* as far back as 21 October 1990 that the Northern Ireland Office had it in mind to introduce legislation on this subject akin to what applies in the United States of America. However, there appears to be a curious dichotomy in the Government's thinking as a unit. Not all Departments in Whitehall seem to be alive to the possibilities of the legislation and the potential effectiveness of clauses such as those which have now been introduced. All honour to the Secretary of State and his colleagues for perhaps defying the advice that they have received from certain other quarters, to the effect that they should take their time and put off this matter until after a general election. That would not have been desirable.

I find it curious that we have not been given more time, but I appreciate the problems and the fact that discussions probably took place in Government at various levels, so I shall not press that point too far today.

My colleagues and I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State seemed to say that he was providing for the application of certain provisions to Great Britain by order. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not being precise because, like his hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), I find it difficult to take all these matters in at one bite. Nevertheless, if that is what the Government have in mind, it would be highly desirable. Like the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), I go further and suggest that thought should be given to a wider application, where possible, to overseas finance houses if co-operation could be secured.

At various stages of the Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann has made pleas for greater precision in drafting. Having listened to the Secretary of State, I hope that he will not close his mind to further suggestions about how precision could be attained. In various respects, the new clauses represent a considerable improvement on the outline made available in Committee, but I hope that, in our examination of the new clauses and amendments, we can give further help to the Secretary of State to achieve greater precision.

I assume that, even when Royal Assent has been obtained, the Secretary of State and his colleagues will pay heed to expert advice and opinion—I use those words deliberately—about closing loopholes which terrorist godfathers, like tax dodgers, will inevitably discover in the legislation. I assure the Secretary of State and his colleagues of the co-operation of the law-abiding people of Northern Ireland and their representatives in the House, first, on the passage of the remaining stages of the Bill and, secondly, in helping him to scrutinise the effectiveness of the legislation when it is applied to doing something significant to contain terrorists, wherever they may be found.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Signals from the Labour Front Bench were trying to attack me through the mouth of my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), but they should remember that example is better than precept.

Of course hon. Members from Northern Ireland welcome the fact that we are discussing a Bill in the House. We should not be over-enthusiastic, because I do not think that the Government are in any way converted to the view that all legislation for Northern Ireland should be done through Bills. This legislation is being done by Bill because of certain regulations connected with it. However, I do not think that the Government have been down a Damascus road and have been persuaded that the House should legislate for Northern Ireland in the same way as it legislates for other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Molyneaux: I hope that I did not give the impression that it was a fait accompli. Is my hon. Friend prepared to give the Government the benefit of the doubt? Perhaps we will all travel hopefully.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I have my doubts about the Government, so I can give them the benefit of the doubt at all times.

I regret that, when the Government introduce a Bill, we have all these changes and additions. It would be easier for Northern Ireland Members to discuss a measure on Second Reading if they knew the full content of the Government's mind. Of course, the Government may not know the content of their own mind, and may therefore be in difficulty about delivering it earlier.

The Government are trying to do what needs to be done. Money should be clawed back immediately from anyone who benefits financially from terrorist activity. Everyone is in full agreement on that. I have tried to be concise.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): For once, I shall try to follow the example of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley).

Again, I am disappointed that this new legislation has been introduced in the manner in which it has. The Minister of State was good enough to consult members of the parties from the north of Ireland in the concluding phase of drawing up the legislation, but we now have 10 new clauses, a complete new schedule and almost a complete new Bill on Report. It may be easy for people with legal expertise to deal with such legislation, but those of us who are not so qualified find great difficulty with it. It is not fair to hon. Members to introduce what is essentially almost a new Bill at this stage, because the Bill is not open to the investigation and examination that is required.

Another important factor is that, if the changes to the Bill had been dealt with in Committee, we would have a much clearer idea of the import, impact and effectiveness of the Bill. I have sympathy with the point made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). One of the difficulties with emergency legislation—I made this point on Monday—is that we end up with a patchwork quilt. The Government have drawn a little from the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973, a little from the prevention of terrorism Act, a little from the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, a little from the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 and a little from something else, and have ended up with a panoply of measures which is like a patchwork quilt, with no central unity. It is almost impossible to deal with such a measure as a single piece of legislation. That is what has happened, and that is why the changes have been made so late.

[Mr. Seamus Mallon]

The Bill seeks to take provisions from the ordinary law, to put them into emergency legislation and to make them apply to proscribed organisations and scheduled offences. The patchwork quilt approach has continued. It does not seem the right way to deal with the matter.

I regard wealth or money which is obtained through violence or as a result of violent activity as nothing less than blood money. *[Interruption.]* I am not terribly sure why the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North has given me a glass of water. Is there a Freudian message within it, or is there something stronger?

Mr. McNamara: It was what the doctor ordered for the hon. Gentleman's throat, and it is suitable for Lent.

Mr. Mallon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for it. I know that, when it comes to that which goes into a glass, he is an expert on the implications of Lent.

Money earned as a result of violence is simply blood money. I and everyone else who lives in the north of Ireland have seen the way in which some people have become wealthy on the back of the sufferings of others, so no one would question the need for legislation to deal with it. It is a difficult area of operation, and the problem has been with us for several years. The reason why it became so widespread and so much a part of the sub-culture of the north of Ireland was that successive Governments were not willing enough to get to grips with it. It is on record in the House through the years that organisations such as the Housing Executive, which is charged with providing housing in the north of Ireland, have paid out millions upon millions of pounds—in protection money and other forms of racketeering. Part of the problem was a reluctance to come to grips with it, because it was a conduit for intelligence. That is a reality which people may not like to hear, but it is one of the difficulties. As a consequence, racketeering has become part of the sub-culture of the north of Ireland. That is why it has reached the stage that it has.

I have reservations about certain elements of the new clauses. I am worried about the families of those who may come under scrutiny. I am fairly certain that in some cases a woman has no control whatsoever over the activities of her husband. Such a woman might find that her home was subject to confiscation. In other words, a woman and her children could lose their home through no fault of their own. I am not sure that such sensitive matters are dealt with clearly. Let us hope that the Secretary of State will be able to clarify the situation.

My other fundamental reservation concerns the fact that, once again, the onus of proof is on the suspect. Throughout these new clauses, the suspect is required to prove his innocence. That represents not just weak law but also a weak approach to law.

4.30 pm

The provision concerning compensation is particularly ambiguous. Compensation may be paid if the High Court decides that there has been some serious default on the part of a person concerned in the investigation or prosecution of the offence. Surely the provision must be made much more precise. Is not proof of innocence sufficient to establish entitlement to compensation under this type of legislation? It seems to me that there is a high degree of subjectivity in the definition of serious default by the High Court. Once a person has been absolved, he should be entitled, without this subjective element, to compensation. The provision would substantially weaken the subject's position. As this is emergency legislation, we should be especially concerned about the protection written into it. It is not enough to provide for the punitive element.

I repeat that there is a need for this type of legislation. It is not confined to proscribed organisations. Indeed, some of the most serious racketeering in the north of Ireland is indulged in by an organisation that some people deem no longer to exist. Those of us who live there know how potent it still is. We know how much money it puts through its hands every year—and its members through their pockets. We know that it works very closely with what many people now regard as a legitimate political party. The fact that it is not proscribed shows the difficulties that could be faced in the application of the law to such racketeering. There are weaknesses in the new clauses. We must always look for means of protecting accused people.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): This new legislation manifests the determination of the Government and of the people of Northern Ireland not to let up, even for a moment, in the attempt to throttle the evil men—on whichever side of the divide—who parade themselves as patriots. The legislation can grab hold of what the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) referred to as the blood money which has been screwed out of the people of Northern Ireland by the terrorists, in particular by the Provisional IRA.

I have some reservations about the legislation. As the Secretary of State said, it is based on legislation dealing with drugs in England. The courts have not been determined in grabbing hold of all the money that drug dealers have accumulated. They have interpreted the laws extremely strictly and dealt kindly with the relations of the defendants in the dock. The laws should be tougher. As the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said, we must be able to follow funds that go to other parts of the world—for example, the tax havens in the West Indies.

The IRA is extremely astute at manipulating money. Those funds have been and are being accumulated for the express purpose of terrorism, but the terrorists also have in mind the day when peace will come—as it surely must—to Northern Ireland and put the money away for their retirement. It is said, although I cannot produce any proof, that IRA funds have been used to buy property in my constituency. Some people act as front men for the terrorists.

I only hope that, when the legislation is enacted, it will be fully implemented, with the greatest determination. As the Secretary of State said, money is the life blood of the terrorist. We must cut off that money and, in so doing, we shall help bring down the evil men who have haunted Northern Ireland for more than 20 years, and whose day of reckoning has come.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The legislation, which was introduced late in the course of the Bill's passage through Parliament, is full of good intention. However, I have been in the House for 17 years and have lived through the problems and troubles of Northern Ireland since the day they began, and I have seen much

legislation pass through the House that was full of good intentions. But good intentions are not enough; the practical consequences of those good intentions are what count. If the Secretary of State thinks back on all the legislation brought before the House that was supposed to produce good consequences, but which gave birth to nothing of the sort, I have no doubt that he will share my reservations about the legislation before us.

The Secretary of State knows perfectly well, because he referred to it, that the legislation is based on the powers contained in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986. How much money, and on how many occasions, and how much property has been seized as a result of the application of that Act against people committing drug offences? Similar powers, relating to the seizure of bank accounts, were contained in the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989: how many bank accounts have since been seized?

If the Secretary of State asks us to pass such legislation, surely he should tell us the practical consequences of earlier, similar legislation, but he did not do so. The House has a right to hear the answers to those questions and to know whether similar legislation has been effective. I fear that it is not effective in those two situations. Whenever he says that business men and accountants are now involved in these matters, he inadvertently proves to the House and to the country that all this talk about mindless violence committed by members of the IRA is utter nonsense. The IRA and its fellow travellers are not engaged in mindless violence. The Secretary of State knows perfectly well that I, for one, have never accepted the belief that they were mindless thugs. They are directed by clever, efficient and ruthless people. By telling the House that business men and accountants are now involved, the Secretary of State has given us proof positive that these organisations—not only but principally the IRA—have got the thing down to a fine art.

These people are being well advised by able people. Therefore, a botched job will be no good. It will only bring the law being formulated against them into grave disrepute. That does no good to anyone: in fact, it makes the matter a great deal worse. Therefore, I hope that, when the Secretary of State, his colleagues and his advisers were dreaming up these new clauses, they asked themselves how the provisions could be circumvented. As soon as they appeared, the IRA and other terrorist organisations had their boys on the ball trying to figure out ways round them.

I have no doubt that, when the Secretary of State and the police proceed against the first targets that they have in mind, they will find that those people have discovered ways round the new law. They will have found the loopholes and expanded them until an elephant, never mind a mouse, can get through. This is a serious issue, and I hope that the Secretary of State and his advisers, and the police officers and accountants who have to investigate such matters, have put themselves into the minds of terrorist organisations, have tried to discover the loopholes, and as a result have created nets to ensure that those people are caught in one way or another.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) referred to the situation in the building trades in Northern Ireland. That has been an open scandal for more years than any of us cares to remember. The consequence is that, whenever a legitimate builder looks for work in Northern Ireland, he is confronted with two problems. The first is that many believe that building firms are under the control of these evil organisations. If even one tenth of what we hear is to be believed, firms have been paying large sums to terrorist organisations on every building contract that has been put through in an area ruled by such an organisation.

The second problem is partly the result of the DHSS in Northern Ireland still falling down on its job. We hear tales from the small builders of how they can no longer compete because these fellows are doing the double, working for £20 a day. Will the DHSS be called in to close that aspect of the building trade? That concerns every legitimate builder in Northern Ireland.

New clause 5 says that the value of the realisable property has to exceed £20,000. I should like an explanation of that figure. Am I to take it from that that persons can acquire a maximum of £20,000 from terrorist organisations or activities before the legislation catches them? Many people would like £20,000 if they thought that they could get it without any danger to themselves. It might be a powerful incentive to some of these folk to go ahead. If that is so, can we close that loophole?

The third line of new clause 5 says:

"whether before or after the coming into force of this Part".

That implies retrospective legislation. Nobody likes that but the fact that it is necessary in this case shows that the Government are a minimum of six years late in introducing this measure.

Mr. Mallon: Twelve.

Mr. Ross: I think that it is rather more than 12, but we shall only try to catch the latter half of the 12, even if that is incorrect.

I appreciate the need for retrospection in this case, but I regret that it is needed, because it is not the sort of Bill that any hon. Member would like to accept or willingly pass. Retrospective law is generally bad law, and I do not like it. However, in this case it is necessary.

4.45 pm

I also noted that the individual who is convicted cannot be caught by these provisions for only one proven offence. He has to be convicted of more than one. I should like the Secretary of State to comment on that. The implication is that we are trying to catch not the one-off offender, but the committed, continuing offender. If that is so, I should welcome it.

New clause 14 speaks of "property wherever situated". As has already been said, property owned by these organisations, and income-producing property at that, can be anywhere—the United States, Canada, the Irish Republic or England. I can understand that the Secretary of State is referring to property in Northern Ireland and probably in the United Kingdom and adjacent British Isles. However, is he saying that he will try to find out the situation in foreign states such as the Irish Republic? If he is not, here is the first great gaping hole. We need to have that cleared up. I do not believe that the IRA has invested all its ill-gotten gains in Northern Ireland. A lot of it is invested elsewhere, where it is safe.

The new clause seems to be aimed at individuals who have benefited, but we are not dealing with terrorists as individuals. Individuals get caught, but they are only part and parcel of the terrorist machine. I am curious about what consideration has been given to how we can get at the whole machine. Although the person who has been caught may have benefited, he is only a tiny part of the machine.

How about the money held by the organisation that owns the property and employs the individual, perhaps as a consultant, a worker, a director or a simple, straightforward employee or alleged employee? These matters need to be addressed, because these organisations are super-mafias.

I wonder whether the powers that the Government have taken unto themselves are sufficient, draconian though they are. Will they hurt these organisations where it matters—in their pockets? That is where we want to hurt them. We do not want to attack the minor individual who has made a small profit, take the money off him and leave the whole organisation with its property and money and resulting income intact.

I am curious to know whether, if one of these individuals has been paid as an employee and has benefited over the past six years to the tune of £10,000 or £12,000 a year, we will tell him that he will have to pay such wages back. What will be the practical consequences of such a move? The person does not have money in the bank, because he was paid the money and has spent it on living. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to recover that money.

I welcome the fact that any compensation that the convicted individual has to make will have priority over any other claim. I am happy to see that, because those who have suffered injury and may be able to claim compensation from the individual who has committed the offence will be protected, and their interests will be safeguarded. It is unusual that the individual rather than the Crown will be first in line for the money. If that policy were applied generally, many people in the business world would be happy to see the tax man's demands. I do not think that the Secretary of State will ever convince the Chancellor to adopt that approach to debts.

Under new clause 6(8), the courts will have to state the reasons for their actions. I am curious about whether that is necessary, because we may create a precedent which, instead of being helpful, turns out to be an albatross. Perhaps the Secretary of State and his advisers would like to consider that measure again. If the right hon. Gentleman puts himself into the position of the courts or the terrorists, he may think of some of the possible problems.

You will have gathered from my comments, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I do not think that this is a good curate's egg overall. It looks good. No doubt the hen's intention in laying it was good. It is a pity that the egg was kept in the nest for six or seven years too long and went bad. However, good intentions are welcome. We hope that, with increasing knowledge of the capacity of the wicked organisations at which the Bill is aimed, the Government will understand that this is a fair beginning but is not yet a good or successful end.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): I support and welcome the Bill, which we hope will prevent racketeers from using normal businesses to make money for terrorist purposes. As a former plumbing contractor and one who worked in the construction industry, I have taken great exception to the threats against business people and tradesmen in the building industry and the protectionism practised by terrorist groups and racketeers.

Many jobs have been lost because of changes in certain areas of Northern Ireland. Many tradesmen and other workers in the construction industry are on the dole because threats mean that they cannot work in certain places because of threats. Sadly, people who went to work in such places were murdered because they came from a different area. It is disgraceful that a person who is trying to earn money for his family should be treated in that way.

The threats are made by cowards, not by people who express their views to workers. They are made by telephone calls and by "a word to the wise". That is absolutely disgraceful. Unfortunately, the cowards are getting away with it. It is a tragedy that people who wish to work cannot do so. If the Bill has any effect on such actions, I should very much welcome it on behalf of those who work in the construction industry. Attempts are made to extract money from people so that they can work in particular areas—and, sadly, workers are paying it. That is another tragedy.

The Bill is the other side of the coin from the terrorists who prevent workmen from going to certain areas or certain camps to carry out their building trade. Workmen are murdered to prevent them from doing their work. Firms are intimidated. I have been sadly disappointed by certain firms that backed down when threatened. For years, workers who have travelled into and out of these areas have been intimidated and threatened but have gone to work; but as soon as some firms are threatened or intimidated, everyone loses his job. I have been sadly disappointed that business people should do that.

Mr. William Ross: My hon. Friend will be aware that, whenever a firm is forced out because of such activity, it can be replaced by a firm whose workers will comply with the terrorists' demands.

Mr. Forsythe: Unfortunately, that seems to be the case.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Is there not a Government failure in providing proper protection for those firms? I am sure that the hon. Member would not like to castigate a firm which has been seriously threatened and which, when it asks for protection, is told by the police that they cannot do much to help. I am sure that such firms cannot carry on in view of a threat against not only the business people but all the workers, as recently happened in Ballymena in my constituency.

Mr. Forsythe: I thank the hon. Member for his comments. I was coming to that point. It is sad that firms are placed in that position and that they feel that they can no longer depend on security measures to look after them and their workers.

In such circumstances, workers are put on the dole. The fellow travellers of those who carry out the threats and murders then wring their hands in despair about unemployment in Northern Ireland. The hypocrisy of such actions is beyond belief and is treated by the people of Northern Ireland with the contempt that it deserves.

I am sure that the racketeers and the terrorists will not listen to anything that I say or, indeed, to what the House says, but they are not wanted by people in any area in Northern Ireland. They should let the rest of us again have the quality of life that the people of Northern Ireland deserve. I plead with the Government to enforce the laws.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Does the hon. Member not find it strange that, on numerous occasions in my constituency, the IRA has set off large bombs which have destroyed many premises, yet the first people on the scene to board up and replace windows happen to be from

the same grouping, from Sinn Fein or the IRA? The Government are ready to fill its coffers with payment for doing those jobs.

Mr. Forsythe: Sadly, I agree with the hon. Gentleman that that has happened on a number of occasions.

Mr. Mallon: It would be entirely wrong to give the impression that everyone working in the building trade in the north of Ireland is, first, a member of that nationalist community and, by implication, a member or a supporter of Sinn Fein or the IRA. The real racketeering in the building trade is organised by the loyalist paramilitary groups, and hon. Members who represent Belfast know that. They also know that the people who have been killed on building sites because of racketeering are, by and large, Catholics who have come to those sites from other areas.

5 pm

The consensus that we should seek to achieve should mean that anyone who runs any racket is guilty and should be found guilty before the law. We should not indulge in the type of snide remarks that the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) has introduced into the debate.

Mr. Forsythe: I made my position clear at the beginning of my speech.

Rev. William McCrea: I should have thought that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) would have the honesty to condemn the despicable actions that have often occurred in my constituency. Whenever the IRA blows up a town and destroys properties owned by people right across the community, IRA personnel then come in under disguise as contractors, and they lift the coffers from the Northern Ireland Office. That is a despicable situation and it should be condemned by everyone in the House.

Mr. Forsythe: I am sure that hon. Members heard what the two hon. Gentlemen said and they will draw their own conclusions. I made it clear at the beginning of my speech how disgraceful I thought it was that building trade workers were not allowed to go about their business without intimidation and threats. I stand by that.

Mr. Mallon: All building trade workers.

Mr. Forsythe: Yes, all. I was one myself, and I support them fully.

If the Government intend to introduce new legislation, I plead with them to ensure that it is implemented for the good of the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): I wish to make it clear at the outset that I support the new clause and the others grouped with it. Like other right hon. and hon. Members, however, I believe that they should have been tabled much earlier so that more detailed consideration could have been given to them.

When considering this type of legislation one must consider the overview and ask whether such measures are necessary in the present circumstances. The present circumstances in Northern Ireland are such that it is clear that further measures are necessary to curtail the activities and membership of terrorist organisations.

One has only to consider the actions of the Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland in the past 48 hours to appreciate that it is attempting to take away people's livelihoods. In my constituency, Mountpottinger police station was attacked. The area surrounding that police station is largely Roman Catholic and a number of properties were affected by the attack which, once again, the IRA got wrong. A large and vital area of industry in east Belfast is Short's. The Provisional IRA has also damaged that company—it has not damaged the structure of the building so much as the credibility of the firm. The Provisional IRA is attempting to undermine that firm and its attempts will be condemned by everyone in the House. Such damage affects the employment of many people and casts aspersions on many. The Provisional IRA may send one person out to infiltrate an organisation and, as a result, that person may cause damage. However, the finger of suspicion is pointed at many when all but a few are not entitled to be viewed with such suspicion.

The Provisional IRA is the master of taking away the livelihoods and finances of others. If I have any criticism of the new clause, it is that it does not go far enough. I cannot see the logic behind simply going for the terrorist who has been involved in profiting from acts of terrorism. There are those terrorists who cause loss to others by their terrorism but who live very nicely thank you in Northern Ireland.

A bomber from the Provisional IRA or any other paramilitary organisation may cause damage worth £100,000 to a public house in Northern Ireland. That person may be found guilty of that terrorist crime and convicted, and the police may have evidence to prove that that individual owns property to the value of more than £100,000. Why should the state compensate the person who has lost his public house when the person who carried out that damage has goods to that value and more? I urge the Secretary of State to consider taking away benefit, by whatever means it may have been acquired, from the terrorist who is prepared to cause damage and loss in society and the public purse. Such confiscation is entirely justified.

I have some scepticism about the general premise advanced by the shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. He has argued that the new clause represents a major way in which to deal with terrorism. I agree with the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) that the new clause deals with the problem on the periphery and that we should be cautious about how advantageous the new clause turns out to be.

If the powers in the new clause strike at the pockets of the terrorists, it will do good, but I do not believe for a moment that touching the finances of the godfather of terrorism or other terrorists will effectively deal with terrorism. The new clause deals with the problem on the periphery; there is no alternative to strong, resolute military activity against terrorists.

Touching the finances of the terrorist will have a marginal effect. Political stability in Northern Ireland will have a marginal effect on terrorism, but I believe that it would have a greater impact on terrorism than touching the terrorists' finances. To defeat terrorism one must take strong, resolute military action against the Provisional IRA and its fellow travellers. No one who supports the new clause should think for one moment that we have cracked the problem and that we have the means to defeat the IRA. At best, we have a marginal advantage on the previous legislation.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I was sorry that at one stage in the debate it sounded as though we were entering into a squabble about something on which we all basically agree, but perhaps we have passed that stage now.

One can level criticism at the Government for the procedural avenues on which they have decided. It is a pity that we have before us 22 pages of amendments, including a huge schedule, all of which could readily have been included in the original Bill and debated properly on Second Reading. Hon. Members who disagree with the Government amendments and new clauses could have tabled amendments to them. There are five Opposition parties in the House with the resources to do that. However, Report stage is not the same as Second Reading, after which a Bill goes to Committee for detailed scrutiny, at which point amendments can be tabled. Hon. Members who do not have the resources of political organisations are affected by this. There are better opportunities to introduce amendments in that way than if the Government suddenly introduce a bundle of proposals almost like a new Bill.

I do not know why the Government have introduced so many new proposals at this late stage. The proposals could form a separate piece of legislation rather than being included in the Bill, and thus allow the usual processes of proper scrutiny of a measure which in principle might be widely supported. Such legislation could have been fine-tuned and improved.

The Bill seeks to tackle the laundering of money from criminal to legitimate areas. Much of that money is obtained by dubious practices, such as theft and exploitation. Funds collected from overseas are also fed to paramilitary organisations and some of those funds finish up in the kind of businesses that hon. Members have described. People need to be told how money collected in America finishes up with the IRA and how it is used. The people who carry the collecting tins say, "It is for our boys." We must spell out what happens to the boys and girls and the adults of Northern Ireland as a result of paramilitary activity.

Yesterday representatives from a group called Families Against Intimidation and Terror were present in a Committee Room. The group was set up by Nancy Gracey in Downpatrick following the knee-capping of her son, who had been involved in some trouble on a bus. The bus passengers were called together by the IRA which meted out its dubious method of justice. Nancy Gracey's son was taken out and knee-capped. Even if he had been guilty of some crime, there was no ground for such punishment. The fracas was about someone who had been in the IRA and had been in prison.

Nancy Gracey was so incensed by what happened that she made a brave stand and the result was an organisation which operates in both Protestant and Catholic areas and involves people suffering at the hands of their own sectarian organisations. The situation has become worse and the proposed legislation should have been introduced earlier. Organisations continue to grow and develop. Extreme organisations, such as the Baath party, the Nazis and Stalinists attract to themselves all sorts of thuggery because they employ methods which ignore law and order and the normal checks and balances in a democratic system. That leads to massive exploitation because such organisations have the freedom to act unlawfully.

5.15 pm

Mr. Mallon: The hon. Gentleman spoke about funds collected in the United States. Has he any observations on the amount of money which the supposedly defunct Official IRA raises on the west coast of the United States and launders back to the north of Ireland every year? It is interesting to note how an organisation that is supposed to be defunct operates probably the biggest international scam of the lot.

Mr. Barnes: Once again we seem to be on the verge of confrontation, which is inevitable when we discuss Irish issues. My knowledge of the Official IRA is in terms of its successor bodies and the developments which led to the establishment of the Workers party. That shows that the democratic process offers opportunities and hope to people and can help to transform the situation. That needs to be taken into account when people consider what action to take about Sinn Fein and whether it should be banned in the same way as the IRA. We might finish up with the same people wearing a different hat. However, the attractions of having to use the ballot box to achieve political change can help to transform organisations. The changes that have taken place are welcome, although the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) may wish to stress problems that have arisen.

The measure is essentially directed at banned paramilitary organisations and deals with the misuse of their funds for further exploitation. Such organisations engage in the legitimate collection of money and use it to build up or retain their strength. The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) said that such a measure was welcome. He also said that it was by no means the main method of dealing with terrorism. I agree. But terrorism cannot be overcome only by massive police and military action to search out and remove terrorism at every stage. Such actions tend to become part of a pattern. The way forward is the long-haul solution which seeks to undermine the very conditions which lead to terrorism. The economic and social agenda, such as Monday's debate on the Northern Ireland (Appropriation) Order, which is equivalent to the Budget, is important and needs to be seen in the context of other issues.

The other avenue is the democratic one of people coming together and standing up for the sort of society that they wish to see. Nancy Gracey's organisation has stood up and campaigned and organised in Downpatrick to such an extent that the official organiser for the IRA has moved out of the area. The argument is being won by people who put forward alternative solutions.

Mr. Brooke: I am delighted to have the opportunity to reply to the debate. I shall allude first, because it has been mentioned by a number of hon. Members, to the delay in bringing forward the legislation. I understand the feelings of the House. I have thanked the House for its indulgence and, in the context of the language that has been used in the debate, I thank the House for its patience and understanding.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) was understanding of some of the circumstances which might have given rise to the delay. It is better that the legislation should have come forward than that it should be delayed further, but I recognise the difficulties in

which the Government have placed the House and I appreciate the understanding that has been shown towards us.

A number of points have been made and I will do my best to respond to them. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), in welcoming the general principles of the legislation on behalf of the Opposition, asked why the new provisions could not be part of general law. The new provisions rely on the concept of scheduled offences and are therefore unique to Northern Ireland. They cannot be applied in England and Wales where there are no scheduled offences. They are also designed to deal with a particular situation in Northern Ireland. However, I understand the sentiment which underlay the hon. Gentleman's question and I am grateful to him for his tribute to the police for their hard and painstaking work.

The hon. Gentleman asked about legitimate businesses. A legitimate business, properly so called, has nothing to fear from these provisions, but somebody who provides a legitimate service but who also helps terrorists will be vulnerable under the legislation. The hon. Gentleman asked a question which was also raised subsequently about a move into Europe and overseas. That is not possible under the present law, but it is not impossible in the longer run. We might be able to take powers to enter into reciprocal enforcement arrangements. That is a proper matter to have been raised and it is something which we would seek to pursue.

I expressed my gratitude to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley for his understanding and I assure him that, with regard to what he said about loopholes and the provision of expert advice and opinion, we shall welcome all the help that we can get to obtain the maximum benefit from the legislation and to prevent loopholes occurring.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley and the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) had a small internal debate about the Government's practice in the legislative procedures in the House. I noted that the phrase "the benefit of the doubt" crept into the debate. That phrase derives much from the game of cricket. I apologise if I have in any way polluted Northern Ireland debate by introducing such metaphors. My experience is that one is given out as often as one is given not out and that they balance out over the years. I hope that the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley will feel that his optimism was more justified than the scepticism of the hon. Member for Antrim, North.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) asked me a series of questions. It is always a source of pleasure to me that my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) should have had an ancestor who was a Member for Newry and that I should have had an ancestor who was a Member for Armagh. We watch the hon. Gentleman's progress with care and we take perhaps greater interest in his development than that of any other Northern Ireland Member.

Mr. Mallon: I thank the Secretary of State for his felicitations. Can he make any observation on the fact that his noble antecedent represented one part of Newry and Armagh and that of the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) represented the other part, while I have to represent both on my own?

Mr. Brooke: Ever since the hon. Member entered the House I have much admired his productivity.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the onus of proof. The onus remains on the Crown throughout to prove all the matters set out in new clause 5. Assumptions are provided to assist the Crown in establishing some of these matters, but all those assumptions can be rebutted by a defendant on the lowest civil standard of proof—the balance of probability.

The hon. Gentleman asked about compensation. The provision in the schedule is in exactly the same form as appears in the other compensation schemes such as those in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act and the prevention of terrorism Act, which have apparently worked without difficulty. The fact that the provisions are broadly paralleled and mirrored in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act will, I hope, help the House in its consideration.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the position of children and spouses. All that can be confiscated are the proceeds of terrorist-related activities. I think that he cited the house. If the house represents the proceeds of such activities, it is right that it should be confiscated. However, if the defendant can show that, on the balance of probabilities, the house was come by legitimately, it cannot be the subject of an order.

The hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) expressed the expectation that peace would come and in so doing endorsed the legislation, and I am grateful to him.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) asked me a question relating to the amounts secured under earlier legislation. The Home Office started collecting statistics on restraint orders issued under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act in 1989, but the returns received were so unreliable that it was not felt safe to quote the figures. Customs and Excise does not collect figures and there is no obvious evidence from, for example, bank evidence to Select Committees, that the banks have any figures.

However, against that background, statistics are available for confiscation orders under the Act—a matter which I think also underlay the hon. Gentleman's question. That is the stage that comes after restraint orders. Statistics are as yet available only for England and Wales where, in 1987, 200 offenders were ordered to pay £1·2 million on confiscation orders. That was the year after the Act came into force. In 1988, 540 offenders were ordered to pay £8·1 million and in 1989, 800 offenders were ordered to pay £7·8 million. Therefore, a significant sum of money is coming into the public coffers as a result of the legislation.

The hon. Gentleman asked why we had not introduced legislation before.

Mr. William Ross: What does the right hon. Gentleman say about sums of money recovered under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman is right to remind me that he raised that question. No restraint or forfeiture orders have yet been made in Northern Ireland under that Act, but I remind the House of what I said earlier. As Lord Colville pointed out in his recent report on that Act, the present law, while providing some machinery for the confiscation of money or property which it can be proved is intended for terrorist use, does not prevent any means of

[Mr. Brooke]

depriving terrorist financiers of the personal benefit which they derive from their involvement in such activity. That gap is filled by this legislation.

The hon. Gentleman was free with criticism of the legislation. I did not catch in his speech much detail of the alternative legislation that he would like to see against the problem which I think we all acknowledge exists. I agree with what he said about mindless violence. There is no question but that manipulative skills of a high order are employed within the terrorist movement, and it is an index of the purpose of the legislation that it is being directed against just such skills. The hon. Gentleman saw that point and I can confirm that it is true. He will recall the 62 establishments which were raided simultaneously in the latter part of last year on warrants signed by myself for the collection of documentation which was then taken away for analysis.

The hon. Gentleman asked about builders, as did the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsyth). I recognise that that is not specifically contained in the legislation except as a side-wind. It is a complex matter, because one must be certain to introduce powers which, although they will defeat terrorists, do not impose impossible burdens on honest business men throughout the Province. The Government are continuing to pursue that matter, and are determined to bear down on those sources of finance.

Mr. William Ross: I made specific reference to persons on the double. Will the Government make a serious attempt to deal with that problem—even in the case of individual houses, where Housing Executive grants are paid?

5.30 pm

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his support. The Government are determined to bear down on all sources of finance. Today, we are adding to our armoury a contribution to that process.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East asked why there should be a £20,000 cut-off. The scheme is deliberately targeted at persons who make a practice of, or living from, financing terrorism—in other words, the major players—and to ensure that a requirement on the courts should not be imposed when someone is convicted of a minor, albeit relevant, offence but who has received no benefit or hardly any benefit personally from his actions. Any cut-off point is arbitrary, but a figure of £20,000 seems about right. It can be varied by order, and we would be perfectly happy to return to that question. The hon. Gentleman, in his remarks about the commissioning of more than one offence, correctly interpreted the Government's intentions.

A confiscation order will apply to property anywhere in the world. If the prosecution can establish that the defendant has realisable property in Australia, for example, it will be included in the order. If the defendant does not pay, he will be sentenced to imprisonment in default of not having done so. The location of the asset is not significant.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East asked whether the scheme will apply to property owned by a terrorist organisation. It does not, but such property is already liable to forfeiture under schedule 7 to the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East for a most agreeable culminating phrase, when he commented that the clauses are not a good curate's egg overall. I shall treasure that phrase, and whenever I quote it I will give the hon. Gentleman the credit for having originally uttered it.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) spoke of the measures as being on the periphery, and referred to the remarks of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East about the particular persons to whom the legislation is addressed. I repeat that terrorism will be brought to an end by exercising pressure on terrorists across the whole front. I am the first to acknowledge that the aspect dealt with by clause 5 is not a decisive element, but it is much better to exercise pressure across the whole front so that the terrorist is made to realise that there is no way he can win.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) argued, perfectly properly, for a doctrine of perfection. As I said earlier, I should have been delighted if these measures could have been introduced on Second Reading. However, the best can be the enemy of the good, and it was desirable to bring forward this measure only when it was ready. I appreciate the understanding that the House has shown in that regard.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Is the Secretary of State prepared to take from a terrorist who was involved in the destruction of property a sum equal to its value?

Mr. Brooke: We have been examining that aspect, and I will write to the hon. Gentleman. I commend the new clause to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 6

PROVISIONS SUPPLEMENTARY TO SECTION (CONFISCATION ORDERS)

'.—(1) Subject to subsection (2) below, a confiscation order shall be made by the court before sentencing or otherwise dealing with the defendant for the offence or offences in respect of which he is before the court.

(2) If a court considers that it requires further information before making a confiscation order against a defendant, it may, subject to subsection (3) below, postpone making such an order for a period not exceeding six months after the date of conviction for the purpose of enabling that information to be obtained; but, without prejudice to Article 11 of the Treatment of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, the court may notwithstanding such postponement proceed to sentence or to otherwise deal with the defendant in respect of the conviction.

(3) If during the period of postponement notice of appeal or of application for leave to appeal is given under section 16(1) of the Criminal Appeal (Northern Ireland) Act 1980 the court may, on the application of the prosecution, extend that period to a date up to three months after the date of the determination of the appeal.

(4) A court shall not impose any fine or make an order such as is mentioned in subsection (5)(b) or (c) below before a confiscation order is made.

(5) Where a court makes a confiscation order against a defendant in any proceedings, the court shall, in respect of any offence of which he is convicted in those proceedings, take account of the order before—

(a) imposing any fine on him; or

(b) making any order involving any payment by him, other than an order under Article 3 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 1980 (compensation orders); or

(c) making any order under Article 7 of that Order (deprivation orders),

but subject to that shall leave the order out of account in determining the appropriate sentence or other manner of dealing with him.

(6) No statutory provision restricting the power of a court dealing with an offender in a particular way from dealing with him also in any other way shall by reason only of the making of a confiscation order restrict the court from dealing with an offender in any way it considers appropriate in respect of a relevant offence.

(7) Where—

(a) a court makes both a confiscation order and an order for the payment of compensation under Article 3 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 1980 against the same person in the same proceedings; and

(b) it appears to the court that he will not have sufficient means to satisfy both the orders in full,

it shall direct that so much of the compensation as will not in its opinion be recoverable because of the insufficiency of his means shall be paid out of any sums recovered under the confiscation order.

(8) Where a court decides not to make a confiscation order against a defendant convicted by it of a relevant offence the court shall state its reasons for that decision.'—*[Mr. Brooke.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 7

RELEVANT OFFENCES

'.—(1) In this Part of this Act "relevant offence" means—

(a) a scheduled offence falling within paragraph 12(a), 20(b), (c) or (e) or 21(aa), (h), (ha), (hb), (j) or (k) of Part I of Schedule 1 to this Act; and

(b) an offence which by virtue of Part II of that Schedule is to be treated as if it were such an offence as is mentioned in paragraph (a) above.

(2) In so far as this Part of this Act applies in relation to a relevant offence committed before the coming into force of this Act "relevant offence" also means—

(a) a scheduled offence within the meaning of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 falling within paragraph 13(a) or 16(b) or (c) of Part I of Schedule 4 to that Act; and

(b) an offence which by virtue of Part II of that Schedule was to be treated as if it were such an offence as is mentioned in paragraph (a) above.

(3) An order under section 1(3) above amending Schedule 1 to this Act may also amend subsection (1) above.'—*[Mr. Brooke.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 8

REALISABLE PROPERTY, VALUE AND GIFTS

'.—(1) In this Part of this Act "realisable property" means, subject to subsection (2) below—

(a) any property held by the defendant; and

(b) any property held by a person to whom the defendant has directly or indirectly made a gift caught by this Part of this Act.

(2) Property is not realisable property if an order under—

(a) Article 7 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 1980 (deprivation orders);

(b) section 27 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (forfeiture orders); or

(c) section 13(2), (3) or (4) of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (forfeiture orders),

is in force in respect of the property.

(3) For the purposes of this Part of this Act the amount that might be realised at the time a confiscation order is made is—

(a) the total of the values at that time of all the realisable property held by the defendant, less

(b) where there are obligations having priority at that time, the total amounts payable in pursuance of such obligations,

together with the total of the values at that time of all gifts caught by this Part of this Act.

(4) For the purposes of subsection (3) above, an obligation has priority at any time if it is an obligation of the defendant to—

(a) pay an amount due in respect of a fine, or other order of a court, imposed or made on conviction of an offence, where the fine was imposed or order made before the confiscation order; or

(b) pay any sum which would be included among the preferential debts (within the meaning given by Article 346 of the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989) in the defendant's bankruptcy commencing on the date of the confiscation order or winding up under an order of the court made on that date.

(5) Subject to the following provisions of this section, for the purposes of this Part of this Act the value of property (other than cash) in relation to any person holding the property—

(a) where any other person holds an interest in the property, is—

(i) the market value of the first-mentioned person's beneficial interest in the property, less

(ii) the amount required to discharge any incumbrance (other than a charging order) on that interest; and

(b) in any other case, is its market value.

(6) Subject to subsection (9) below, references in this Part of this Act to the value at any time (referred to in subsection (7) below as "the material time") of any proceeds or of a gift caught by this Part of this Act are references to—

(a) the value of the proceeds or gift to the recipient when he received it adjusted to take account of subsequent changes in the value of money; or

(b) where subsection (7) below applies, the value there mentioned,

whichever is the greater.

(7) Subject to subsection (9) below, if at the material time he holds—

(a) the property which he received (not being cash); or

(b) property which, in whole or in part, directly or indirectly represents in his hands the property which he received;

the value referred to in subsection (6) above is the value to him at the material time of the property mentioned in paragraph (a) above or, as the case may be, of the property mentioned in paragraph (b) above so far as it so represents the property which he received, but disregarding any charging order.

(8) A gift (including a gift made before the coming into force of this Part of this Act) is caught by this Part of this Act if—

(a) it was made by the defendant at any time since the beginning of the period of six years ending when the proceedings were instituted against him; or

(b) it was made by the defendant at any time and was a gift of property—

(i) obtained by the defendant as a direct or indirect result of terrorist-related activities engaged in by him or another; or

(ii) which in whole or in part directly or indirectly represented in the defendant's hands property received by him as proceeds of such activities.

(9) For the purposes of this Part of this Act—

(a) the circumstances in which the defendant is to be treated as making a gift include those where he transfers property to another person directly or indirectly for a consideration the value of which is significantly less than the value of the consideration provided by the defendant; and

(b) in those circumstances, the preceding provisions of this section shall apply as if the defendant had made a gift of such share in the property as bears to the whole property the same proportion as the difference between the values referred to in paragraph (a) above bears to the value of the consideration provided by the defendant.'—*[Mr. Brooke.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 9

ASSUMPTIONS AS TO BENEFIT AND VALUE OF PROCEEDS

'.—(1) The Crown Court shall, for the purpose of determining whether the defendant has benefited from terrorist-related activities and, if he has, of assessing the value of his proceeds of those activities, make the following assumptions, except to the extent that any of the assumptions are shown to be incorrect in the defendant's case—

(a) that any property appearing to the court—

(i) to have been held by him at any time since his conviction; or

(ii) to have been transferred to him at any time since the beginning of the period of six years ending when the proceedings were instituted against him,

was obtained by him, at the earliest time at which he appears to the court to have held it, as a result of terrorist-related activities engaged in by him;

(b) that any expenditure of his since the beginning of that period was met out of the proceeds of such activities engaged in by him; and

(c) that, for the purpose of valuing any property obtained or assumed to have been obtained by him at any time as a result of such activities, he obtained the property free of any other interests in it.

(2) Where the court decides that any assumption mentioned in subsection (1) above is incorrect in the defendant's case it shall state its reasons for that decision.

(3) As respects property or expenditure in relation to which the foregoing assumptions do not fall to be made the standard of proof required of the prosecution on the question whether the defendant has benefited from terrorist-related activities and, if so, as to the value of his proceeds of those activities shall be that applicable in civil proceedings.'—*[Mr. Brooke.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 10

STATEMENTS, ETC., RELEVANT TO MAKING CONFISCATION ORDERS

'.—(1) Where—

(a) there is tendered to the court by the prosecution a statement as to any matters relevant in the case of a defendant who has been convicted of a relevant offence—

(i) to the determination whether the defendant has benefited from terrorist-related activities; or

(ii) to the assessment of the value of his proceeds of those activities; or

(iii) to the determination whether the requirements of section (*Confiscation orders*)(5) above are satisfied; and

(b) the defendant accepts to any extent any allegation in the statement,

the court may, for the purposes of that determination and assessment, treat his acceptance as conclusive of the matters to which it relates.

(2) Where—

(a) a statement is tendered under subsection (1)(a) above; and

(b) the court is satisfied that a copy of that statement has been served on the defendant,

the court may require the defendant to indicate to what extent he accepts each allegation in the statement and, so far as he does not accept any such allegation, to indicate any matters he proposes to rely on.

(3) If the defendant fails in any respect to comply with a requirement under subsection (2) above, he may be treated for the purposes of this section as accepting every allegation in the statement apart from any allegation in respect of which he has complied with the requirement.

(4) Where—

(a) there is tendered to the court by the defendant a statement as to any matters relevant to determining the amount that might be realised at the time the confiscation order is made; and

(b) the prosecution accepts to any extent any allegation in the statement,

the court may, for the purposes of that determination, treat the acceptance by the prosecution as conclusive of the matters to which it relates.

(5) An allegation may be accepted or a matter indicated for the purposes of this section either—

(a) orally before the court; or

(b) in writing in accordance with Crown Court rules.

(6) No acceptance by the defendant under this section that any property was obtained by him as a direct or indirect result of terrorist-related activities engaged in by him or another shall be admissible in evidence in any proceedings for an offence.

(7) If the court is satisfied as to any matter relevant for determining the amount that might be realised at the time the confiscation order is made (whether by an acceptance under this section or otherwise), the court may issue a certificate giving the court's opinion as to the matter concerned and shall do so if satisfied that the amount that might be realised at the time the confiscation order is made is less than the amount the court assesses to be the value of the defendant's proceeds of terrorist-related activities.'—*[Mr. Brooke.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 11

ASSISTING ANOTHER TO RETAIN PROCEEDS OF TERRORIST-RELATED ACTIVITIES

'.—(1) Subject to subsection (3) below, if a person enters into or is otherwise concerned in an arrangement whereby—

(a) the retention or control by or on behalf of another (referred to hereafter as "A") of A's proceeds of terrorist-related activities is facilitated (whether by concealment, removal from the jurisdiction, transfer to nominees or otherwise); or

(b) A's proceeds of such activities—

(i) are used to secure that funds are placed at A's disposal; or

(ii) are used for A's benefit to acquire property by way of investment,

knowing or having reasonable cause to suspect that A is a person who engages in or has engaged in such activities or has benefited from such activities, he is guilty of an offence.

(2) In this section references to any person's proceeds of terrorist-related activities include a reference to any property which in whole or in part directly or indirectly represented in his hands his proceeds of such activities.

(3) Where a person discloses to a constable a suspicion or belief that any funds or investments are derived from or used in connection with terrorist-related activities or any matter on which such a suspicion or belief is based, then, if he does any act in contravention of subsection (1) above and the disclosure relates to the arrangement concerned, he does not commit an offence under this section if—

(a) the disclosure is made before he does the act concerned and that act is done with the consent of the constable; or

(b) the disclosure is made after he does the act but on his initiative and as soon as it is reasonable for him to make it.

(4) In proceedings against a person for an offence under this section it is a defence to prove—

(a) that he did not know or suspect that the arrangement related to any person's proceeds of terrorist-related activities; or

(b) that he did not know or suspect that by the arrangement the retention or control by or on behalf of A of any property was facilitated or, as the case may be, that by the arrangement any property was used as mentioned in subsection (1) above; or

(c) that—

(i) he intended to disclose to a constable such a suspicion, belief or matter as is mentioned in subsection (3) above in relation to the arrangement, but

(ii) there is reasonable excuse for his failure to make disclosure in accordance with that subsection.

(5) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—

(a) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding fourteen years or a fine or both;

(b) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or both.'—*[Mr. Brooke.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 12

CONCEALING OR TRANSFERRING PROCEEDS OF TERRORIST-RELATED ACTIVITIES

'.—(1) A person is guilty of an offence if he—

(a) conceals or disguises any property which is, or in whole or in part directly or indirectly represents, his proceeds of terrorist-related activities; or

(b) converts or transfers that property or removes it from the jurisdiction,

for the purpose of avoiding prosecution for a relevant offence or the making or enforcement in his case of a confiscation order.

(2) A person is guilty of an offence if, knowing or having reasonable cause to suspect that any property is, or in whole or in part directly or indirectly represents, another person's proceeds of terrorist-related activities, he—

(a) conceals or disguises that property; or

(b) converts or transfers that property or removes it from the jurisdiction,

for the purpose of assisting any person to avoid prosecution for a relevant offence or the making or enforcement of a confiscation order.

(3) A person is guilty of an offence if, knowing or having reasonable cause to suspect that any property is, or in whole or in part directly or indirectly represents, another person's proceeds of terrorist-related activities, he acquires that property for no, or for inadequate, consideration.

(4) In subsections (1)(a) and (2)(a) above the references to concealing or disguising any property include references to concealing or disguising its nature, source, location, disposition, movement or ownership or any rights with respect to it.

(5) For the purposes of subsection (3) above consideration given for any property is inadequate if its value is significantly less than the value of that property, and there shall not be treated as consideration the provision for any person of services or goods which are of assistance to him in terrorist-related activities.

(6) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—

(a) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding fourteen years or a fine or both;

(b) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or both.'—*[Mr. Brooke.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 13

ENFORCEMENT AND SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

'. Schedule (*Confiscation orders: supplementary provisions*) to this Act shall have effect with respect to the enforcement of confiscation orders and otherwise for supplementing the provisions of this Part of this Act.'—*[Mr. Brooke.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 14

INTERPRETATION OF CONFISCATION PROVISIONS

'.—(1) In this Part of this Act—

"charging order" means an order made under paragraph 6 of Schedule (*Confiscation orders: supplementary provisions*) to this Act;

"confiscation order" means an order made by a court under section (*Confiscation orders*) above;

"defendant" means a person against whom proceedings have been instituted for a relevant offence (whether or not he has been convicted);

"gift caught by this Part of this Act" has the meaning given in section (*Realisable property, value and gifts*)(8) above;

"interest", in relation to property, includes right;

"proceeds of terrorist-related activity" has the meaning given in section (*Confiscation orders*)(2) above;

"property" includes, in addition to money, all other property, real or personal, heritable or moveable, including things in action and other intangible or incorporeal property;

"realisable property" has the meaning given in section (*Realisable property, value and gifts*)(1) and (2) above;

"relevant offence" has the meaning given in section (*Relevant offences*) above;

"statutory provision" has the meaning given in section 1(f) of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954;

"terrorist-related activities" has the meaning given in section (*Confiscation orders*)(2) above.

(2) This Part of this Act applies to property wherever situated.

(3) References in this Part of this Act to offences include references to offences committed before the coming into force of this Part of this Act but nothing in this Part of this Act imposes any duty or confers any power on any court in or in connection with proceedings against a person for an offence if the proceedings were instituted before the coming into force of this Act.

(4) References in this Part of this Act to property obtained as a direct or indirect result of terrorist-related activities include references to property obtained partly in that manner.

(5) The following provisions also have effect for the interpretation of this Part of this Act.

(6) Property is held by any person if he holds any interest in it.

(7) References to property held by a person include a reference to property vested in his trustee in bankruptcy or liquidator; and references to an interest held by a person beneficially in property include a reference to an interest which would be held by him beneficially if the property were not so vested.

(8) Property is transferred by one person to another if the first person transfers or grants to the other any interest in the property.

(9) Proceedings for an offence are instituted—

(a) when a summons or warrant is issued under Article 20 of the Magistrates' Courts (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 in respect of that offence;

(b) when a person is charged with the offence after being taken into custody without a warrant;

(c) when an indictment is presented under section 2(2)(c), (e) or (f) of the Grand Jury (Abolition) Act (Northern Ireland) 1969;

and where the application of this subsection would result in there being more than one time for the institution of proceedings, they shall be taken to have been instituted at the earliest of those times.'—*[Mr. Brooke.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 1A

IDENTITY CARDS

'The Secretary of State may make regulations—

(a) requiring all persons ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland to possess an identity card;

(b) requiring such an identity card to contain a photograph; and otherwise prescribing the format and content of an identity card;

(c) prescribing the circumstances in which passports may function as identity cards and providing for the issue of identity cards to visitors to Northern Ireland not carrying a passport;

(d) specifying the circumstances in which a person may be required to produce an identity card; and

(e) specifying penalties for failing to produce an identity card.'—*[Mr. Trimble.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause would empower the Secretary of State to make regulations that provide for identity cards in Northern Ireland. It is deliberately drafted in a permissive form to give the Secretary of State leeway in introducing such a system. That is not to undermine or devalue the need for identity cards. Given the situation in Northern Ireland, there is clearly a need for a system of identity cards to enable everyone moving within its jurisdiction to be identified.

One of the major tools used by the security forces when trying to contain terrorism is the widespread operation of vehicle control points, road blocks, and road checks. Earlier this week, the Secretary of State himself, while commenting on the regrettable series of incidents of the past few days, referred to an increase in the number of vehicle control points in the hope that that would inhibit the movement of terrorists and their ability to carry out ghastly acts.

It is essential that those who man VCPs are able to identify people who pass through them, and an identity card system is necessary for that purpose. In Committee, the Minister of State commented:

"on the face of it, we can see how a common identity card could be of help. It might help security forces who come to the Province for a relatively limited time and then leave, and do not have the benefit of developing detailed knowledge of the people in whose areas they serve, as does the Royal Ulster Constabulary. There might be therefore a certain security advantage in that regard."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 31 January 1991; c. 326-7.]

I welcome those comments, but the Minister was taking far too limited an approach. Not just Army personnel serving in the Province for a short time require the help given by identity cards; members of the RUC need it. RUC officers may come to know all the people in rural areas with small populations but they cannot know everyone in areas with a population of tens of thousands. It would be impossible for RUC members to know everyone in such areas, let alone all the suspected terrorists. The Minister's remarks point to the need for identity cards to help all the security forces.

Identity cards should be linked to some form of computer databank from which other security intelligence would be available, so by cross-referencing the card, the security forces and others would have available a wide range of information about suspects. To a certain extent, that happens at present. Northern Ireland Members of Parliament are familiar with the extent to which it happens. We have documents which are used for identity purposes. I have in my hand a Northern Ireland driving licence; I referred to it in Committee. Unlike licences in England and Wales, it carries a photograph and is produced in plastic.

Car licence plate numbers are held on a central computer. We know that there is a certain amount of tagging of such numbers. At vehicle checkpoints one regularly sees a member of the security forces reading car registration numbers into a microphone. The general understanding is that that information is transmitted to a central point and checked on the records to find out whether there are any tags in the computer for the registration numbers concerned. The security forces can then decide whether to pull in a car and its occupants for closer examination.

The system that I am arguing for exists to a certain extent already through driving licences and car number plates, but that is a partial, rather than an effective, system.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Should it not also be underscored that this House, in its wisdom, has decided that people must carry an identity card of some type when they vote, and have listed the only identity cards that are accepted on such an occasion?

Mr. Trimble: I thank the hon. Member for his intervention. He is perfectly correct, and the fact that the House decided that evidence of identity should be produced for one function underscores the need for it. The hon. Member will know that the multiplicity of documents available to prove identity for voting purposes is a weakness of the system. A coincidental benefit of new clause 1A is that it would provide for a single, common identity card which could be used instead of all those other documents. That is an incidental benefit, but I am afraid that, in Committee, the Minister was confused into thinking that it was one of the main planks of the proposal. We are arguing for an identity card system to help the security forces, so we need a comprehensive system.

Some people have reservations about identity cards. When one mentions computer records and other information being held centrally they get even more upset. They think that the existence of such information will undermine civil rights or infringe their human liberties in

some way. Like some other hon. Members, I find it difficult to see any merit in that argument. There is nothing unusual about identity cards. Indeed, we are all wearing one. If one looks around the House, one can see several hon. Members who are clearly wearing the required identity card. Hon. Members obviously do not find that the personal use of an identity card is an infringement of their civil liberties because when the requirement to wear one was extended to Members of Parliament it was accepted without murmur or complaint.

Coincidentally, this week's edition of the magazine of the Police Federation of England and Wales, which is supplied to all hon. Members on a complimentary basis, includes an article on identity cards which describes the situation in other European countries. It says:

"Spain: A compulsory system comes into force from the age of 14 onwards. Germany: Identity cards are required from the age of 16."

In some other countries, such as France and Italy, cards are voluntary, but the federation understands that they are used on almost all occasions.

The article also refers to the seventh report of the Home Affairs Select Committee, published last July, which recommended the introduction of a common identity card system and discussed the arrangements in Europe. There is a slight conflict between the report and the article about Denmark, but we need not go into that. One states that identity cards are compulsory there and the other says that they are not.

I refer to European practice because I want to emphasise that identity cards are known and are used on a wide scale in Europe and do not cause any problems for civil liberties or infringe human rights. I feel that that objection has no merit.

In Committee, one practical objection to identity cards was mentioned. Persons from the Republic of Ireland come across the border to a number of towns to do their shopping. We would not want to discourage that. Such people might not have identity documents with them. That is an anomaly, which should perhaps be considered more comprehensively. It is anomalous that the United Kingdom still refuses to recognise the independence of the Republic of Ireland in some respects. The anomaly flows from legislation of 1949, in which this Parliament said that it would not recognise the Irish Republic as a foreign country. In some respects that is not a privilege which is being extended to citizens of the Irish Republic, but a subtle refusal to——

Mr. William Ross: It is an insult.

Mr. Trimble: Yes, as my colleague says, it is, in a sense, an insult because it refuses to recognise their independence.

Common travel arrangements, which may have been convenient in other respects, flow from that anomaly. To some extent, there is a strong argument—we dealt with it here on Monday night—for extending proper passport controls and the sort of regime that applies to other countries to the frontier in Ireland. That argument should be studied, rather than allow the present anomaly to persist.

I realise that the Bill may not be the appropriate vehicle to tackle the common travel area in the British Isles. Moreover, with 1992 just around the corner, it may be inappropriate to refer to passports, or to give instructions to increase their number, because if there is to be free travel throughout the European Community post-1992, we may not want to increase passport arrangements.

The new clause would enable identity cards to be issued to visitors to Northern Ireland, although the regulations that we suggest could also provide for passports as identity cards. Both could be used which should keep the inconvenience caused by the proposal to a minimum.

This may be a temporary provision—much less temporary than the provision that we discussed on Monday—because post-1992 it is probable that there will be a common European standard on the use of identity cards. If there is to be a common travel area in the entire Community and no passport controls at borders, some other form of identification will be required. It is likely that common identity cards will be introduced as a European requirement to deal with the security implications post-1992. If that is the case, the new clause would be temporary because it covers us only for the period between now and the common regime likely to be introduced through the European Community. However, that is like looking into a crystal ball.

The new clause would enable the Secretary of State to make regulations for identity cards, which we believe are necessary. To a certain extent, such provision exists, but it must be put on a better comprehensive footing so that we have a common identity card which is used throughout Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stanbrook: I support the new clause, which has been ably and convincingly proposed. The wording is admirable, as it does not place an obligation on the Government, but would enable the Secretary of State to nudge his Cabinet colleagues and to say that the time has come when we should introduce identity cards in the country as a whole.

The discussion about whether we should follow the lead given by other members of the European Community and introduce compulsory national identity cards has reached a stage at which the arguments for and against are fairly evenly divided. The argument in favour has strengthened. Originally, it was suggested that, apart from its convenience for law enforcement and other purposes, the system would assist immigration control. Subsequently, the question of terrorism has arisen.

The argument for compulsory introduction of identity cards in the United Kingdom as a whole has now been largely accepted. A fortiori, we should surely introduce them in Northern Ireland, where the problems of the security authorities are so much greater and terrorism is a constant threat. The public there need to be reassured that the Government are doing everything possible to defeat terrorism and restore law and order. Because I am sure that the Government are indeed determined to do everything possible, I hope that they will accept the new clause and pass the necessary enabling legislation.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): For two reasons, I am surprised at the new clause and its source. First, I gather that the same proposal was made in Committee, but was defeated. Secondly, the new clause would make Northern Irish people second-class citizens, as only they would be required to carry identity cards: Englishmen, Scotsmen, Welshmen and citizens of the Republic would

[Mr. Eddie McGrady]

not be subject to the same requirement. Usually, my hon. Friends want Northern Irish people to be treated in the same way as everyone else.

The new clause has been described as permissive rather than mandatory. I do not trust Secretaries of State with permissive legislation. With the best will in the world, they are inclined to use whatever powers they have, often—although perhaps not under the present regime—unwisely, hastily and without due consideration. I think that legislation should always be mandatory, especially when it deals with the rights of the individual and with restrictions on freedom of movement.

Currently, anyone who ventures abroad without some form of identification to present on demand at the legitimate and numerous vehicle check points on every road and byway is acting very foolishly. Nearly everyone, apart from very young people, has identification of some kind. The mind boggles at the idea that identity cards will carry some special mark meaning, "I am not a terrorist" or, indeed, "I am a terrorist", or, "I am a suspected terrorist"; unless we bear in mind the earlier suggestion that the card be linked to a data bank where the holder might be placed, unknown to him, in one of those categories. He would then have no chance to defend himself.

Mr. Harry Barnes: It would be possible to ensure, without the need for a data bank, that different categories were included on the cards. When a card is taken away from someone who is being investigated, the information can be added without anyone knowing. That would have applied to the "smart cards" that were proposed for football fans.

Mr. McGrady: That is true. Anyone who has had the misfortune to buy a secondhand car that, unknown to him, has been tagged will find himself the subject of intense interrogation at vehicle checkpoints. Identity cards cannot further the information that is available to the security forces at vehicle checkpoints. As Northern Ireland Members know, security intelligence in Northern Ireland is extraordinarily intense. I am certain that I could not move a couple of miles from my home without my movements being known and my category well understood at any vehicle checkpoint.

The practicalities make my argument even stronger. Some of the new clause is very vague. It refers to the penalties incurred by those without identity cards. What administrative nightmare will be created, and what new judicial processes will evolve to bring to book those who have forgotten their cards? At what age, for example, will young people be required to produce them? Will it be 18—the age at which they can vote—or 17, 16, 15, 14, 12 or even 10? Young people need to be free to go about their daily business, whether it be school or leisure. Unless everyone is tagged from the cradle to the grave, the position will become nonsensical. I do not think that even those who tabled the new clause would argue that young people, who are constantly subject to military searches—both personally and when in vehicles with others—should have to carry identity cards to school with them.

Mr. William Ross: Secondary schoolchildren carry bus passes with photographs.

Mr. McGrady: That proves my point. All of us already possess some form of identification.

The new clause involves another administrative nonsense. There is currently a big drive to bring more tourists into Northern Ireland. As soon as they reach either the land border or the sea border—perhaps it is the border with the English channel—tourists must apply for and obtain an identity card. A traveller from the Republic of Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales, the continent, America or anywhere else—intending, perhaps, to do some shopping—must obtain such a card. God knows the problems that hon. Members experience when travelling to and from Belfast under the present security arrangements will be nothing compared with the problems that will arise when a whole queue of people travelling to Belfast with British Airways or British Midland must produce not only passports but identity cards. The poor old sod who has forgotten his card, or does not even know that he should have one, will hold up the whole plane load.

The new clause is unnecessary, because of the plethora of identification that people already hold. More important, however, it takes yet another bite out of personal liberty and freedom. I am talking not merely about the identity card itself, but about the motivation behind its introduction. Information will be in data banks that the individuals concerned will never know about.

6 pm

Rev. William McCrea: I listened with care to some of the spurious arguments advanced by the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady). He showed that he has not read new clause 1A, which was moved by the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble).

The hon. Member for South Down was surprised that the hon. Member for Upper Bann should have tabled new clause 1A. Surely it is right and proper that we should debate it. The hon. Gentleman did nothing wrong in tabling the new clause, or it would not have been accepted.

The hon. Member for South Down made an interesting point about second-class citizens. He made the strongest integrationist speech that I have heard from a member of the SDLP. People outside will note carefully that the SDLP is concerned to ensure equal status.

Mr. McGrady: The hon. Gentleman did not listen to my speech. I said that it was an unusual argument for an Ulster Unionist Member to advance.

Rev. William McCrea: I listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman, and we shall read his speech tomorrow.

Mr. Mallon: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that there is an integrationist wing in the SDLP.

Rev. William McCrea: This is probably the first time that we have heard of it. Perhaps the cuckoo is coming out of the nest, or perhaps there is a major policy split in the SDLP.

My hon. Friends, and I am sure other hon. Members, were surprised when the hon. Member for South Down said that he was worried about people in the Province becoming second-class citizens. SDLP Members were happy to force on the people of Northern Ireland the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which does not apply in any other part of the United Kingdom and which makes the people

of Northern Ireland second-class citizens. That was a weak part of the hon. Gentleman's argument against identity cards.

I support the new clause. In Committee, some hon. Members took exception to it on the ground that it would infringe civil liberties and civil rights. That was going over the top. Hon. Members carry an identity card.

Mr. Mallon: Where is the hon. Gentleman's identity card?

Rev. William McCrea: The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh was happy to wear his for each Committee sitting, and he is happy to be wearing it again today.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Is not it a rule of the House that hon. Members need not wear their card in the Chamber?

Rev. William McCrea: I agree with my hon. Friend. I am sure that Opposition Members are still learning the etiquette of the House.

If identity cards infringe civil liberties, why is the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh wearing his? There must be another reason for the opposition to the new clause.

How can the Government justify refusing to accept the new clause when they were happy to introduce identity cards for football fans? If cards would have stopped hooliganism and protected fans at football matches, why would not they ensure the safety of the people of the Province? People are required to wear identify cards for less important functions than the safety of the nation.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Is my hon. Friend aware that since the introduction of identity cards at Luton football club not one arrest has been made?

Mr. Harry Barnes: Luton has no support.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Its takings have increased from £1 million to £5 million, and it has had record attendances. It has not, whether the House likes it or not, had one arrest at its ground. That shows that identity cards work.

Rev. William McCrea: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. If the Government were happy to accept identity cards for football, why will not they accept them to ensure the safety of people in the United Kingdom, especially in Northern Ireland?

In Committee, some hon. Members said that they would accept a national identity card. Conservative Members were happy to accept that proposal, and suggested to the Minister that the Government should act to implement a scheme.

In 1992, there will be a European identity card. Will Opposition Members object to that as an infringement of civil liberties that makes people in the Province second-class citizens? They will happily accept that card. It will be interesting to see how a distinction is made between Community countries. The citizens of Northern Ireland will probably have to wear an identification card that will show a Union Jack, which will be rather hard for some to swallow.

It was strange—I shall not say hypocritical—that the Government were happy to introduce legislation that made people wear identity cards when exercising the greatest civil and democratic right—the right to vote. No citizen in Northern Ireland is allowed to vote without having identification. Strangely, SDLP Members do not object to that identification card, which can allow or deny a person the right to vote. Even if someone's name is recorded on the electoral register, he will not be allowed to exercise his right to vote without an identity card.

Rev. Ian Paisley: A presiding officer may know someone and may be able to take an oath to say that it is that person, but he is not allowed to give him a ballot paper without an identification card.

Rev. William McCrea: Yes.

Mr. McGrady: Surely, Madam Deputy Speaker—I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker—the hon. Gentleman has made the point that I was making: the people of Northern Ireland can already prove their identity and the new clause is not necessary.

Rev. William McCrea: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments—at least in respect of the legislation, but not in terms of the person sitting in the Chair.

I am arguing for something that would do away with the load of regulations in favour of only one identity card, which could be easily carried. One of the problems that all our constituents face when they go to vote is that they think that they have the proper identification with them, but are told that it is out of date or that what they are carrying is not one of the accepted identity cards. That is a fact; that is what is happening, as hon. Members of all parties in Northern Ireland know. A common identity card would resolve that problem. Instead of the evidence disproving my case, it actually proves that a common identity card is necessary and would be of great assistance to our people both in the exercise of their franchise and for the safety of the community as a whole.

The hon. Member for South Down made great play of the fact that the provisions might affect visitors at a time when we need tourists. The hon. Gentleman might have found it helpful to read the new clause. Perhaps it would be a good thing if he were to read it now because paragraph (a) states:

"requiring all persons ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland to possess an identity card".

He would also find that paragraph (c) covers another aspect of this matter:

"prescribing the circumstances in which passports may function as identity cards".

A visitor need not apply for a special identity card, because his or her passport will be accepted as an identity card. Therefore, the legislation will not in any way stop citizens entering Northern Ireland as tourists.

Mr. McGrady: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that an Englishman must bring his passport when visiting Northern Ireland?

Rev. William McCrea: What we have been suggesting is a national identity card——

Mr. Harry Barnes: That is not in the legislation.

Rev. William McCrea: That is correct; that is not in the legislation, because we are dealing with Northern Ireland provisions. However, we are suggesting that it should be a provision of our legislation, and that it should be extended so that a person from England, Scotland or Wales would also have an identity card. Indeed, they will have one in the future. Although some hon. Members may find the idea of an identity card absurd, that is what we shall have in 1992 whether they like it or not.

Mr. Mallon: Is it not a fact that we are discussing emergency legislation? If those responsible for security expressed the need for such an identity card, does the hon. Gentleman not agree that the Government would introduce it? I am sure that he will share my healthy scepticism of the way in which Governments treat the susceptibilities of people in the north of Ireland. I repeat that, if there were a security need for such a card, one would have been introduced long ago by the Government. The Secretary of State rightly drew attention to the marvellous phrase about the curate's egg. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, in many ways, this is a bit of a parson's nose?

Rev. William McCrea: Without continuing those clerical references, I suggest that, even if the Government proposed such provisions, the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) would oppose them. He does not want this legislation or anything that clearly identifies an individual. Why should we run away from that when we are happy to have identification cards in this House?

Rev. Ian Paisley: Is it not a fact that the police have come out in favour of identity cards over and over again? It is totally false for the authorities to say that nobody in security wants identity cards, when the law officers and those who execute the law have made such calls. I have heard police officers on our own television saying that it would be a good thing if they could immediately eliminate the people whom they do not need to cross-examine once a bomb has gone off because they know their identities and know that they are no longer needed in connection with the case.

Rev. William McCrea: I thank my hon. Friend for his helpful intervention. Now that it is known that the provisions are supported by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, I am sure that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh will be ready to support and vote for them in the Lobby, given that that was the basis of his argument a few moments ago.

It is true that the security forces have requested, and still desire, such identity cards. It would do the community of Northern Ireland a service if the House were to pass the new clause.

6.15 pm

Mr. William Ross: The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) said that my hon. Friends and I always want to be treated the same as the rest of the United Kingdom. In case he thought that we were slipping away from that principle, may I reassure him that we do indeed want to be treated exactly the same as the rest of the United Kingdom. What is good enough for Members of this House should be good enough for the people of Northern Ireland. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear that in mind whenever he tries to poke fun at us because anything that we say is soundly based on the principle of the Union and its maintenance.

Members of this House now wear an identity card and, as far as any of us is aware, we all do so without a word of protest. My wife says that I look pretty good on my identity card—I am not sure that anyone else would agree —despite the colour, which some of us do not really like. We wear the identity card for a simple reason—it is part of the defence of the House, its Members and staff against the actions of the same terrorist violence from which we suffer in Northern Ireland. If the authorities of the House, the Government, and the leaders of the major parties in the House have all decided that the card is necessary for the defence of Members and the House, and we have agreed , I believe that there is now an excellent precedent for saying that identity card provisions could be applied more generally throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Harry Barnes: If the hon. Gentleman is basing his argument on the precedent of the cards that we are all wearing around our necks at the moment, does that mean that the people of Northern Ireland will have to clip on their cards or wear chains so that the identity card itself can be generally seen when the wearer is travelling around?

Mr. Ross: The hon. Gentleman sometimes makes a show of being ridiculous, and he is trying——

Mr. Barnes: It is a ridiculous card.

Mr. Ross: The hon. Gentleman may say that it is a ridiculous card, but it is his photograph on it. As I have said, my wife likes my photograph on the card—I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman's wife will like his.

The card is considered necessary in the House. We would not have to wear the card around our necks in Northern Ireland. We wear these cards around our necks in the House for the sheer convenience of the guardians of the House and its Members, and for our own protection. People would not be expected to wear an identity card on their collar or around their necks in Northern Ireland.

An identity card would be useful in all sorts of ways. One way that has not yet been mentioned relates to those who use plastic money in shops. Because of the rates of interest, people may not be anxious to use their credit cards in the future, but we should remember that it would be useful to shopkeepers if purchasers showed not only their credit card, but also an identity card bearing their photograph. There would then be no doubt about identity. Of course, I am assuming that the photographs would be better than those that usually appear on passports.

As the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster pointed out, the provision would be useful, in that a single mode of identification could be used by everyone. It would have the advantage of bearing the photograph of the individual. Most of the documents which are used for identification when casting a ballot do not have a photograph. The identification document which we propose would be extremely useful. It would enable a citizen to go about his normal business with minimum inconvenience, because he would have a simple, straightforward means of identification. I have no objection to wearing identification in the House, given the current position. I would have no objection to carrying it and producing it on demand in Northern Ireland, any more than I object to producing my driving licence or my firearms certificate, which also bear my photograph.

People could be made to carry identification if there were a small on-the-spot fine. If we make a hullabaloo about it, involving court proceedings and a huge fine, people would resist it and would become heroes for refusing to pay. If there were an on-the-spot fine of £1, £2 or £3 every time a person did not produce the identification, everyone would soon catch on. It is a matter of attrition, because only the wicked would refuse to produce identification.

As to personal freedom, I objected to the legislation on the compulsory wearing of seat belts, but I wear one now, as a law-abiding citizen. I suspect that most people would take the same attitude to the use of an identity card. Personal freedom is damaged far more by terrorist action. Our civil rights are injured far more by the activities of the IRA and other terrorist organisations than they would be by the carrying of a positive means of identification. The format would be a matter for discussion, but the introduction of an identity card would be one of the most useful things that the Government could do for the convenience of citizens of Northern Ireland.

As has already been pointed out, after 1992 we may be forced to produce an identity card for the entire United Kingdom. If so, I suspect that the civil rights, personal freedom and all the other objections which have been bandied about, not only today but on every other occasion when the matter has been debated, will vanish like a morning mist. There will not be a cheep, especially from those who are in favour of the Common Market.

The objections to the new clause are spurious. There is no good reason, apart from Government cowardice, for opposing such a provision. It should have been done long ago. It should be brought into operation without further delay, because there is no good reason for delay.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I do not propose to prolong the debate, since I spoke on the subject on Monday. May I inform the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) that I dealt with it in the context of the entire United Kingdom? We are asking that it should apply not only to Northern Ireland but throughout the United Kingdom. We are not as brainless as the hon. Gentleman may think. There are some brains north of Newcastle as well as south of it. I should point out to him that the Bill before the House relates only to Northern Ireland.

Why do Northern Ireland Ministers not want to take up the proposal? Has it to go before the Anglo-Irish Conference? Has the Secretary of State to persuade Mr. Collins that it would be a good idea? Has he to exercise his great talents of persuasion and to use all possible pressure to get agreement? We know what happened with conscription in Ireland when we were at war. Pressure from the south kept conscription from the north. Let me put it on record that, nevertheless, there were many volunteers from the south and the north in both world wars. We remember the nationalist community from the south who fought so bravely at the battle of the Somme in world war 1.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Might not it mean that Mr. Collins would have to bring his passport when coming to see the Secretary of State, because he would not have an identity card?

Rev. Ian Paisley: Northern Ireland Ministers were glad to put the passport of the Irish Republic on a level with the passport of Her Majesty's Dominions as a means of identification for voting, so no doubt they would have no twinge of conscience about accepting anything, including even a pass to a bar in Dublin. An on-the-spot fine might change the Secretary of State's mind: he might decide to get payment from Mr. Collins for not having a pass.

Police officers on both sides of the water have often spoken to me about the importance of eliminating people on whom they do not need to waste time when there has been terrorist activity. The way to do so is to have proper, on-the-spot identification.

I had a letter from the Secretary of State the other day telling me that he intends to bring in an additional means of identification. The Government are going to add yet again to the list of acceptable identification documents. I suggest that he abolishes all those means of identification and introduces one identity card to do the job at election time.

Mr. Forsythe: I am amazed at the great reluctance of hon. Members representing the major parties to countenance an identification document. Points have been made about the number of identification documents which we have and it has been said that we do not need an identity card. I think that makes the case. When we consider the number of items that a person could have, I cannot see any reason for not having an official identification document.

There is a passport, a driver's licence, a national insurance number, a student's pass, a House of Commons pass, a Visa card, an Access card, an American Express card and bank cards. If we have to travel on public transport, our names are put on tickets on planes, on boats and on rail. Hon. Members are proud to display their photograph and their party affiliation on election literature and posters. When a person is employed, he may have a clock number, a pay number and even a VAT number. When the major parties hold conferences, delegates have conference passes. Even people playing football have numbers on their backs for identification, as do rugby players. I understand that cricketers may have to put their names on their cricket kit.

I was disturbed to learn recently that if someone applies for a telephone, British Telecom will approach credit companies for information about the person. If the applicant has had difficulty with credit in the past, British Telecom will make that person pay a deposit for the telephone. In all, we have an amazing number of means of identification.

I am surprised that there are those in the United Kingdom who are afraid to identify themselves and are not proud to take their pass out of their pocket and hand it to whoever asks for it. They wish to hide their identity. I am afraid that most of those people fear that in certain circumstances such identification would be a disadvantage to them.

6.30 pm

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that with modern technology all the identifications that he has described can be put on one identity card?

Mr. Forsythe: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman pointed that out. That could be a case for introducing a single identification card to cover all those matters. I agree that perhaps such a measure should extend to the whole of the United Kingdom rather than apply only to Northern Ireland.

Of course, such identification cards are very handy for elections in Northern Ireland. I wonder how the major parties would react if there were a close result in an election or by-election—*[Interruption.]* No, I am not prophesying. If identification documents were required and perhaps 500

[Mr. Forsythe]

people were not eligible to vote because they had no identification document, that might make people think differently as regards the position in Northern Ireland.

In wartime, identification documents had to be obtained. We feel that we are in a war situation in Northern Ireland and see no reason why we should not have identification documents.

Mr. Harry Barnes: The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) was incorrect on only one point—his point about what occurred in Committee. A motion similar to the one before the House now was dealt with in Committee and was withdrawn. Had it not been withdrawn, we should not be debating a similar motion now. The new clause is slightly different from the proposal in Committee because a flaw in the previous proposal in respect of what would happen to people who had come from outside Northern Ireland has been covered by a provision allowing passports to be used as identification. The new clause is more consistent than the previous proposal, but it is no more correct.

The last place in the United Kingdom and perhaps in the world where identity cards should be introduced is Northern Ireland. That is partly for the reasons stressed by those who want to introduce them—that when incidents take place, the police can get hold of information quickly. Identity cards would be a godsend to terrorist organisations. Identity cards could be inspected by terrorist organisations and fed into their databanks and computers. We have just discussed a measure on how we could confiscate the vast funds that terrorist organisations hold. Undoubtedly, they have great strength of organisation, and their organisation would be further strengthened by introducing identity cards which people would be expected to carry with them all the time.

Enough problems are already caused by terrorists getting hold of identification documents. People might choose to go about without identification, not simply to avoid the security forces but to avoid being tackled by terrorists and their friends. Furthermore, the technology referred to by the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) which allows cards and smart cards to bear all sorts of information seems terribly dangerous. Such cards can be impregnated with invisible information which can be read only by those who have the proper machinery. Not only the security forces may have such machinery. In any case, there may be worries about the security forces and the police having access to such information. Terrorist organisations may get hold of the machinery and add all types of information, including basic information about whether they judge the person to be a Protestant or a Catholic, which they could use on future occasions.

Mr. William Ross: Will the hon. Gentleman look at the first line of the new clause, which says,

"The Secretary of State may make regulations"?

Surely such regulations would be subject to scrutiny in the House and surely the House would lay down the information which could be put on the card. If the hon. Gentleman does not believe that the officials who would create the cards would carry out the instructions given to them, how would he deal with such people?

Mr. Barnes: If officials were given cards which could be impregnated with information other than that which they had been requested to put on it and the House made regulations which prohibited them from doing so, an extra problem would be created in respect of the acceptability of the cards in Northern Ireland. Vast elements of the population may come to believe that the cards would be misused even though the regulations prohibited it. If it is possible to impregnate the cards with various information, the IRA and Protestant paramilitary organisations would hardly be put off by regulations passed by the House.

There are further serious reasons to be added to the points made by the hon. Member for South Down about why the measure is incorrect and will be counterproductive. It is a dangerous measure and that is why the House should vote against it.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): You may know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that, except for some minor alterations, the new clause was debated at some length in Standing Committee. We have had a longer debate this evening, with one or two new players. Unfortunately, contrary to the idea of the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe), they did not have numbers on their backs, so we found it difficult at times to identify them. With the exception of the idea of soccer numbers and, I presume, rugby numbers and perhaps even innovations for cricket teams—about which the Secretary of State may tell us in a future debate—no new arguments have been made in the debate.

Mr. William Ross: Yes, they have.

Mr. Marshall: No new argument ever comes from the mouth of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross). No new arguments have been made in the debate.

There is an argument for identity cards. I do not agree with them but I admit that there is an argument. There is a genuine debate about identity cards, not only in the United Kingdom but throughout Europe. That may be a factor which we shall have to face post-1992.

The only justification for introducing such a scheme into the Province and not into the remainder of the United Kingdom is that it would improve security and enhance the position of the security forces vis-à-vis terror groups in the Province. All the information that I have received, and certainly the view advanced on behalf of the Government by the Minister of State in Committee, runs counter to that argument. The information from the mouth of the Minister of State is that that is not a requirement of the scheme.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Does the hon. Gentleman believe that the cards which we wear in the House of Commons are a waste of time? Would he wish us not to carry them?

Mr. Marshall: That is a red herring. You will notice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I do not wear my identification card in the Chamber. If right hon. and hon. Members see me around the building, they will know that I do not wear it then either. I take the view, rightly or wrongly, that as an elected Member of this place who represents the people who send me here the security forces have a duty and responsibility to recognise me and all the other elected Members. For that reason, I reject the argument of the hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson), who has only just entered the Chamber, and similar arguments that were made by Ulster Unionist Members.

Rev. Ian Paisley: If the hon. Gentleman were stopped and asked to produce his identity card, would he do so?

Mr. Marshall: If I am stopped and asked for identification—not in this place, because as an elected Member of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, I am supposed to be known to the security people—*[Interruption.]* That is true, but it is a different argument.

If I were stopped by the police, on suspicion that I had committed an offence, and were asked to produce identification—not on the spot, but at a place of my choosing, in agreement with the police—I should do so. But that point is totally different from the one concerning the general introduction of identity cards in the Province of Northern Ireland.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), in his interpretation of the Minister's response in Committee to his amendment, sought to mislead the House to some extent. I shall quote what the Minister said in the Standing Committee on Thursday 31 January. He will forgive me for quoting him. On the other hand, perhaps he is pleased, as I may be saving him the problem of quoting himself. On that occasion he said:

"If his argument"—

the argument of the hon. Member for Upper Bann—

"was for security, on the face of it we can see how a common identity card could be of help. It might help security forces who come to the Province for a relatively limited time and then leave, and do not have the benefit of developing detailed knowledge of the people in whose areas they serve, as does the Royal Ulster Constabulary. There might, therefore, be a certain security advantage in that regard."

Those are the words that were quoted by the hon. Member for Upper Bann. I draw the attention of the House to the fact that the Minister used the conditional tense throughout that part of his statement. But he went on to say:

"However,"—

note the change—

"I am not aware that the security forces or the police have major difficulty identifying people. Indeed, I know from our debates that at least some in the community think that the ability of the police and security forces to determine people's identity is over-extensive, almost to the point of being intrusive. So the argument that a security lacuna needs to be filled does not convince me."—*[Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 31 January 1991; c. 326-27.]

Hon. Members, especially Conservative Members, should bear that in mind when this new clause is put to the vote. In the Government's view, identity cards in the Province alone would not affect the security situation a great deal. I think that I am right to say that the hon. Member for Upper Bann misled the House a little when he prayed in aid the remarks of the Minister of State. In fact, the Minister of State was using a slightly different, and stronger, argument to refute the suggestion of the hon. Gentleman.

6.45 pm

In another debate, the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) argued that identity cards should be supported if it were thought that they would provide extra security assurance. Like the Government, I believe that identity cards would not provide additional assurance against acts of violence, or enhance the position of the security forces in the Province. In Committee, the Minister could not think of any overriding security need to justify the introduction of such cards—and I am sure that his officials were putting their minds seriously to the subject. The argument stands or falls on the basis of the security question alone. For that reason, if for no other, I oppose this new clause.

The Minister also mentioned reasons of convenience. The hon. Member for Upper Bann has sought to rectify the fault in the new clause by introducing paragraph (c), but the basic argument still applies. The Province has many visitors, not just from overseas and from the Republic, but also from the remainder of the United Kingdom. I travel to Northern Ireland fairly frequently, though not as often as some of my hon. Friends think I should. If I had to produce my passport or an identity card—a card for which I had had to be photographed—or were further inconvenienced in what can already be a very trying journey, even I might find that a deterrent. Such an additional restriction, as well as deterring visitors and tourists from the remainder of the United Kingdom, could well have a detrimental influence on business people travelling to the Province. I refer to business men not just from abroad but also from the remainder of the United Kingdom. Surely it is such people that the Province is most anxious to attract, on the ground that inward investment and jobs are so important. The convenience argument is as strong now as it was when the Minister of State used it in Committee on 31 January.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) has just walked into the House. I gave way to another hon. Member who had only just entered the Chamber, and I do not intend to repeat the practice this evening.

Mr. Beggs: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has quite rightly observed that I have not been present for the entire debate. There is a good reason for that. The hon. Gentleman suggested that my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) had attempted to mislead the House. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman himself would not want to mislead the House by suggesting that travel to Northern Ireland is always a trying experience. Perhaps he will admit that he could travel more than 100 miles in Northern Ireland without being stopped by a member of the security forces.

Mr. Marshall: When I talked about travel I was not referring to travel within the Province. I suppose that I really ought not to reply to the hon. Gentleman's point, as it is really a matter for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, as the point of order was really directed at me in the form of a question—*[Interruption.]* That is a lesson that I never fail to learn in debates with Ulster Unionist Members, including the hon. Member for Antrim, East, with whom I have spent some happy hours in the Province. Travel within Northern Ireland has never presented me with any problem. If that is the assurance that the hon. Gentleman wants, I am happy to give it. However, as he must know, the journey from Great Britain to Northern Ireland is sometimes trying. That is what I was referring to.

I want, finally, to repeat something that I said in Committee. As the Minister will know, in Committee my speech on this matter was very short. My party and I find it ironic that the new clause should be introduced by a political party that believes in selective internment on the ground that the terrorists are already well known to the

[Mr. Marshall]

security forces. If that proposition is correct—it is put continuously by hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber—and the people are already known to the security forces, why would identification cards make their job any easier?

Rev. Ian Paisley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In view of the hon. Gentleman's earlier remarks, will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, give a ruling on whether hon. Members are required to produce their identity cards outside the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I am not an authority on those matters, but my understanding is that hon. Members are not required to wear their identity cards in the Chamber, which is a matter for the discretion of the individual. My responsibility does not go beyond the Chamber, but I understand that hon. Members are required to wear their identity cards in the Palace of Westminster and advised not to wear them outside it. I am speaking on matters for which I have no authority outside the Chamber, but I think that that is the general position.

Mr. Marshall: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not seeking to involve you in a squabble that does not concern you as it does not relate to order in the Chamber, but the red herring was introduced by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). My understanding is that the letter from the Serjeant at Arms contained a request, not an order.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If that is so, why are hon. Members stopped by the security officers and the police and asked to produce identity cards? [HON. MEMBERS: "They are not."] They have been. I came to the House the other day without my identity card, I was stopped at the door of the House and asked where my identity card was. I said that it was in Belfast. I was asked to produce my identity card and I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to consult Mr. Speaker because I think that the occupant of the Chair should be able to give us a proper ruling so that we know the facts. The majority of hon. Members believe that they have to produce identity cards and if they are wrong, they had better know the truth. We are informed that, outside the precincts of the Palace of Westminster, we are expected to wear our identity cards and produce them on request.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: My understanding is that hon. Members are not obliged to wear their identity cards in the Chamber, but are expected to wear them in the precincts of the Palace of Westminster outside the Chamber, and are advised not to wear them outside the Palace because they may make themselves vulnerable. The precise obligation on hon. Members outside the Chamber, but within the precincts, is a matter dealt with in the guidance issued by the Serjeant at Arms. It is right that the security authorities of the House should have the power to challenge an hon. Member about whose identity they may have doubts, so that the identity is put beyond doubt.

As I understand it, no hon. Member has been refused admission to the precincts of the Palace of Westminster because he or she was not, at the time, wearing his or her identity card. Identities are challenged, but once they have been established the hon. Members are admitted. It would be unwise for me to seek to go beyond that. I have given as comprehensive a reply as I can and I hope that we can now get back to new clause 1A.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to make it perfectly clear that the police officer who challenged me knew me and did not try to stop me, but asked for my identity card.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would have been astonished if any of our security staff did not recognise the hon. Gentleman on sight. I hope that the hon. Gentleman appreciates the vigilance of the security forces on that occasion.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): At the beginning of our proceedings, the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) encouraged all of us to be concise and not to waffle. I shall seek to follow the sterling example of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in this and other speeches that I have to make during the evening, being careful at the same time to answer the arguments of the individual debates. In that context, it may be helpful if I start by clarifying one or two issues, so that I do not have to come back to them as I review this interesting debate.

First, this is emergency legislation as it relates to Northern Ireland, and is not United Kingdom legislation. There may be arguments on both sides of the fence for an identity card scheme in the United Kingdom, but, as I made clear in Committee, that is not what the legislation is about, and neither I nor the Northern Ireland Office have responsibility for such a scheme in the United Kingdom. Therefore, I hope that the House, like the Committee, will not allow me to become sidetracked by that argument.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) has consistently supported the introduction of an identification scheme throughout the United Kingdom, for which I pay tribute to him and do not argue with him, but that does not relate to this debate. I recognise the legitimacy of the point made by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), who spoke on Monday about an identity card system in the United Kingdom. That was perfectly legitimate. As the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) said, there is an argument relating to such a scheme on a United Kingdom basis, although he does not support it, but it does not relate to the Bill, so I do not wish to get involved in that argument tonight. Exactly the same argument applies to the issue of 1992. There may be discussions about having identity cards after 1992, but that is not a matter for the Northern Ireland Office or for me, and I do not want to include it in my reply.

Secondly, this is emergency legislation, so if identification cards were to be introduced under it, it would have to be—as the hon. Member for Leicester, South said—for an overwhelming or compelling security reason, not for administrative convenience or any other reason. I understand the point made by the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea). There is an argument that, on purely administrative grounds, one form of identification is better than six or seven. Another argument to be made is that six or seven forms of identification provide a degree of convenience. But those are not the issues before the House in relation to the new clause. This is emergency legislation, so security should be paramount.

As the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) said, we debated this matter in Committee. The original clause was withdrawn and was reproduced as clause 1. I suspect that, following the debate in Committee, new clause 1A was added to address the issue.

Mr. Trimble *indicated assent.*

Dr. Mawhinney: I see that the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) nods in agreement. I do not believe that he sought to mislead the Committee, although I understand why the hon. Member for Leicester, South said so. The hon. Member for Upper Bann quoted what I said in Committee to support his argument, but in Committee he made it clear that he is much too good a lawyer not to expect other hon. Members to quote different parts of my speeches in Committee to counter his argument. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Leicester, South for doing so and for saving me the trouble.

I repeat what I said in Committee: the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the armed forces already have considerable powers to examine and establish people's identities. There is no evidence that the RUC experience any major problems in establishing people's identities. This point was made in Committee by the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady), and it remains as true now as it was then.

I am told that it would be technically feasible to produce an identity card and even one that would be difficult to forge, although there would be no guarantee that it would be impossible to forge. However, even if such a card were produced, all it would show was that it had been issued by the appropriate authority. It would not necessarily identify the individual who was holding it. It would not prove, for example, that the card had not been fraudulently applied for, or that the information on it was accurate. Accordingly, a sophisticated screening system would be necessary to prevent fraudulent applications.

7 pm

Given the scope for abuse with postal applications, a system of personal applications would probably be necessary. The population at which an identity card system would be particularly targeted—terrorists and their supporters—represents considerably less than 1 per cent. of the total population. Whether certain persons fall into this category would not be known to the issuing authority, and, given that consideration, the RUC would probably be the most appropriate issuing authority. However, this would present major resource difficulties for the RUC, and there would also be security reasons for not allowing too much public access to police buildings.

When the hon. Member for South Down raised some of the practical difficulties, most people could identify with them, whether or not they found them compelling. However, there are even more fundamental difficulties associated with such a scheme in the context of Northern Ireland that the House must bear in mind.

A number of right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the argument have asked what would happen to those wishing to come to Northern Ireland who were not normally resident in the Province. The hon. Member for Upper Bann has tried to solve that problem, but the new clause does not answer some of the fundamental difficulties associated with it.

It is all very well saying that people from the Republic or from Great Britain could get an identity card before coming, but where would they get it, from whom and on the basis of what information? How would that information be checked so that we could be sure that it was accurate?

There are serious problems at the heart of the issue. If that of dealing with people living outside Northern Ireland is put in the context of the United Kingdom, as it might be, some of the difficulties would be lessened, as they would be if it were put in the EC context, but that is not the issue before the House. We are dealing with these two clauses, which relate just to Northern Ireland.

I have a great deal of sympathy with the argument that such a scheme is likely to be a deterrent not only to visitors but to those who have an investment commitment to the Province. Ministers and hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies spend a lot of time out and about around the world singing the praises of Northern Ireland—its beauty, its hospitality, the generosity of its people to visitors and the advantage of investing there for the creation of jobs. It does not make sense then to introduce regulations which have no compelling security argument behind them but which would be detrimental to that process.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Upper Bann for his consistency. He said in Committee that he was not impressed by the civil libertarian argument against identity cards, and he repeated that this evening. Nevertheless, such arguments exist, and they are compelling for some people.

Rev. William McCrea: When the Minister says that there is no security argument for such a system, is he speaking with the authority of the Police Federation or in his capacity as the responsible Minister?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Member must have seen me turn to address the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) to answer that point. I accept what the hon. Gentleman said about hearing police officers on television or personally saying that they are in favour of such a system. I do not question what he has told the House. He will want to know that the RUC were consulted on this subject, at senior level, during a major security review in 1988 and they said that they were not in favour of an identification card scheme—for two reasons. First, they did not believe that such a system was necessary; secondly, they said that there would be formidable problems in administering an effective scheme. I hope that that answers the hon. Gentleman's point. That is the best and most up-to-date information that I have.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Was that information given by the present Chief Constable or the former Chief Constable, Sir John Hermon, who was always against identity cards?

Dr. Mawhinney: The advice was given in 1988; the hon. Gentleman will be able to work out the answer to his question from that information.

We have had a good debate and aired important issues that the House should consider. However, I am not convinced that the uncertain advantages of a compulsory identity card system outweigh the practical difficulties and penalties associated with it, or that the security arguments are compelling in the Northern Ireland context. Therefore, I hope that the hon. Member for Upper Bann will follow

[Dr. Mawhinney]

the good precedent that he set in Committee and not push the new clause to a vote. If he does so, I must ask the House to resist it.

Mr. Trimble: As the Minister said, we have had a good debate. It was much longer than the debate we had in Committee, and a wider range of views have been expressed. One of the advantages of the debate is that we have now had a longer and more considered response from the Opposition. In Committee, the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) limited himself to two interventions.

I am sure that the hon. Member will understand when I say that I must take exception to his suggestion that I intended to, or did, mislead the House. No one could reasonably hold that view. I quoted precisely the words that the Minister used in Committee. The limited and tentative nature of his support for an identity card system was clear from the words that he used and, after quoting those words, I went on to disagree with them in some respects. No one could have been misled then, but if they were, I hope that I have made it clear now.

The burden of the observations of the hon. Member for Leicester, South and the Minister was that the security forces do not want an identity card system. I am not privy to the advice given by some senior officers in the RUC in 1988 but, like the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), I have often heard members of the security forces refer to this system. I believe that the Northern Ireland Police Federation, like the Police Federation of England and Wales, as evidenced by the article that was coincidentally published this week, is in favour of it.

It is a constant wonder to those of us who represent constituencies in Northern Ireland how advice from senior levels of the RUC so often seems to contradict our experience and what we hear at almost all other levels of the RUC from those people to whom we speak when we come across them. Those views never seem to be expressed by people speaking to us. We could all benefit from such experiences.

The Minister of State said that this was a debate on Northern Ireland emergency provisions, not a debate on the United Kingdom or Europe. He was right to say that, strictly, some of these matters are not relevant, but such a narrow approach is not altogether realistic. Issues overlap, and form part of the background. I appreciate that there would be difficulties in operating this scheme on a purely Northern Ireland basis, but I am convinced that, even on that limited basis, there would be advantages, and that we must explore these matters further.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) was worried about tampering with identity cards, and he referred to smart cards. Last year, the Home Affairs Select Committee argued in its seventh report for smart cards. I hope that the hon. Gentleman noticed that I did not argue for them. Cards could be tampered with. The system could be broken into and be open to abuse. I am not an expert and am prepared to be guided by those who are experts in this matter, but it may be safer to have a simpler card that relates to information held in security force data banks.

The new clause does not attempt to deal with all the points of detail. It is an authorising, empowering provision, which leaves it open to the Secretary of State to make regulations. We would expect regulations to deal with many of the points made in the debate, particularly some of the Minister's.

Several hon. Members referred to the difficulties that would arise for visitors, and I agree that they would arise. I do not think that they can be avoided if security measures are to be taken. Significant numbers of people move back and forth between Northern Ireland and other places. At certain times of the year when thousands of people travel, hon. Members are occasionally caught up in huge queues at Heathrow, but the people involved travel year in and year out; they would need to get an identity card only once, or they could use other identity documents, if that were provided for by regulations. The problems could be overcome.

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) raised some interesting points which got him into some difficulty with hon. Members, especially when he said that it was strange that such an argument should come from our Benches, because it suggested that we wanted to create second-class citizens. He was not being integrationist; he was using the words ironically. I am sure that he appreciates the danger of irony because it often backfires; he will learn from that experience.

The hon. Member for South Down asked about the age from which people would carry identity cards. I am not old enough to remember it personally, but I believe that identity cards were carried by the entire population during the war. That answers his point.

The hon. Gentleman asked what the penalties would be. They would be a matter for the regulations. We have referred in previous debates to European precedents. In France, citizens are arrested if they cannot produce an identity card and are given four hours to find it. In Spain, people are given time to produce their card on request. Similar arrangements exist in Germany. A range of procedures could be followed, but I suspect that the suggestion by my hon. Friend the Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) would be the simplest procedure.

The hon. Member for South Down complained about my suggestion that the identity cards could be used in connection with information held in security force data banks and was worried about what that might lead to. This week, an article in *Police* states:

"In Denmark . . . they record data from the cards onto computers. This information includes health service numbers, criminal records and even the number of a library ticket."

That procedure does not seem to have worried the Danes. We should bear that information in mind when objections are made on a civil liberties or human rights basis.

The hon. Member for South Down referred to a practice which I mentioned earlier, whereby identity cards are logged on security force computers and tagged by reference to their owners' perceived activities. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the difficulties that people face when buying second-hand cars. He will realise that an identity card system would remove those difficulties, because the information would be tagged by reference to the identity card rather than the vehicle. I trust that there will not be a market in second-hand identity cards.

7.15 pm

Mr. McGrady: The hon. Member obviously did not pick up my point correctly. I said that, as many members of the security forces are on short-term duties in Northern

Ireland, presentation of an identity card by, for example, me would assist them in determining whether I was a terrorist or suspected terrorist. That could happen only if that card were accompanied by computerised data about which I knew nothing but which showed whether I was such a person. If that information is not attached, the card is just a piece of plastic which is entirely useless for security purposes.

Mr. Trimble: That is what I said in introducing the new clause—that there should be a link between an identity card and a computer database. That system exists. The hon. Gentleman talked earlier about the difficulties that some card owners would face. My point is that they would not get into difficulties if there were an identity card system.

Mr. McGrady: I would not know what information was held about me.

Mr. Trimble: The hon. Gentleman has repeated his concern about not knowing what data were held on him. I do not know what data are held on me.

Mr. McGrady: The hon. Member should know.

Mr. Trimble: People in Northern Ireland do not know what data are held on them. I am not sure that we should know. I am not sure that I want to know. By a roundabout route, I once discovered information held on security force files about me that was utterly wrong, but I thought that it was quite a joke. That would make an interesting story which I will not repeat. Anyone who wants to find out the whole story can see me outside.

Mr. McGrady: On a point of information, let me explain what has happened in other circumstances. Some of my constituents have lost their jobs because of incorrect data held by the security forces. On only one occasion was I successful in getting an accusation rebutted and the person involved restored to his job. One has no control over the data. If that is acceptable to the hon. Member, democracy is down the drain.

Mr. Trimble: We could pursue that matter at some length. There are several unknowns. One cannot assume that the information is always incorrect. We appreciate that there is a serious risk in Northern Ireland and that serious measures must be taken in response, just as they have been and will continue to be taken. Occasionally, inconveniences fall on innocent people. We expect people in the community to support the need for these measures and to accept inconveniences where they arise. That is necessary and it applies in respect of identity cards as well.

I was encouraged by some support during the debate, particularly by the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), who expressed his support, just as he did in Committee, although he supported cards on a United Kingdom basis. Perhaps such a system will end the anomalies that may arise by operating on a Northern Ireland basis only.

The hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) also supported an identity card system, although on a United Kingdom basis. I can think of no better way of concluding than by quoting the hon. Gentleman's exact words, and I hope that I do not mislead the House by doing so. The hon. Member said:

"I see no reason why an identity card should not be used throughout the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland. I firmly believe that the only people who would object are cranks and those who are up to no good—the latter are the very people we want to trace quickly and bring to justice". —[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 31 January 1991; c. 325.]

That sums up the matter in a nutshell.

In view of the wide-ranging discussion we have had on this matter, my hon. Friends and I are confident that this cause will continue to progress. We believe that there is significant support for an identity card system, and we are encouraged that we are winning the argument on this matter. Consequently, I do not intend to press the motion to a Division but will seek to withdraw it, as I did in Committee. I am sorry if I have disappointed hon. Members who sought otherwise.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Hon. Members: No.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time.

The House proceeded to a Division; but no Member being willing to act as Teller for the Ayes, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Noes had it.*

New Clause 2

MISCARRIAGES OF JUSTICE

'If the Attorney General for Northern Ireland is of the opinion that a conviction may be unsatisfactory or unsafe in the light of relevant evidence which was not available to the court at the time of conviction and at the time of any subsequent upholding of the conviction, he shall refer the case to the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal for further consideration.':—*[Mr. McNamara.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. McNamara: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The purpose of the new clause is to uncover Government thinking on miscarriages of justice in Northern Ireland. We are also thinking of the consideration that the Secretary of State is giving to the case of the Ulster Defence Regiment Four, otherwise known as the Armagh Four. The new clause also deals with possible mechanisms that could be introduced to deal with suspected failures of justice.

The report of Sir John May on the implications of the Guildford Four case for the criminal justice system in England and Wales will soon be submitted. The conclusions that Sir John reaches, having examined all the factors involved, must be tackled by Northern Ireland Ministers. The new clause seeks to explore Government thinking on that and it gives hon. Members who wish to do so the opportunity to raise issues that they believe to be relevant to the case of the UDR Four.

We do not make any pretence that the new clause represents the best or the only way in which to tackle problems of miscarriages of justice in Northern Ireland. We do not intend to suggest that such miscarriages of justice are excessively frequent in Northern Ireland. Fortunately, the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland has a good reputation, particularly on the supergrass trials. There is only one case that has gone to that court that has aroused great emotion and confusion in the community —that of the Armagh Four.

There is a need to consider ways in which such miscarriages of justice can be resolved, especially given the sensitive nature of public confidence in the administration

[Mr. McNamara]

of justice in Northern Ireland. That is a fragile commodity and there is a paramount need for an effective, corrective mechanism in Northern Ireland.

The present law is embodied in section 14 of the Criminal Appeal (Northern Ireland) Order 1980, which gives the Secretary of State discretionary power to refer a case to the Court of Appeal when he believes that some new evidence or factor not available at the time of the trial has come to light. It is on the basis of that particular power that the Secretary of State is now considering the fresh material submitted by hon. Members representing Northern Ireland in the case of the UDR Four.

Our solution to the problem is to take away the Secretary of State's present role when considering possible miscarriages of justice. It is hard for the ordinary citizen to distinguish between the semi-judicial and political roles of the Attorney-General, but it is infinitely more difficult for people to distinguish between the high profile political role adopted by the Secretary of State and his quasi-judicial one when he discusses evidence before him. We believe that the Attorney-General, in his capacity as Law Officer, would be more suitable than the Secretary of State to handle such cases. It might be thought that the Secretary of State has responded to particular political pressures in certain cases.

The case of the Armagh Four is happily the only major case of possible miscarriage of justice in Northern Ireland. On this island, however, we have had the cases of the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six and the Maguire family. The Armagh Four are four members of the UDR who are contesting their convictions for murder. It is not for me to declare their guilt or innocence, but the Secretary of State will know of my concern from correspondence that I had with his predecessor. Members of the families of some of those convicted have approached me and I am aware of the unease felt not only in Northern Ireland but in the rest of the United Kingdom about the safety of the convictions.

Obviously, the interests of justice and public confidence in the criminal legal system demand that the evidence collected by the supporters of the Armagh Four, some of whom may speak later in the debate, should be scrutinised by the Court of Appeal as quickly as possible. We hope that the Government will introduce a long-term mechanism that will obviate the need for my previous remarks, and prevent the need for such long-drawn-out campaigns by many people in Northern Ireland, including the hon. Members for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) and for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis).

7.30 pm

The interests of justice demand a self-correcting mechanism in the criminal legal system which will remove the need for outside pressure. A booklet has been produced by campaigners who support the case for the retrial of the UDR Four. Point 8 in the introduction makes an interesting and valid comment on which I should like the Minister of State to comment. The compilers of the dossier say:

"We contend that the referral of this case to the Court of Appeal will have been brought to the point of inevitability by the contents of this dossier."

That is a matter for judgment, but it is the opinion of the people who prepared the dossier, which continues:

"However, the Secretary of State might also like to consider whether or not it would be more appropriate that there be a police inquiry by another force . . . such as preceded the resolution of the Guildford case. More particularly, not that an investigation has commenced, the scope and remit must be widened and the legal representatives of the men should be given access to all the relevant material."

That is important and it is necessary for it to be carried out.

The May report will no doubt contain many important recommendations, but it is not for us to guess what they will be. It is important carefully to consider the need for an independent forensic service in Northern Ireland and Great Britain. That has been shown by the English cases, and the need has also been shown by what is happening, or may have happened, in Northern Ireland.

Cases such as that of the Armagh Four always arouse great emotions. In a contentious situation the attitude of the Secretary of State or any other Minister is bound to create controversy on both sides of the community. It is vital that both sides of the community have absolute confidence in the administration of justice. Taking away decisions that have to be made by the Secretary of State because of the existing law and putting them in the hands of the Attorney-General or into some other mechanism, if one can be found—we are not bound by the details of our proposal—would make a judicial decision less politically flawed. Already, too many decisions in Northern Ireland have caused grave questions to be asked not about the judges, but about Ministers.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am grateful to the Opposition for the new clause because it enables us to debate a case that is vital to the interests of everyone in Northern Ireland. I approached the Secretary of State about this matter and he graciously responded and said that he certainly would be prepared to consider any evidence that we would prepare and put to him. I and my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson), who will seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were appointed by our party to consider the preparation of a dossier. The remit was widened and a committee of all interested parties was set up and prepared the dossier from which the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) has quoted.

The Secretary of State has received that document and has assured me and my colleague, the leader of the Official Unionist party, the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), that he is giving it careful attention. The Secretary of State has a quasi-judicial role in this matter. I urge on him the necessity of a speedy decision because at the end of the day his decision is really a referral to a court which will decide whether there is a case to be answered and whether the weight of the new evidence is such that it would be unsafe to uphold the verdict of a previous court.

I am convinced that the weight of the new evidence and some of the facts that have come to light cast considerable suspicion and a shadow upon certain witnesses upon whose word the judge largely depended in his summing up. The statements of those witnesses have been challenged and seem to be seriously flawed.

I am alarmed by a matter that was brought to light by Mrs. Mairead Maguire, who was better known to many of us as Mairead Corrigan during the high days of the peace movement in Northern Ireland. Mrs. Maguire has been looking at the case of the UDR Four and at the part played by two well-known Roman Catholic priests, Father

Faul and Father Murray. In a letter Mrs. Maguire says that she accepts what the dossier states about her role in this matter. There is no challenge to what is contained in the dossier.

Mrs. Maguire said that the two priests had collected certain evidence against the UDR in this case but that they would not give it to the Royal Ulster Constabulary until they had undertakings from the Chief Constable and higher authority. Those undertakings were:

"1. That an entire UDR patrol, operating in the North of the city, should be arrested by Police Officers from another locality.

2. That the UDR soldiers should be taken to a holding centre other than Gough Barracks, namely, Castlereagh.

3. Interrogating Officers should be of Senior Rank and again the majority of these officers, preferably completely unknown to any of the Soldiers."

Until those undertakings were given and carried out, the priests were not prepared to present the evidence that they had collected.

It is troubling to know that certain people can go to the authorities and ask for something to be done before they are prepared to bring forward evidence. I am alarmed at the fact that it has been established beyond doubt that when RUC officers and members of the Ulster Defence Regiment are brought before a court on charges relating to violence or terrorist crimes, the authorities go the double mile to make the defence case difficult to present. In prison, they even lose the facilities that are given to members of the IRA and other organisations. In case after case, I have had great difficulty obtaining even the elementary parole that was due to some police officers. I have raised that matter before and I find it difficult to understand.

I agree with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North that all classes in Northern Ireland should feel that they have recourse to justice and that justice will not only be seen to be done but will eventually be done. Whoever it is, that should be established in their mind. But when I talk to the families of police officers and members of the UDR who have been charged with such crimes, it is apparent that even in prison their membership of the security forces is held against them, and that is not right. I trust that the Secretary of State will take that on board this evening.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for tabling the new clause, but he knows that I do not agree with it. I do not want the Attorney-General to have this power because if he did we would not be having a debate such as this. All sorts of judicial barriers would be put up and Mr. Speaker would be telling us that we should proceed in accordance with the motion and it is unlikely that I would be able to table such a motion so there would be no opportunity to discuss such a matter. Therefore, I am arguing tonight that the Secretary of State should retain and exercise the power.

I come to the authority upon which the judge seemed to rest when he gave his verdict—witness A. I am sure that all hon. Members will be amazed to hear something of what happened to witness A. Witness A had some terrible things to say when she appeared on Radio Telefis Eireann about how she found herself having to give evidence against the UDR men. There is also a typescript of a telephone conversation between witness A and Mr. Hegan. In that, she states clearly that the two officers who were interrogating her said that

"they were bad boys and that no judge in the land would ever let them out. He said that if they get out and they kill someone, he says, it will be your fault for letting them out . . . because they'll murder all round them. I said I didn't believe they done it. He said 'They done it all right'. So what d'you want me to . . . what do you expect me to believe?"

We cannot try anyone in the House, nor can anyone be tried on television, but when a question mark is placed over evidence given on oath on which the judge largely relied, and said that he did, there must be an inquiry. I urge the Secretary of State to do his level best to bring his inquiries to a speedy conclusion. As I have said, he is not passing a verdict——

Rev. William McCrea: Does my hon. Friend agree that what the UDR Four request and desire is that justice now be done and be seen to be done in their case?

Rev. Ian Paisley: Yes. That is why I say that the Secretary of State is not asked to give a verdict; he is asked to say that the court should have another look at the evidence. We are asking the Secretary of State for a referral.

7.45 pm

I am also worried about the electrostatic data analysis reports from the police. I do not know why those have not been made available. I have talked to the Chief Constable about the matter. The fact that he has set up an inquiry into the matter arouses suspicion. If he feels that he has to appoint a high ranking officer to investigate the ESDA reports, there must be something to investigate. Those reports need to be made public. Certainly the lawyers for those four young men should have them. I urge the Secretary of State to come to a speedy conclusion on the matter.

As I have said in an early-day motion, this matter affects a wide range of people in Northern Ireland. It casts its shadow across the Province. If some members of the police force have acted wrongly and illegally, they must be brought to justice and dealt with. There cannot be and must not be any cover-up. After all, those four young men put their own lives at risk by joining the UDR. They could have had their lives taken from them; they could have been shot by the IRA if they had continued to serve in the regiment.

Bearing in mind that the four were members of the UDR, a regiment of the British Army set up by the House, and bearing in mind what the people who are not sympathetic to the Loyalist position have been saying—I salute them because they are prepared to face up to the matter—it is imperative that the Secretary of State refer the matter to the court as quickly as possible. I make that personal plea tonight with all the passion of my heart, having known the young men and their families for years and having known what they have gone through. Then the court can give them a proper trial and the allegations in the dossier can be tested in a court of law. The people against whom they have been made will have the opportunity to rebut them if they are able to do so. No man should be seen as guilty before he is proved guilty.

There are many other matters in the dossier that I could read to the House, but I will not do so. Through the extracts that I have read, I have tried to show just how serious the matter is. I urge the Secretary of State tonight to give some hope to the four young men and to their families that the country that they have sought to serve so faithfully and well is prepared to give them the right that every British citizen should have—the right to British justice.

Mr. William Ross: New clause 2 is entitled "Miscarriages of Justice". I am grateful to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and to his hon. Friends for giving the House an opportunity to debate the unfortunate consequences of such incidents.

Given human nature, there is always a chance that something will go wrong with the legal process. When miscarriages of justice occur, they are blots not only on the police, as the investigating officers, but on the the defence and prosecution solicitors and barristers, the judiciary, and the community in general. We have every right to feel deeply concerned when miscarriages occur, and we should do all that we can to make amends.

I was once involved in a case in which an individual admitted to murder when questioned by the police, pleaded guilty to murder—it was a particularly vile murder at a farmhouse—and was given a long sentence. As a constituent of mine, he subsequently wrote to me. Like most Members of Parliament who are contacted by prisoners, at first I wondered whether he was not just another of the innocent men of which prisons seem to be full whenever one speaks to their inmates. That prisoner also wrote to Mr. Douglas, who represented a Londonderry constituency at Stormont—and as the murdered man was a neighbour of his, both Mr. Douglas and myself started our own investigations.

Mr. Douglas visited the farmyard where the murder took place. By then, we both had a good idea of the contents of the convicted man's statements. We discovered that he had described not the yard in which the murder had actually been committed, but one a mile or so down the road. We were left in an extremely difficult situation. Mr. Douglas and I went to see the right hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott), who was then a Northern Ireland Minister. If the Secretary of State cares to talk to the right hon. Member for Chelsea, I am sure that he will recall this clearly. We put our views to that Minister, having discussed the case at considerable length with the police. Eventually, the right hon. Member for Chelsea, the police, and ourselves were thoroughly convinced that something was wrong, but we were in some dilemma as to what could be done.

The matter was eventually resolved when another individual made a statement to the police indicating that he had driven the car that had taken a group of robbers to the farmhouse where the murder had taken place. Unfortunately, for my constituent still in prison, that witness subsequently committed suicide. We found ourselves in an even more difficult situation. We were in possession of a confession from a dead man, another man was in prison, and there was evidence that seemed to cast a deep shadow of doubt over the safeness of the conviction.

As it happened, my constituent was released some months later. Nevertheless, that experience brought home to me the necessity of collaborative evidence. It is well known that whenever a murder occurs—the more vile its nature, the more likely this is to happen—there is a queue of people waiting to claim the credit for it. That happened even when the death penalty was still in force.

Police questioning techniques have moved on, and the police can play on the psychology of the suspect and exert considerable pressure. There is a danger that people admit to crimes that they did not commit, which is why we need more than a signed confession. When the innocent are convicted, or convict themselves, the unfortunate consequence is that the guilty escape due retribution for their wicked deeds. The case that I described makes me view with somewhat less jaundiced eyes those individuals who, having been convicted, then claim that they are not guilty. I begin to wonder whether they are not further examples of the type of case in which I was involved.

I know nothing of the Birmingham Six, the Guildford Four, or the Maguire family, because they have little to do with Londonderry, East. Nor have I concerned myself with the case of the UDR Four, to which a large part of the debate has been devoted, because they were from the constituency of a late colleague, Mr. Harold McCusker. I well remember his reaction whenever a member of the Ulster Defence Regiment was charged with murder. He was exceedingly angry that the regiment was once again being besmirched.

When Harold McCusker first talked to the UDR Four, he was a very troubled man—and he was not a fool, as those right hon. and hon. Members who knew him can testify. He undertook extensive investigations, and I understand that his wife is still associated with the committee involved with the UDR Four. The more he examined the facts, the more convinced he became of the innocence of those individuals and that there had been a grave miscarriage of justice.

I have not been personally involved, but since Harold's death, other hon. Members have taken an interest in that case—not least the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson), party leaders, and the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis), who has reported fully to the members of his party. Having myself heard the results of investigations, I have grown more and more concerned. The powerful case being made for the UDR Four should be fully investigated, and a completely fresh look should be taken at what appears to be a most dreadful miscarriage of justice, with four soldiers serving life sentences for murder.

Complaints are sometimes made about the fragility of justice in Northern Ireland. However, in the face of the most dreadful provocation and difficulties, it has proved far more robust than in England—to judge from the number of people apparently being found not guilty after serving many years in prison.

Frankly, I am not one of those to call for speedy decisions, in the light of my experience in investigating one such case. I want careful and deep consideration to be given to this matter, and not a precipitate announcement. I want the matter to be thoroughly investigated and I want the truth to come out for the good of all concerned, because that is the safest and the wisest way to proceed.

In all four cases with which we have been concerned —three in England and one in Northern Ireland—where people have been tried and convicted, it would appear that in England the police reached quick decisions and acted upon them, that people were convicted and that on every occasion the guilty have escaped.

8 pm

Certain questions follow on from that regarding police activities after the trials were over and convictions had been handed down. Did the police consider that their work was done in each of those cases? Did they stop asking questions? Did they close the files? Did they forget about the 21 people who died in a Birmingham pub? Did they forget about all the folk who died as a result of the alleged

activities of the other accused? If so, people are walking around who committed those murders and who have got away with them because the police did not do their jobs properly and because, frankly, the courts and the lawyers did not do their jobs properly. That is a real blot on the legal system in this country, and it must be tackled and corrected because the people of this country cannot afford to lose faith in the judicial system or in the capacity of the police—whether the RUC in Northern Ireland or any of the police forces in England—to carry out efficient, in-depth investigations that enable them to lay their hands on the guilty, rather than condemn the innocent. It is a serious matter, which will not go away.

We are grateful to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North and to his hon. Friends for tabling the new clause. Our discussions have perhaps wandered rather far from the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill but this matter had to be aired in the House, and aired rather bluntly.

I have investigated one such case in my constituency. The individual concerned was eventually released on licence. In the light of all that has happened since, I wonder whether that decision should not also be reconsidered and a fresh trial granted to that man, who has now been free for some years. The fact that he is still under licence is not a satisfactory outcome for him.

If the four Ulster Defence Regiment men, or any of the other people mentioned, were to be released on licence, the blot would remain. That blot must be removed if they are innocent; and if they are not, proof of the guilt should be put beyond any reasonable doubt.

There is more to say, but I think that all the necessary things have been said about these cases many times over. I should prefer the matter to remain with the Secretary of State for a decision rather than going to the Attorney-General. I find it easier to talk to another politician than to a legal man. No matter how much I may disagree with the politician, at least we can keep on hammering at him, time after time, in this place. That is a good reason to let the matter rest with the Secretary of State for a decision, and that is the only quibble that I have with the new clause.

I hope that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North will carry the provisions of the new clause into effect. In his opening remarks he said that the reason for the new clause was to explore the Government's mind. The hon. Member may rest assured of one thing—he has put his view, hon. Members representing Northern Ireland have put their views, and we now wait with interest to find out what the mind of the Government is.

Mr. Peter Robinson: I should like to add my voice to those who have thanked the shadow Secretary of State for tabling this new clause, which has given us an opportunity to speak on an issue of some considerable importance to people in Northern Ireland, none more so than the four men who have been imprisoned for the past seven years as a result of a miscarriage of justice.

At least in its more candid moments, the House will recognise that miscarriages of justice occur. Happily, however infrequently that may happen, this is not a perfect world. From time to time, either people who enforce law and order in Northern Ireland or members of the judiciary in Northern Ireland make mistakes. It is quite clear that one such mistake was the conviction of four men arising out of the murder of Adrian Carroll on 8 November 1983. Four of the six men who appeared before the court were convicted—all were members of an Ulster Defence Regiment patrol. The men were charged with murder and the basis of the Crown case against them was that together, and with others, they had conspired to murder a well-known republican, Adrian Carroll, and that they had done so in a premeditated fashion.

The Crown described the way in which they had carried out the murder. To support its contention, it had signed statements from five of the men before the court and a statement from a witness, known as Mrs. A. The Crown had another and, in my view, more important witness—indeed, the only witness who was able to give evidence that she saw the gunman. She was the only eye-witness to the killing of Adrian Carroll. She was brought by the Crown to the court and was never broken down during cross-examination or by evidence in chief. She testified that the gunman she saw on the day of the killing was smaller than she was—she is 5 ft 4 in—and that he was not the person charged with murder, Neil Latimer. That was the evidence given by the Crown's eye-witness.

The eye-witness to the event had clearly testified that, not only was the person in court and arraigned as being the gunman not the gunman; it was someone considerably smaller. Neil Latimer is 5 ft 10 in and the estimated height of the gunman is 5 ft 2 in. There were a number of other witnesses to a pattern of events on the day of the killing which was considerably different from the pattern suggested by the Crown. Mrs. A, who was not at the scene of the crime, identified Neil Latimer close to Armagh on that day in dress similar to that which Elaine Faulkner, the single eye-witness, had said that the gunman was wearing. That produced a link for the Crown between the evidence of witness A, who said that she had seen Neil Latimer, and the events that took place in Abbey street in Armagh.

To all intents and purposes, the signed statements of the men in question led to their convictions. As I said, more than four men appeared before the court, but the case against one man was thrown out precisely because the court recognised that undue pressure had been applied to him under interrogation. It recognised that the police had behaved in a way in which they were not entitled to behave to secure a signed confession from the man. The same judge could not, however, accept that the same pressure could have been applied to the four other men before him, or that their signed statements could have resulted from physical or mental torture by the RUC.

The four men gave evidence to the effect that they had not signed their statements willingly, and that the statements had not been written by them but had been concocted by others. The most important evidence against the four was represented by those signed statements of admission, which suggested a pattern of events that fitted the evidence of witness A.

As the two pillars of the case against the four were their signed statements and the evidence of witness A, the judge, in finding the four soldiers guilty, was disregarding the evidence of the one eye-witness who had testified that the accused was not the gunman, the evidence of the Archbishop's gardener, who had seen the gunman depart in a different direction from that mentioned in the Crown case, the evidence of a police patrol who had been on the road by which, according to the Crown case, the gunman had left, but had not seen him, the evidence of a resident of Abbey street who said that the man who had shot Adrian Carroll had left by a different route from that described by the Crown, and the evidence of other

[Mr. Peter Robinson]

members of the UDR who had been in the same patrol as the four men. If the four were guilty, they were not guilty alone; nine other guilty men are outside prison. The Crown case was that the entire patrol was involved in the murder. I should add that the judge also went against the evidence of the four men.

Since the appeal, much new evidence has come to light. Like the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), I live some distance from the constituency, and I felt that the matter did not directly involve me. No one from the constituency had come to see me. Some years later, however, I met the mother of one of the four men by chance at a wedding. She told me, "My son is serving a life sentence in prison for a crime of which he is not guilty."

I confess that at the time I thought, "Well, she would say that, wouldn't she?". Naturally a mother would find it hard to believe that her son might be guilty of murder. The lady—Christian lady that she was—said that she would send me some papers to try to convince me. Of course, I expressed willingness to read any papers that she sent. I was rather surprised when, about a week later, the papers arrived. She had sent me the judgment of the Court of Appeal. It struck me as strange that someone who was trying to convince me of her son's innocence should send me the judgment that had convicted him rather than, for instance, her counsel's summation of the case in his defence.

I read the judgment. On five or six occasions, the Lord Chief Justice had had to consider whether to take the side of the Crown or that of the defence in order to settle a matter of contention. Each time, he had come down in favour of the Crown. Whenever there was doubt, he gave the Crown the benefit of the doubt. I had always thought that the benefit of the doubt should be given to the accused, especially in murder cases, in which sentences of life imprisonment can be imposed.

8.15 pm

After reading that lengthy judgment, my initial scepticism diminished. I was no longer sure that the conviction was safe. I could not and did not say at that stage, either publicly or privately, that I believed the men to be innocent, but I asked the lady to send me more documentation—a request that I regretted somewhat on the arrival of a 4ft-high pile of transcripts of both the original trial and the appeal.

As I waded through those papers, I became convinced beyond doubt that the conviction was insecure. The more I read, the more doubt I felt. I met the families of the convicted men. At that time, the only campaign for their release was the one promoted by their families. They had no new evidence then, apart from a transcript of what had been said by witness A on an RTE programme. That transcript had been given to the Secretary of State's predecessor, who had judged that it did not amount to new evidence that would justify the referral of the case to the Court of Appeal with a recommendation for a retrial.

My hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) was, however, promised that, if we provided a dossier of new evidence, the Secretary of State would consider it carefully. About 18 months ago, we set about putting the dossier together. We suspected then that it might take us two or three weeks, but the more that we delved into the case, the more doubt entered our minds, the more queries were raised and the more new evidence was unearthed.

At that point, the two props that had held up the prosecution case in court were pulled away. There can be only two ways of drawing the statements signed by the two men into question, both of which are forensic. The most direct is a test known as syntax analysis—a linguistic test involving the examination of the formation of words and sentences, from which it aims to determine whether the words and sentences used in the text in question could have been uttered or written by its supposed author. The authority on that test is Professor Andrew Morton, of Edinburgh university. He has considerable expertise, and has been employed in cases elsewhere in the United Kingdom, as well as in the United States and Australia. He has written many books about his work, which is considered completely accurate.

Professor Morton was given copies of letters written by the four UDR members, and their so-called statements of admission. When he compared the two, he reached a definite conclusion and when I spoke to him on the telephone, he described his findings plainly. I approached the subject almost sideways. I did not want to imply an answer in the terms in which I put my question; I made it clear that I wanted his view. I asked him whether any concern arose from his study of the letters and the statements of admission. He replied:

"There is cause for more than concern, there is cause for alarm. They"—

the confessions—

"are quite unsatisfactory. Not one of them is a genuine confession of the accused."

That man has considerable experience in the subject. He studied each of the confessions and determined that not one of them was genuine. In more detail, he suggested that the statements had been concocted by more than one person, which fits with the views expressed by the four men concerned, who said that their so-called confessions were concocted by the interviewing officers and that they were forced to sign them. Syntax analysis establishes that the so-called statements of confession were not made by the four purported authors of them.

The second way to assess the accuracy, and therefore the relevance, of signed confessions is the electrostatic data analysis technique. The legal representatives of the families of the four men asked the RUC to carry out ESDA tests on the interview notes. The Chief Constable of the RUC was given a preliminary report by the forensic science laboratory, presumably because of its concern about the results of the tests. The preliminary tests showed that a considerable number of alterations had been made.

The laboratory considered about 200 documents, and the ESDA tests showed that changes had been made to almost every page of the interview notes. In some cases, there was a multiplicity of changes in the interview notes.

The initial test results fuelled the concern of the Chief Constable who, rightly and properly, before awaiting the final document, asked one of his senior officers to carry out an investigation. He would not have ordered such an investigation because somebody had not spelt a word right, because their grammar was not right or because they got the name of a town or place wrong. Such an investigation would be ordered only if changes of some significance had been made. The Chief Constable admitted by his statement that the ESDA tests caused some concern

about the authenticity of the interview notes. The syntax and ESDA tests question the correctness of the so-called signed statements of confession, which were one of the main pillars, if not the main pillar, of the prosecution case.

As the statements were supported by the evidence of witness A, we must consider how that evidence stands up in the light of the fresh evidence. My hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North mentioned how the process began. Witness A called in two parish priests who assisted her—I use that term having considered fully the consequences of it—to put her statement into writing. During the court case, it was recognised that she signed her name on seven blank pieces of paper and that the statement was included afterwards.

As I understand it, the priests went to the local police chiefs and said, "We have evidence which implicates members of the Ulster Defence Regiment in the murder of Adrian Carroll." The natural response of the police chief to whom they spoke was, "I hope that is not true." On hearing that, the priests felt that the police were reluctant to take action against the UDR men and said, "We shall take our statement elsewhere."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North said, according to Mairead Maguire of the peace people and Mr. and Mrs. Bell, the father and mother of one of the four UDR men, Father Faul admitted to them that he went to see the Chief Constable and someone higher. I shall not abuse the rules of the House by naming that person because I have no evidence against him, but as it is an hon. Member I am being particularly cautious. They were given three undertakings before they handed over the statement: first, that the RUC would arrest a patrol of the UDR; secondly—this was a fairly understandable concession—that they would be interviewed by officers who did not know them and who were senior in rank, which is normal interrogation procedure; and, thirdly, that they would be interviewed in Castlereagh holding centre and not Gough barracks. Hon. Members are wondering why on earth Father Faul, who has castigated Castlereagh holding centre, would want the men held there rather than at Gough barracks. Presumably, he sought to get them moved further from the location in which they were known. Therefore, before the statement of evidence was given to the Chief Constable of the RUC, an undertaking had been given to arrest a patrol of the UDR.

Mr. Trimble: If the account that we have heard is correct—I believe that it is—a decision to arrest was made before the evidence was to hand. Therefore, the arrest was not only unlawful but the decision to arrest people was taken with the participation of someone higher than the Chief Constable. If it transpires that that person was an hon. Member and perhaps a Minister in the Northern Ireland Office, that was grave interference by a member of the Executive in a quasi-judicial decision, which is quite unprecedented and has grave constitutional implications that should be explored.

Mr. Robinson: The hon. Gentleman is, of course, right. That incident has given rise to wide-ranging ramifications —if Father Faul's statement is true. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said that the Secretary of State was being asked to refer the case to the Court of Appeal for retrial and to consider whether it might be appropriate for a further investigation to be carried out. That is an important point that needs to be underlined, especially given the special circumstances of this case.

8.30 pm

In relation to witness A's statement, the agreement had apparently been entered in before it was in the hands of the police or even of its Chief Constable. That would be very bad if it happened in connection with any member of the general public, but we are talking about a patrol of the British Army—about members of our security forces. The fact that an undertaking was given to arrest members of the security forces without seeing any evidence against them seems totally absurd. However, I shall not labour that point because my general point relates to the validity of the evidence of witness A.

After her statement was handed over, the RUC presumably started to question witness A and to get details from her. As my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North has said, a transcript is now available of a telephone conversation between witness A and the father of one of the four men who has been convicted. It is available in the dossier and I have the original tape. It contains several points of importance suggesting that witness A was pressurised at various stages when she was giving evidence.

In court, when the accused person to whom I referred earlier was discharged because it was felt that undue pressure had been applied to him, witness A telephoned the parents of one of the four UDR men and said, "I am unhappy at what is happening in court and I intend to retract my evidence." One can imagine the feelings in the home of the parents of that young UDR man when they were informed that the witness upon whom the prosecution was relying intended to retract her evidence. Naturally, the parents informed their legal representative who, next day, sought to have witness A recalled so that she would be in a position to retract. During that day, the court was informed that witness A was not available, but that she would be brought to court on the following Monday. The telephone transcript showed that witness A was not only available, but was ready to go to court. However, instead of being brought to the court, she was deliberately taken instead to Mahon road police station where she was pressurised not to retract, but to stand by her evidence.

According to witness A's own mouth, therefore, the police had deliberately obstructed justice from being done and the Crown counsel had unknowingly misled the court by stating that the witness was unavailable, no doubt on the basis of the information that had been received from the police. As has already been recorded in *Hansard*, the remarks were attributed to witness A because she was told that those men were murderers; that the police knew that they were murderers, and that if she did not stand by her evidence, the blood that they would shed in the future would be upon her.

If witness A is to be believed, there are serious consequences for the RUC. However, I do not believe that witness A is to be believed. It was unknown to us at the time of the trial, at the time of the appeal and until recently, but it has been established, that witness A has twice been in a mental institution for what was termed "a psychopathic personality". I am informed that her medical history notes that:

"(a) she is a danger to herself and to her children.

(b) she is . . . persecuted.

(c) she is inclined to be jealous.

(d) she is very unstable, emotionally varying from depression to aggressive tendencies . . . demanding to get out of hospital yet due to her attitudes and threats one could not allow her to do so.

(e) she is suffering from a mixed psychoneurotic reaction.

She was recorded as suffering from:—

(1) Obsessional fears or thoughts.

(2) Disturbance of behaviour and activity.

(3) Delusions and misinterpretations."

I repeat that the Crown's key witness is someone whose mental history shows that she suffers from delusions and misinterpretations.

Under the new clause, it will be the Attorney-General —at present it is the Secretary of State—who has the job of referring such cases to the Court of Appeal. Knowing what we now know about witness A's background and the evidence about the confessions, I ask the House how anyone could possibly believe that, if the judge at the trial or the judges at the appeal had had that information available to them, they would not have arrived at a different conclusion. In my view, it is a probability—at the very least, it must be a distinct possibility. Furthermore, there is other and additional new evidence. Therefore, the job of the Secretary of State, or what would be the job of the Attorney-General if we adopted the suggestion of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, is to decide whether to refer the case to the Court of Appeal so that it might consider the strengths and depths of the new evidence that is available to us.

There is no longer any need for the Secretary of State to wait for the final report from the RUC, the result of its investigations into the ESDA tests, or of the investigation into the interviewing officers who have to explain away why changes were made in the interview notes. If one sets aside the ESDA tests, there are still compelling reasons —indeed, an irresistible case—why the Secretary of State must refer that case to the Court of Appeal for a retrial. If he was to do otherwise, it would bring into discredit the whole process of law in Northern Ireland.,

I happen to believe that, simply because a mistake has been made in the judicial system or in the police system of law and order enforcement, that does not mean that the system is rotten or that it needs to be dragged down; it simply means that a mistake has been made and that it has to be put right. We damage the system more by pretending that a mistake has not occurred and that everything is all right when everybody of four years of age and upwards in Northern Ireland knows that it is not all right. If we were to suggest that our courts and our police are infallible, we might fool ourselves, but we would not fool the people of Northern Ireland or the general public anywhere else in the United Kingdom.

Mistakes can be made and a mistake has been made. I urge the Secretary of State at the earliest opportunity to send this case to the Court of Appeal. He does not have to decide the innocence or guilt of the four men—and he will be glad that he does not have that onerous responsibility —but he has a responsibility to judge whether there is sufficient new evidence or significant new factors to merit the case going before the Court of Appeal. Having heard what I have said in the past few minutes outlining a part of the new evidence, the Secretary of State has an unanswerable case for passing the detail to the Court of Appeal.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I had not intended to speak, but on reflection I felt that I should, because for some time I have been pressing at business questions for the Secretary of State or the Attorney-General to come to the House to make a statement on the case of the UDR Four. Therefore, if I do not speak now, some people may think that I am running away from the issue on the only occasion that we have been able to debate it.

I should be happier if the new clause referred to the Secretary of State rather than the Attorney-General. I welcome the understanding that the new clause has been tabled to tease out Government thinking. So long as matters are in the realm of the Secretary of State, it will be possible for hon. Members to raise them sooner or later in the Chamber. One can choose different ways of doing so. If a matter is kept strictly within the sphere of the legal fraternity, we cannot get the necessary debate and scrutiny.

I have been interested in the case since shortly after the four men were arrested and detained in custody prior to trial. The right hon. Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) will remember, if he reads the debate, that I was in correspondence with him about the trial being brought forward quickly, for two reasons. First, I still believe that justice delayed is justice denied. Secondly, I have had grave misgivings over the years about servants of the Crown being imprisoned in the same place as terrorists and ordinary criminals who know their background. Having spent a couple of day in Her Majesty's "hotel" at Crumlin road, and having been there when a young British soldier was brought in, I know the feeling of prison inmates that he should not have been there.

I pressed for the trial to be brought forward. I was convinced of the innocence of the four men. The case had been brought to my attention by the prison chaplain who asked me, at their request, to visit them. I listened carefully to their story, because I have been around long enough to realise that most people want to paint the best picture of their case. As I probed them, I was absolutely convinced that they had not been party to the crimes of which they were accused. Time elapsed before the trial. I will not go into detail on the trial, but several points lend credence to the belief that there has been a miscarriage of justice. The time has come to put it right by an open examination of the facts.

I think that it was a previous Secretary of State who suggested in a letter to a colleague that the retraction of the evidence of witness A was unimportant in so far as her evidence did not lead to the conviction but only to the police being able to extract confessions. I may be naive, but I am speaking now in tribute to my young colleague in the Northern Ireland Assembly, Edgar Graham, who was murdered by the IRA. He was one of the brightest young legal brains in the United Kingdom, and respected equally in the United States.

Sitting on the Assembly bench in Stormont, I said to Edgar, "I cannot understand how anyone would confess to a crime which he had not committed." He said, "I know what you are saying, but all I can say from my legal background is that I have seen it happen time and time

again. People can be conditioned into saying things that lead to their conviction when they have not been party to the crime."

Thereafter, I began to look afresh at the case. We have an opportunity in the Chamber to highlight a miscarriage of justice, in the opinion of many people in Northern Ireland. There should be a proper appeal procedure to examine the evidence again and to bring out a new verdict, which I believe, in the light of the information and evidence now available, will be not guilty.

Servants of the Crown have as much right as others to the protection of the legal system. If we are prepared to allow a right of appeal to others who, so far as we can see, have been improperly convicted, servants of the Crown should not be penalised simply because they were servants of the Crown and there was a reaction because it was felt that they had let the side down. That seems to be the real reason why the case has gone so far.

I support the thrust of the new clause but dissociate myself from the terminology which would put the Attorney-General in place of the Secretary of State. I hope that the Secretary of State, who has been listening carefully to the debate, will in the near future come up with the good news that he has asked the Court of Appeal to re-examine the case.

8.45 pm

Dr. Mawhinney: We have had an important debate about serious matters. The new clause is headed, "Miscarriages of justice". It is common ground that when miscarriages of justice occur that is an unhappy state of affairs. We are also united in believing, happily, that they do not happen often.

When the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) moved the new clause, he said that he was doing so in a probing fashion, explicitly to permit hon. Members who wished to do so to comment on the case of the UDR Four, as it is commonly known. He has succeeded in that purpose.

I must deal first with the new clause. As it is a probing new clause, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be satisfied with the probe and will withdraw it. If not, I will have to ask the House to reject it for two reasons. First, it is unnecessary, as it seeks to confer on the Attorney-General a power which, in substance, is already possessed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Secondly, the new clause is drafted in terms which would apply to a conviction for any criminal offence. It is in any case inappropriate for inclusion in an Act which is temporary and is concerned only with an emergency situation. The proper context within which to consider a change of the kind proposed by the hon. Gentleman is legislation on the general criminal law.

The hon. Gentleman set out the existing law. Under section 14 of the Criminal Appeal (Northern Ireland) Act 1980, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has a discretionary power to refer a case to the Court of Appeal. That power is not unique to Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman did not suggest that it is, but I think that he suggested that it is more difficult for someone in a political role to exercise that power. In accordance with the practice followed in England and Wales, and in Scotland, successive Secretaries of State have been prepared to exercise the power only when some new evidence or new consideration of substance which was not available to the trial court or at any previous appeal came to light.

The new clause seems to envisage a reference being made by the Attorney-General in almost exactly the same circumstances. The Attorney-General would refer a case when there was

"relevant evidence which was not available to the court at the time of conviction and at the time of any subsequent upholding of the conviction".

The Government's view is that a power to refer a case to the Court of Appeal because there are doubts about the justification for a conviction would more appropriately be exercised by the Secretary of State than the Attorney-General. I think that I am right to say that all hon. Members who have spoken in the debate, except the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North sustained that view. It is more appropriate to the Secretary of State, not least because the Attorney-General has responsibilities in connection with the prosecution of certain offences with which the new power might not sit comfortably. We further believe that it would make no sense for similar powers to be possessed by both the Secretary of State and the Attorney-General.

As the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) said, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been present throughout the debate. It is worth making that clear for the record. He has listened carefully, as I have, to everything that has been said on the case of the UDR Four. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) for expressing his appreciation and, I expect, that of his hon. Friends and others, of the "careful attention"—I use his phrase—which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is giving to the dossier provided to him. That was appreciated. I have also noted that he wishes the matter to be tackled as speedily as possible. That view is endorsed by other hon. Members, but I am sure that they also accept the view of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) that processing and consideration should not be so speedy that it is not exhaustive and detailed.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would not be justified in referring the case of the former UDR soldiers to the Court of Appeal unless some new and substantial evidence which was not available at the time of the trial or the appeal came to light. The dossier on the case presented to my right hon. Friend by the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson), to which much reference has been made and from which quotations have been given to the House, was handed over on 10 January this year. As the hon. Gentleman told us, it took more than a year to prepare. It is currently being given vigorous and detailed consideration. The dossier raised several issues on which the advice of the Chief Constable of the RUC has been sought.

As has been said, the RUC was already conducting an inquiry on foot of receipt of a report from the forensic science lab on the outcome of electrostatic deposition analysis tests on the original police interview notes from the interviews with the four men. The result of that inquiry by the Chief Constable will be reported to the Secretary of State and will be an integral part of his further consideration of the case.

The House will have heard the views that hon. Members have expressed about the case and the conviction with which they were expressed, but the House will also

GREAT BRITAIN HOUSE OF COMMONS PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD) 1990/1991

Published on microfiche by Chadwyck-Healey Ltd
Cambridge Place
Cambridge CB2 1NR
England

Distributed in the USA by Chadwyck-Healey Inc.
1101 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
USA

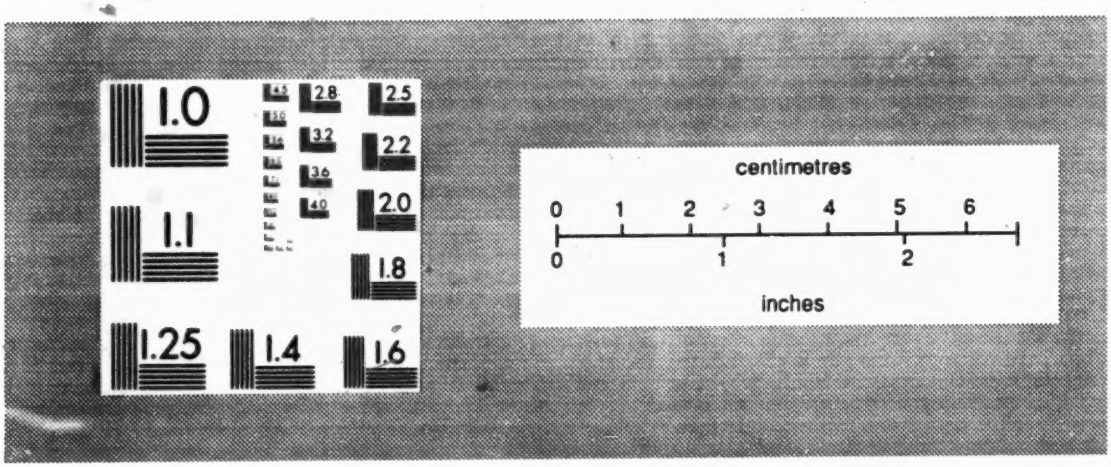
Date of publication: 1991/1992

Reproduction rights: © Parliamentary copyright 1990-91. Reproduced by permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Microfiche edition: © 1991-92 Chadwyck-Healey Ltd. The arrangement of these papers on microfiche is the copyright of Chadwyck-Healey Ltd.

Technical data: Film type: positive silver halide, archivally permanent microfiche conforming to AIIM and BSI standards.

Producing laboratory: Chadwyck-Healey Microform Publishing Services



[Dr. Mawhinney]

understand that I am in no position to comment on any of them. They reflect what is in the dossier and the dossier is being given detailed consideration as speedily as is appropriate in all the circumstances.

I hope that, on reflection, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North will feel that the debate has been worthwhile—I believe that it has—that his probe has been answered and that the views of the Government have been made clear on both the substantive motion and, as far as I am able to go at this point, on the UDR Four. I hope that he will withdraw the new clause.

Mr. McNamara: I thank hon. Members from the parties of Northern Ireland for their kind words about my hon. Friends and myself. We felt that it was important that an issue of such concern should be given an airing, particularly as hon. Members from the area have tried to raise the matter in different ways. It seemed to us that to table a new clause on the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill would give hon. Members an opportunity to make their points, however it was calculated and provided that it was selected. However, I would point out that the UDR Four were convicted of scheduled offences so the emergency powers legislation, which creates scheduled offences, is the right place to raise the matter.

I was not aware until now that the Secretary of State was so popular with the hon. Members from Northern Ireland. The wind of good will which has blown through Belfast town hall during the past few days must have affected the Chamber, too. They have shown their confidence that he is the right person to hold his position.

Mr. Molyneaux: Has it escaped the hon. Gentleman's notice that the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and I have been engaged in harmonious, civilised discussions with the Secretary of State for well over 13 months? It is to our mutual regret that we have not made more progress than we have, but that is the fault of others and not ours.

Mr. McNamara: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I am sure that everyone involved in the discussions has had a harmonious relationship with the Secretary of State. We all hope that the discussions will be carried forward to such a point that talks will take place shortly on the three points which all parties have accepted should be the basis of any talks.

But I digress. If hon. Members are prepared to accept that the Secretary of State should have the power to refer cases, they should also be aware that there are anxieties about whether matters even come before the courts and whether prosecutions are ever carried through. There was a decision not to prosecute on the Whiterock killings and on the Armagh killings, otherwise known as the shoot-to-kill killings. The attitudes of the Attorney-General and the Director of Public Prosecutions in those circumstances perhaps gave substance to the anxieties expressed by hon. Members. That may be why they preferred that the Secretary of State should have the power.

Three further points are important. I hope that the Northern Irish Members will consider them when considering other legislation which has been before the House or might come before the House in future. First, hon. Members objected to the way in which the UDR Four were originally arrested. I share their objection, but they voted to give that power to the police on Monday night when the Labour party suggested that the power to trawl should not be allowed. That power was vigorously defended by the Home Secretary.

Secondly, Northern Ireland Members are concerned about uncorroborated confessions. Opposition Members have emphasised the dangers of accepting uncorroborated confessions, whether in this part of the Kingdom or in Scotland or Northern Ireland. The hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) said that he had been concerned time and time again about what his friend the late Edgar Graham had told him about people being tricked or persuaded or pressured into making uncorroborated confessions.

In this context, I have to draw attention to amendments which were tabled but not selected by the Chair. Of course, I make no criticism of the Chair. I refer to amendments concerning cases involving scheduled offences. Despite some of the difficulties of which the police talk, interviews ought to be tape-recorded. That could be done with appropriate safeguards. Interviews could even be videoed. The essential point is that if the dossier evidence that we are asked to believe is true—evidence about the pressuring of the four soldiers; evidence about the intensity of interrogation—allegations of verbal or other ill-treatment would be revealed. Such recordings were recommended by Lord Colville. However, the Government refused to accept his recommendation and, regrettably, it did not have the full support of Northern Ireland Members.

9 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes: I should like to know whether the concern expressed by Labour Front-Bench Members who, by initiating this debate, have enabled the UDR to be discussed—the expressions of concern were picked up by Northern Ireland Members—is shared by other Back-Bench Members. I am one of those who have been in correspondence with two of the UDR Four. I have written to the Secretary of State. I think that there is wider concern than has been reflected in this debate.

Mr. McNamara: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for his observations. Miscarriages of justice should be the concern of all Members, and all such allegations must be examined very carefully.

We have had an opportunity to discuss the issue. I felt that we had a duty to the people of Northern Ireland to make sure that their feelings were ventilated. That having been done, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the new clause.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 4

ARMY OMBUDSMAN

'.—(1) There shall be established in Northern Ireland the office of ombudsman for the army.

(2)No holder of the office of ombudsman for the army shall be or have been either a member of Her Majesty's Forces or a member of any police force in the United Kingdom.

(3) The term of office of the ombudsman for the army shall be five years, renewable for a second term of five years.

(4) The ombudsman for the army shall be responsible for overseeing the investigation of complaints made to the Royal

Ulster Constabulary against members of Her Majesty's forces serving in Northern Ireland, including members of the Ulster Defence Regiment.

(5) The ombudsman for the army shall be informed of every complaint under subsection (4) above within one week of every such complaint being made.

(6) A complaint under subsection (4) above may be made directly to the ombudsman for the army, in which case the ombudsman for the army shall refer the complaint to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and subsection (5) above shall not apply.

(7) The conduct of the investigation of complaints under this section shall be the responsibility of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, acting in accordance with the statutory instrument issued under subsection (8) below.

(8) The Secretary of State shall, after consultation with the ombudsman for the army, the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the General Officer Commanding, Northern Ireland, the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights and the Committee for the Administration of Justice, issue a statutory instrument setting out the procedure for the investigations referred to in subsection (7) above.

(9) The ombudsman for the army shall publish an annual report detailing the number of complaints made in the relevant year, the nature of the complaints made, the way in which such complaints were dealt with, the outcome of each such complaint, and any other matters which may be required under the statutory instrument made under subsection (8) above.

(10) Every annual report issued under subsection (9) above shall contain an assessment of the complaints procedure in place during the year in review and shall contain any recommendations for improvement which the ombudsman for the army judges it appropriate to suggest.

(11) The Secretary of State shall make an order setting out the terms and conditions under which the office of the ombudsman for the army is to be held, subject to subsections (2) and (3) above.'.—*[Mr. Jim Marshall.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Jim Marshall: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

This new clause deals with the appointment of an ombudsman for the Army—an independent person who could deal with complaints against Army personnel in Northern Ireland. The Minister will recall that this topic was discussed at some length in Committee, but I make no apology for returning to it. In our view, it is of paramount importance that the security forces—specifically, the Army—in Northern Ireland have such a structure, so that it may be shown beyond any shadow of doubt that many of the complaints levelled against the Army are malicious and untrue. If that can be done by means of independent machinery, the Army's position will be enhanced, and the public's confidence in it will be increased, resulting in an increased flow of information to the security forces generally.

No doubt the Minister agrees that if such an appointment were made the Army would be brought formally into line with the RUC in this respect. Lord Colville devoted a large section of his latest report to the subject of complaints. He pointed out that an effective complaints procedure is essential, for at least two reasons—first, to avoid the creation of more terrorists as a result of counter-terrorist measures; secondly, to ensure that relations with the civilian population are such as to guarantee a ready flow of information to the security forces. With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I intend to quote Lord Colville's report at some length. I apologise for having to do so, but I hope that I shall not be accused of making the mistake of which I accused the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble)—making selective quotations to support a case.

Lord Colville stressed the importance of this issue. Paragraph 5.51 of his report says:

"So long as emergency laws are in force effective complaints procedures must take equal rank with training and sensitive planning, in ensuring that the operations which constitute the campaign against terrorism do not end up by alienating the civilian population."

Paragraph 5.5 states:

"The fundamental reason for trying to satisfy the public is that the security forces are there only to bring order according to the law. There is an operational reason to reinforce this".

That reinforces the point that I have already made twice. The report continued:

"the majority of crime is reported by the public, and the majority of the solutions depend on information given by the public. Assistance will come more readily from those whose contacts with the security forces are such as to encourage them."

At paragraph 5.7 the report continues:

"There is then the battle for hearts and minds. The winning of that is no one-way trade. The armed forces seek to instill confidence through sensitivity and politeness whereas it is greatly to the terrorist's advantage to mar that image."

At paragraph 5.12, Lord Colville quotes from the instructions issued by the commander land forces in 1988 on the consequences of the effective investigation of complaints. The report states:

"Effective investigation of complaints may have the following desirable consequences: (a) Justice is done and seen to be done. (b) Good order and military discipline are properly enforced and seen to be so. (c) Public confidence in the armed forces is maintained and improved. (d) False accusations are properly and, if necessary, publicly refuted, thus countering terrorist propaganda and preserving the reputation of the armed forces, individually and collectively."

Lord Colville concludes in paragraph 5.26:

"I believe it to be in the public interest, and of great potential value to the security forces as well as the community, that serious thought should now be given to devising acceptable supervisory systems".

I recognise that there are informal mechanisms for the handling of complaints—the Minister referred to some of them in Committee—but the new clause rectifies the anomaly that the police are subject to a statatory procedure while the Army is not. What I have said shows that the new clause is inspired by a suggestion made by Lord Colville—page 22 of the report, paragraph 5.25—that an ombudsman-type official could be responsible for the investigation of complaints against the Army.

In Committee the Minister gave signs of his intention to consider ways of bringing that about. He said:

"I said that we intended to return to the matter on Report, and that remains our intention. I did not undertake to return to the matter in Committee because I did not think that we would be in a position to do so, and we are not.

That answer may not give the hon. Gentleman great insight into the thinking of my colleagues in the Ministry of Defence"—

that is true—

"but I reiterate my assurance on 17 January that we are considering the matter and that when we have something to report we shall return to the House. I therefore ask the Committee to reject the motion."—*[Official Report, Standing Committee B, 31 January 1991; c. 354.]*

In the first part of that quotation the Minister made a specific commitment—he said that he intended to return to the matter on Report. In the second part of the quotation, he was a little more evasive and said that the Government

[Mr. Jim Marshall]

were considering the matter and would return to the House when they had something to report. I am prepared to accept that the Minister intends to present some proposals at some stage, but it would have been far better for all of us if he had been able to present them on Report. We regret that he has not been able to do so, which was one of the primary reasons why we reintroduced the new clause on the ombudsman.

The new clause is designed to probe the Government's present thinking on the procedure. If the Minister deflects our probe or even refuses it and makes it clear that he will reject both our proposal and Lord Colville's thinking on complaints against the armed forces, we shall press the new clause to a Division. I hope that we are not driven to that course of action, but a great deal will depend upon how the Minister responds to the points that I have made.

Mr. Molyneaux: I do not quite understand why the word "ombudsman" was used. I am not criticising the official Opposition, because I understand Lord Colville used that word, although he said, "ombudsman-like". The function of an ombudsman is to investigate complaints of maladministration, and such a complaint is usually laid —sometimes by Members of Parliament—against Departments of Government, in this case the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence. Such complaints could be made only against Ministry of Defence agents—in this case, the Army—for example, because of damage to a vehicle or a house after or during a search.

The mechanism set out by the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) already exists for complaints against individual soldiers, and I should have thought that that was sufficient. I know of many cases in which it has been the instrument for disciplining soldiers who, like all of us, occasionally step out of line when they are in uniform.

Like the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), I noted the point made in an earlier debate on the desirability of common citizenship of the United Kingdom and of avoidance of second-class citizenship anywhere in the United Kingdom. Therefore, it is peculiar that we are now contemplating having second-class treatment for the element of the Army that serves in one part of the United Kingdom.

Wherever it is based, the Army supports the civil authorities. It has been used in support of civil power in this capital city of the United Kingdom. For example, the Special Air Service was used, with great success, to storm the Iranian embassy. The troops in Northern Ireland and in the Ulster Defence Regiment have not chosen to be shot at in the course of their duties. British military personnel have borne and used arms in many places on the continent, notably in West Germany. There too they are in contact in the course of their duties with the civil population. Will this proposed clause be applied to those troops? If not, why not?

To go a little further afield, some of us have noticed that parts of the Army are dealing with civilians in a place called Kuwait and have also been at some considerable risk, and risk of complaint. I understand that some parts of the Army are still in Iraq and no doubt they are doing their best to win the battle for hearts and minds in that country. I have great sympathy with our serving soldiers because of the manifold restrictions already imposed on them. I doubt that our 1st Armoured Division would have advanced so swiftly across the desert last week if its soldiers had been told by their commander before they started, "Watch it boys: the ombudsman will be looking over your shoulder at all stages," and if they had been warned that they would be court-martialled if they happened to ram an Arab camel in the dead of night.

If we are to have this device in Northern Ireland alone, we should face up to the fact that we need an entirely new force rather than a rotating element of the Army serving there. There must be a special permanent force, presumably a special unit of the Army, perhaps in conjunction with the Ulster Defence Regiment. I hope that no further burdens will be imposed on the soldiers who risk their lives in defence of all of us when they happen to be posted to Northern Ireland.

9.15 pm

Mr. Mallon: I should like to pick up a point made by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux). No comparison can be made between an army during a declared war, as in the desert in Kuwait, and an army that fulfils a policing role, as in the north of Ireland.

Mr. Molyneaux: What about Germany?

Mr. Mallon: Substantial differences occur in Germany compared with the north of Ireland, especially in terms of confrontation and manoeuvres. The policing role that the Army performs in the north of Ireland is, of necessity, of great sensitivity.

Any army is a blunt instrument, as the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley said. Either it has a policing role or it is involved in a war. The Government tell us at great length why the Army is not involved in a war. One need only remember the former Prime Minister's references in a European country to a war in Northern Ireland to recognise the hasty way in which the Government's position was clearly put. The implications are immense and far-reaching, and are not always conducive to solving the problem.

An Army complaints procedure is needed. The present mechanism is not sufficient, because it is not a complaints procedure but merely an informal method. A young person who wishes to complain has three options. First, he can go to the RUC. He will be told that, unless violence was used against him or threatened or a criminal offence was committed, it is not a matter for the RUC. The second option is to go to an Army base. One can imagine the reception that that young person would get when he arrived at the outside gate of any Army base and said that he would like to make a complaint against the Army.

The third option is what is termed the informal choice —to process complaints through Members of Parliament, local councillors and people who have standing in the community, such as clergymen. Such people would consider the case at third hand, which is a difficulty in itself. We cannot deny a proper means of processing legitimate complaints and not provide the necessary means to do that while somewhere in between relying on an informal process and hoping for the best, which is what happens at present.

Difficulties arise for officers in the armed forces. If a complaint involves a disciplinary matter, they can investigate and deal with it speedily and efficiently, as they

do now. As well as being a blunt instrument, an army tends to have a strong discipline base, and its commanders have a strong sense of authority.

It is possible for someone like myself to process a complaint and to receive certain satisfactions because such and such an action was taken against a certain person on a certain date. One accepts that such disciplinary action is used in certain circumstances.

What happens when it is suggested that a complaint should be taken to law? Do the officers try a soldier twice? Is he subjected to the disciplinary process within the Army and an official investigation by the police at the same time? The difficulty is that, in 99 cases out of 100, when there is a threat of or actual violence, invariably there are no witnesses. When that happens, the person who is aggrieved must put his word against that of five or six members of an Army patrol. When the case goes to the Director of Public Prosecutions and he takes a cursory look at it—it is right to be cursory, as there is no supportive evidence—it is stamped "no case".

It is bad for everyone that we do not have a formalised, clearly defined statutory way in which such a complaint can be processed. We should not be glib about this, because it is bad for morale, for people and for those soldiers against whom unfounded complaints are made. I am aware of circumstances in which that happens and, in those cases, I am the first to recognise that that is unjust to the soldier involved. Such cases should not be allowed to stand, but when a genuine complaint is made there must be a proper way in which to proceed with it.

One hon. Member said that he wanted to bring complaints against the armed forces into line with complaints against the police. He should read Lord Colville's report—I referred to it on Monday—which, in implied scathing terms, referred to the success, or lack of success, of the Police Complaints Commission in the north of Ireland. From more than 400 complaints to that commission, not one disciplinary charge resulted. That tests the credibility of anyone who knows the tinder box that is the north or Ireland and the sensitivities that exist.

There is something wrong with that complaints procedure, but it is not the fault of the legislation. I was in the House when that legislation was passed. It is good, and it has laid down procedures to ensure that there is a full and adequate investigation of a complaint and adequate redress. Is it not time to consider the 400-odd cases that have gone before the commission and to ask what is wrong? Lord Colville's report contains a strong implied criticism of and comparison between the effectiveness of the police complaints procedures in England and Wales as opposed to those in the north of Ireland.

The Secretary of State should look carefully at the Police Complaints Commission in the north of Ireland, although I accept that it is a bit late to do that, because new appointments have been made. Suffice it to say the facts speak for themselves.

Dr. Mawhinney: I thank the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) for the way in which he introduced his new clause. He did so in the same measured and responsible manner as he acted in Committee. No one objected to the references to Lord Colville—indeed, the hon. Gentleman did the House a service.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) repeated the arguments he put in Committee and affirmed his belief that some new measures are necessary. I understood the point that the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) made. Bearing in mind his typical grace, I know that he will not mind if I do not follow him into the sands of the desert and the autobahns of Germany.

I shall start in the spirit with which I tried to conduct proceedings in Committee by seeking common ground in the House. I am sure that it is common ground that the public have a right to expect the highest standards of behaviour from police officers and members of the armed forces. Activity or actions falling short of those standards will never be condoned.

The Government believe that anyone who has a genuine cause for complaint about the conduct of a police officer or a member of the armed forces should use the existing procedures for the investigation of such complaints. It was against that background that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland told the House on Second Reading that the Government were paying special attention to what Lord Colville and indeed others have had to say on this particular subject. He said that we would return to the subject as the Bill progressed. As the hon. Member for Leicester, South reminded the House, we returned to the issue in Committee.

As Lord Colville observed in his review, the Independent Commission for Police Complaints was established by the Police (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 in order to provide an independent element in the scrutiny of complaints against the Royal Ulster Constabulary. In Lord Colville's view, which the Government share, the commission is now making a valuable contribution, and should continue to be the main vehicle for reinforcing public confidence in the handling of complaints involving police officers. The commission has wide powers. As well as supervising the investigation of all complaints alleging death or serious injury, it can decide to supervise the investigation of any complaint. It does that to good effect and I understand that it intends to supervise even more of these cases in the future.

Ensuring that complaints against the armed forces are investigated promptly and thoroughly is no less important, as the military authorities fully recognise. In recent years, as Lord Colville has pointed out, the Army has therefore consistently sought to improve the way in which complaints are dealt with. The latest in a series of improvements will be the establishment, next month, at Army headquarters in Northern Ireland of a central complaints office to improve the monitoring and handling of complaints against the armed forces. I am sure that the House welcomes that initiative.

However, such measures do not of themselves answer Lord Colville's arguments in favour of bringing the complaints process under some form of independent scrutiny. Allegations of criminal misconduct by the armed forces are already, and will remain, subject to independent investigation by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. That is an important point for all hon. Members to bear in mind.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South reminded the House that in Committee I said that I intended to return to this matter on Report, and I now propose to fulfil that commitment. The Government have considered most carefully the arguments advanced by Lord Colville, the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, the Committee on the Administration of Justice, and others, including members of the Committee who expressed their

[Dr. Mawhinney]

view when the matter was debated there. Therefore, I am pleased to tell the House that we have decided in principle to introduce an independent element into the scrutiny of the armed forces' procedures for handling those complaints which fall short of allegations of criminal misconduct.

This matter falls primarily within the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. As I told the Committee, we have accordingly been discussing the matter with our ministerial colleagues in that Department, including how to give effect to our decision. As hon. Members will recognise, the subject is important and some care must be taken in drawing up proper arrangements. This will take a little more time, and my noble Friend the Paymaster General will therefore return to the subject in another place.

The Government are confident that, for the reasons set out by Lord Colville and others, this measure—in addition to all the other improvements in complaints systems either introduced in recent years or about to be introduced—will be of value to the community. It will also be of value to the armed forces in helping to build and retain the confidence and support of all men and women of good will from both traditions in Northern Ireland.

The Government are already addressing the important issues raised by the new clause. I hope that the hon. Member for Leicester, South feels that his probing clause has been satisfactorily met. It would have been convenient to the House if we had been able to bring forward the specific ideas that we have in mind. That has not proved possible, but at least I have made the commitment in principle. I hope that that will be satisfactory to the hon. Gentleman and that, consequently, he will not press his new clause to a Division.

9.30 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall: I welcome the Minister's final comments, but before I speak at greater length on what he had to say I must comment on what the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) said. Like many of his hon. Friends from the Province, he fails to distinguish between the Army acting in its usual role—he highlighted the warfare in the middle east theatre over the past few weeks—and in its role in support of the civil security force in the Province. There is a huge difference between the two roles.

I express no opinion on the recent war in the middle east, and clearly the restrictions that we seek to impose on the Army when it operates in the Province would not, could not and should not be imposed in an acknowledged theatre of war. But when the security forces are there to support and buttress the civilian security force, it is our duty to ensure that the Army is as nearly as possible subject to the same degree of control and scrutiny and to the same adherence to the law of the land as we expect from our police forces, whether in the Province or elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Molyneaux: The hon. Gentleman put his finger on the point in his penultimate sentence. He implied that one could not expect soldiers from a unit which had not been accustomed to service in Northern Ireland to behave as though they were local bobbies on the beat, and I accept that. It may surprise the hon. Gentleman to know that some years ago, when I had the freedom and privilege to drive my own car, soldiers belonging to a regiment which was withdrawn recently from the British Army of the Rhine, at a time when there was more tension in Germany than there is nowadays, would haul me out of my car at least three times a week, often in pouring rain, and frisk me, spreadeagled across the car. The car was searched and they would address me in terms that I shall not use in the House. It never occurred to me to lodge a complaint against any of those soldiers because, being an ex-service man myself, I recognised that they were not trained in community relations. They were trained to be the spearhead of the British Army of the Rhine. I hope that I have made the point that if an element of the 1st Armoured Division should, in the course of the rotation of units, be brought to Northern Ireland to do duty, it would almost need a special induction course. It could not be expected to behave like a London bobby.

Mr. Marshall: I shall not be tempted to follow all that the right hon. Gentleman has said, but the House realises that soldiers going to the Province for the first time will have a naivety that one would not expect from soldiers who have been there on more than one visit. The right hon. Gentleman must know that that is recognised by the Army authorities. The Army tries to teach such soldiers how to behave in a civilian role. I presume that it does it as well as it possibly can, although one might argue that it could be better done.

Mr. Molyneaux: The Army will have to make allowances for the fact that the offender was serving in the Province for the first time, and could not be expected to behave in the same way as a soldier who had been there for two years.

Mr. Marshall: I have already stressed that there is clearly a difference between the inexperienced soldier who is serving in the Province for the first time and the service man who has been there on more than one occasion. Nevertheless, inexperience does not excuse certain types of behaviour.

The Army acknowledge that first-time soldiers need to be educated as to the way they should operate in a civilian theatre. It knows more than anyone else that without the support and co-operation of the civilian population its role will be made more difficult by an order of magnitude than would otherwise be the case. That is why the Army emphasises the need for civility, but that point is one that the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley sometimes fails to understand.

I welcome the establishment of a central complaints office within the next few weeks, and the Minister's decision in principle to establish also an element of independent security in respect of allegations against the armed forces. I appreciate that there are caveats and that discussions must take place. I am sure that the Minister realises that there must be fuller debate on that issue both in another place and in this House at the appropriate time.

Is it the Government's intention to introduce in another place amendments to the Bill?

Dr. Mawhinney *indicated assent.*

Mr. Marshall: So it is the Government's intention to introduce further amendments to cover the points that we discussed, which we will then be able to debate when the Bill returns to this House.

Dr. Mawhinney *indicated assent.*

Mr. Marshall: I am pleased that the Minister nodded more than once, as though to tell me to resume my place as quickly as possible.

Dr. Mawhinney: Our present intention is as the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Mr. Marshall: I am grateful to the Minister. With that assurance, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the new clause.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 15

ORGANISATIONS IN RECEIPT OF PUBLIC FUNDS

'Where the Secretary of State is of the opinion that an organisation in receipt of public funds is furthering the aims of a proscribed organisation, he may seek an order from the High Court permitting him to terminate such public funding.'.—*[Mr. Jim Marshall.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Jim Marshall: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause deals with an issue which has been a matter of some contention in the Province for a number of years, but more particularly in recent months in respect of a specific case. It would provide judicial control over the Secretary of State's power to end the public funding of organisations that he believes promote the interests of proscribed organisations. The intention is to limit the present arbitrary and unfair system, rather than to make it easier for proscribed organisations to obtain access to public funds. I wish to make that clear.

The present power of the Secretary of State is exercised under the terms of policy set out by the present Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd), in his written answer of 27 June 1985. It is not my intention to read out that answer, but the House will recognise that it gives the Secretary of State wide powers and wide discretion to stop financing certain organisations.

Our new clause recognises the fact that it may be necessary to stop funding if it might be of benefit to proscribed organisations. However—this is where our clause differs from Government policy—it places the exercise of such power on a statutory basis and provides for independent scrutiny of the power by the courts.

As the Secretary of State recognises, under the existing system there is no right of redress, despite the severe consequences that groups, individuals or communities may suffer if funds are removed. Appeals can only be made to, and heard by, the Secretary of State—the very person who made the decision in the first place. Such a practice creates an image of arbitrary and, in some cases, unfair government.

A few moments ago, I referred to a specific case—the Glor na Gael affair—which will come as no surprise to the Secretary of State. For whatever reason, he removed funding from that Irish language group. Unfortunately for him, no one—including, apparently, the RUC—believes that his decision was either sensible or correct.

The present system makes it difficult to reverse such decisions, which are essentially political, without causing embarrassment to the Government, and, as we all know, no Government likes deliberate political embarrassments. The new clause would provide judicial scrutiny before such decisions were taken. We recognise that that is not a perfect solution, but at least it would reduce the arbitrary nature of such decisions, while meeting any Government objections based on security grounds, since the flexibility of a system of judicial review is such that it can be conducted without any security risks.

I commend the new clause in the hope that it will find favour with the Government. Even if the Secretary of State cannot accept it as it stands, I hope that he will reflect the bipartisanship shown by his Minister of State in our previous debate and will be able at least to accept the spirit and intent of the new clause.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker (Belfast, North): How does the Secretary of State form his opinions on these organisations? Does he receive advice or information from someone or some group who may be against the activities of such an organisation? They might be motivated by petty jealousy, because the organisation in question is maintaining and making progress in community and social activities. Such individuals or groups may have political or other aspirations and may believe that they are reduced because of the beneficial activities of such an organisation.

What appeals can such an organisation make against an adverse opinion or complaint by the Secretary of State? Is machinery to be set up to investigate such complaints?

Mr. Stanbrook: The hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) illustrates the weakness of the new clause. It would transfer responsibility from the Secretary of State to a High Court judge with no rules, motivation or purposes, and without limiting the judge's discretion in any way. It has been admitted that the decisions concerned involve political considerations. Are we content to transfer responsibility for them to a judge who, for these purposes, would be superior to the Secretary of State, who is himself responsible to Parliament? That is absurd. The new clause is fundamentally misconceived.

9.45 pm

Mr. Trimble: I share the doubts expressed by the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook). I think that the new clause would cause more problems than exist now.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) mentioned an Irish language organisation from which funding had been withdrawn. It is interesting to note that that organisation subsequently sought support from the Irish Government—unsuccessfully; I do not know what that implies. Another interesting fact, which the hon. Gentleman failed to mention, is that it applied for a judicial review of the Secretary of State's decision, and failed in that as well.

I think that what the hon. Member for Leicester, South said was inaccurate. The existing law provides for the challenging of decisions to withdraw funding made by the Secretary of State or others. Applications can be made for judicial reviews, and, if an organisation can show that the Secretary of State had arrived at his decision unreasonably, a remedy, albeit limited, is available.

How would the court proceed if the existing judicial review procedure were replaced by new clause 15? Under the new clause,

"Where the Secretary of State is of the opinion that an organisation . . . is furthering the aims of a proscribed organisation, he may seek an order from the High Court".

What does the High Court do then? Is it bound to grant the order? Must it consider whether to grant it, and, if so,

[Mr. Trimble]

on what evidence must it proceed? How can such procedures be adopted, given that the Secretary of State may be in receipt of confidential information?

I hope that I am not misquoting the hon. Member for Leicester, South—if I am inadvertently misleading the House, no doubt he will correct me—but I believe that he said that the flexibility of the judicial review system is such that it can be implemented without any security risk. What does that mean in this context? Does it mean that the Secretary of State's opinion will be conclusive, allowing him not to divulge any information that would carry a security risk?

The new clause refers to

"furthering the aims of a proscribed organisation".

Proscribed organisations have many aims. I believe that one of the IRA's aims is the promotion of the Gaelic language. Does this mean that funds should be withdrawn from all organisations that promote the Gaelic language?

Mr. Brooke: This novel measure seeks to substitute the judgment of the court for that of the Secretary of State in a matter that is manifestly the domain of the executive —as my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) pointed out.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) was concerned about the manner in which the Secretary of State exercises his discretion in discharging his responsibility to protect public funds where there is a grave risk that the provision of support would assist a paramilitary organisation, directly or indirectly. He did not quote the answer given by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State—who is now Foreign Secretary—on 27 June 1985, and I shall not do so in full. The heart of that answer was in the words

"However, I am satisfied, from information available to me."

This is a matter properly for the Government, not the courts.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington and the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) said, the courts have acknowledged that judges should not make decisions on policy. Lord Diplock, in Council of Civil Service Unions *v.* The Minister for the Civil Service in 1984 —a case to which, ironically and coincidentally, reference was made this afternoon in the debate on the Employment Protection (Government Communications Headquarters) Bill—made that clear when he said that the application of Government policy involves the weighing of competing policy considerations—

"a balancing exercise which Judges by their upbringing and experience are ill qualified to perform."

To give the courts the role that the new clause suggests would conflict with our well established and sensible separation of powers. As the hon. Member for Upper Bann said, the new clause does not make clear what the High Court should take into account in considering an application by the Secretary of State for an order permitting him to terminate public funding. It would be most unusual if the court were empowered to examine the merits of the Secretary of State's opinion and substitute its judgment for that of the Secretary of State should it see fit.

Hon. Members can be assured that all decisions to withhold public funds in line with current Government policy are taken by the Secretary of State after most careful consideration.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): The new clause would enable the Secretary of State to seek an order from the court. Under the law in Northern Ireland, is it possible for an organisation whose public funds have been terminated by the Secretary of State to appeal to the court?

Mr. Brooke: I shall deal with that later, but there is the right of appeal to myself in the first instance.

Decisions to withhold public funds are taken by the Secretary of State after the most careful consideration. The policy is even-handed and has been applied in respect of republican and loyalist paramilitary interests. Ignoring the four cases in which the decisions were reversed after fresh evidence was put before the Secretary of State, the pattern of the withholding of public funds shows that just under 60 per cent. have been in connection with republican paramilitary groups and just over 40 per cent. with loyalist groups.

Political opinion is not an issue. Decisions are subject to review and can be changed in the light of a change in circumstances. That is what happened in the four cases in which the decisions were reversed. That is not an answer to the legal question that I was asked but it is a response to the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker).

It is not possible, for security reasons, to divulge the information on which decisions are based. I do not accept that the introduction of a court in a supervisory capacity, as proposed by the hon. Member for Leicester, South, is appropriate or would lead to an improvement in the quality of decision making. Well established arrangements for the judicial review of administrative decisions—this answers the question asked by the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan)—recognise the different responsibilities of Ministers and the courts. Any organisation that considers that it has been unfairly treated by a decision of the Secretary of State can apply to the courts for a review of the decision, as happened recently. I see no reason to introduce any further judicial scrutiny.

It is not practicable—this answers the question asked by the hon. Member for Belfast, North—either at present or under the proposed new clause to advise an organisation of the precise grounds for the Secretary of State's belief that withdrawal of grant is justified. Such decisions are taken on the basis of confidential security advice, the disclosure of which could reveal to those engaged in unlawful activities involving paramilitary organisations the extent of the information known about them, how it is evaluated and possibly its source, with consequential risk to those involved in its procurement.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South referred to the case of Glora na Gael. The decision to withdraw funding from the west Belfast committee and the procedure by which such decisions are taken are subject to judicial review. The hon. Member for Upper Bann thought that it had been turned down, but the case is still under review.

In those circumstances, the House will understand if I am constrained in what I say on such matters. I do not accept that the present arrangements are unreasonable or inappropriate; nor am I prepared to be drawn on the detail of the arrangements or the nature of the information relied upon.

In view of those overall considerations, I must ask the hon. Member for Leicester, South to withdraw his new clause or the House to vote against it.

Mr. Jim Marshall: I and my party are naturally disappointed with the Secretary of State's reply. Within a matter of minutes, we shall be showing our dissatisfaction by supporting our new clause in the Lobby. I ask the House to support us in that action.

The hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) said that, in his view—I recognise that it is his view only—our new clause is to be described as "absurd". His reason for using that word was that he claimed that only the Secretary of State and only the Government can make political decisions. There is no disagreement between us on that point. Politicians and Governments are there to make political decisions. If the Secretary of State was to come to the Dispatch Box to say, "I have made this decision on political grounds; these are my reasons for doing that," there would be no disagreement between the two sides, because I recognise that that is the nature of politicians and of Governments.

However, that is not the point at issue. These judgments are not supposed to be based on political considerations; they are supposed to be based on security considerations. In those circumstances, we have every right to say that, if it is a matter of judgment and of balance, a judge and the system of judicial review are able to make that decision and to judge that balance. We are not asking the judges——

Mr. Stanbrook *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Member for Orpington is shaking his head, but we are not asking the judges to make political decisions; we are asking them to decide whether, on balance, they believe that the Secretary of State has acted fairly or unfairly when weighing up the security risks to make his decision.

The altercations between myself and the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) are increasing. He always accuses me of misrepresenting his case and of making half a case myself. I tend to believe that my assertions about him are always correct and that his assertions about me are always wrong. He is clearly wrong in the specific point that he has made in this debate. The Secretary of State supports and buttresses my point when he reminds the hon. Gentleman that the case of Glora na Gael is still in the process of judicial review.

In case he has forgotten, I remind the hon. Member for Upper Bann that the Secretary of State has made it even more difficult for that organisation to defend itself and to put its case to the judicial review because the right hon. Gentleman has introduced a public interest immunity certificate, which is signed by him, the Secretary of State, and which has prevented that organisation or its counsel from gaining access to specific papers that it believes would assist it——

Mr. Brooke: The case is sub judice.

Mr. Marshall: The Secretary of State reminds me that the case is sub judice. I am referring not to the details of the case, but to the actions that the Secretary of State has taken which make it more difficult for that organisation to present its case at the judicial review. The Secretary of State has issued a public interest immunity certificate which refuses the organisation access to certain documents which it thinks would support or further its case at judicial review. I think that the point made by the hon. Member for Upper Bann in the specific instance is spurious.

Mr. Trimble: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way, particularly as he prefaced his remarks by comments, which I thought inappropriate, about what I had said. The hon. Gentleman has not answered the question which I put to him: if his clause is adopted, and if the Secretary of State has to make an application to the court, on what basis is the court to proceed? I am grateful to the Secretary of State for pointing out the stage which the case has reached. There is in existence a judicial review procedure——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. —*[Mr. Neil Hamilton.]*

Question again proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Trimble: I was asking the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) to state how the court should proceed. Will it accept the opinion of the Secretary of State? Will it ask itself whether that opinion was made unreasonably, in which case it is doing exactly the same as the existing judicial review procedure, or will it examine the merits of the case itself? If it is examining the merits of the case——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making an interjection in the middle of a speech.

Mr. Trimble: I think that I have said enough to make my point clear.

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Gentleman always says more than enough. The answer clearly is that the judge would decide whether the Secretary of State's action was reasonable in the light of all the evidence, based upon security considerations, that the Secretary of State had available at the time. I do not see anything wrong with that.

Mr. Stanbrook: That is not the point that is included in the new clause. The new clause says:

"Where the Secretary of State is of the opinion that an organisation in receipt of public funds is furthering the aims of a proscribed organisation".

No decision is made; the Secretary of State is simply of the opinion, and he then may seek an order from the High Court. In other words, the whole decision is transferred to the High Court. It is not a question of confirming, or of some sort of review, under the wording of the new clause. The new clause is talking not about judicial review but about transferring responsibility for the decision from the Secretary of State to a judge. That is entirely and utterly wrong, and I still think that it is absurd.

Mr. Marshall: I am not pleased to hear that the hon. Gentleman still thinks that the new clause is absurd. We are seeking to reverse the present procedure. If the new clause was adopted, before the Secretary of State took a decision, he, his ministerial colleagues and his officials would have to realise, in the light of all the security considerations available at the time, that any decision they took was likely to be upheld or turned down by the judge. The position seems to be clear.

The Secretary of State repeated many of the points put forward by the hon. Members for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) and Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble). He seemed to imply that many of his decisions were taken on political rather than security grounds. I am sure that he did not

[Mr. Marshall]

mean to give that impression, but he made the point. I accept that he makes the decisions not on political but on security grounds.

Mr. Brooke: I gave the statistics so that the House might have a clear picture that we were talking about an even-handed policy addressed to paramilitary organisations. I think that the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) has not answered the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook). As the new clause is drawn, he is asking the judiciary to take on an executive role which in the past it has been disinclined to take.

Mr. Marshall: Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption.]* I am receiving advice from all quarters. Perhaps I could put it to the Secretary of State this way. Our view remains that the present system must be changed. There must be a movement away from the present arbitrary and unfair system. Our view is and remains—and we shall press it in the Lobby—that the new clause represents a step in the right direction. If the Secretary of State says that there are inadequacies in it, I make this offer to him. If he is prepared to support us in the Lobby or even to accept the spirit of the new clause, we will sit down with him and draft a new clause which meets his criticisms and those of the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook). I see that the Secretary of State is not prepared to accept that compromise, so we intend to press the new clause.

Question put; That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 76, Noes 150.

Division No. 88] **[10.05 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beckett, Margaret
Beliotti, David
Bermingham, Gerald
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Fearn, Ronald
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
McAvoy, Thomas
McGrady, Eddie
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beggs, Roy
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, John
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trimble, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann

Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George (Acton)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Neil Hamilton and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 17

LETHAL FORCE

'.—(1) The Secretary of State shall make a code of practice in connection with the use of lethal force by police officers and members of Her Majesty's Forces in dealing with suspected terrorists; and Schedule (*Code of practice on lethal force*) shall be the first code under this section.

(2) Subsections (2) to (5) of section 50 of this Act shall apply to a code under this section as they apply to a code under that section.

(3) A failure on the part of a police officer or a member of Her Majesty's forces to comply with any provision of such a code shall constitute an offence punishable on conviction on indictment by imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine or both, or on summary conviction by imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or both.'.—*[Mr. McNamara.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. McNamara: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 39, a new schedule—*Lethal force*—

GENERAL RULES

1. In all situations the minimum force necessary must be used. Firearms must only be used as the last resort. Where their use is unavoidable they must be used with restraint, in proportion to the seriousness of the offence and the legitimate objective to be achieved, and so as to minimise damage and injury and to respect and preserve human life.

2. Superior officers shall ensure that members of the security forces are equipped with appropriate self-defensive equipment and appropriate non-lethal incapacitating weapons with a view to restraining the use of weapons capable of causing death or serious injury. Superior officers shall be responsible for any breach of these rules by members of the security forces under their command in cases in which they did not take all measures in their power to prevent such a breach.

Opening fire

3. Firearms must always be made safe. No live rounds are to be carried in the breech of a firearm and automatic weapons are not to be made ready for firing unless they are about to be fired or an express order to that effect has been given by a superior officer.

4. Firearms shall not be used against a person except in the following circumstances—

(1) in self-defence or defence of others against the imminent threat of death or serious injury;
(2) to prevent the commission of a particularly serious crime involving a grave threat to life;
(3) to effect the arrest of a person immediately presenting such a threat.

In all these cases firearms must not be used unless there is no other way to prevent the danger and it is strictly unavoidable to protect life.

5. The following are examples of acts endangering life, depending always on the particular circumstances—

(1) firing or being about to fire a weapon;
(2) planting, detonating or throwing an explosive device.

6. In cases where the use of firearms is unavoidable the following rules must be observed—

(1) only aimed shots are to be fired;
(2) no more rounds than are necessary to prevent the danger referred to in rule 4 above are to be fired;
(3) all reasonable precautions are to be taken not to injure anyone other than the person presenting that danger.

Warning

7. Where the use of firearms is justified in accordance with these rules members of the security forces shall identify themselves and shall give a clear warning of their intent to use firearms, with sufficient time for the warning to be observed, unless to do so would expose others or themselves to undue risk or would be clearly pointless or inappropriate in the circumstances.

8. The words "Army/Police: stop or I fire" or words to similar effect are to be used.

Medical attention

9. Assistance and medical aid are to be rendered to any person injured at the earliest possible moment.

Informing relatives

10. Relatives or close friends of any person injured or affected by the use of firearms shall be notified at the earliest possible moment.

Reporting

11. In all cases where firearms are used a report on the circumstances shall be made promptly to a superior officer.

Access

12. The police shall have immediate access to a member of the security forces who has used or is reasonably suspected of having used lethal force.'.

Mr. McNamara: In Committee, the use of lethal force by the security forces was considered on several occasions. There has been a continuing debate on the issue—the matter was raised when last we had a full review of the Act in the previous Parliament. The new clause and the amendment attempt to deal with subsequent developments in the debate.

Amendment No. 39 seeks to complement the codes of practice issued under sections 48 and 49 of the Act by including guidance to the security forces on circumstances in which it is legitimate to use force. Given the controversies over the use of force by the security forces, and the implications for public confidence in the security forces, such a guide would help to clarify the nature of security force operations.

In his penultimate report, Lord Colville stated that the major difficulty for the administration of justice stemmed from deaths caused by the security forces. We have only to think of the Armagh killings and the Whiterock bookies shop case and other incidents to understand the passions and problems involved. Large sections of society believe that the security forces are immune from the law, and a number of killings by the security forces are not regarded as unavoidable or representing the legitimate use of force.

The new clause and the amendment are a response to the concern expressed by the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights last February. The new schedule copies the draft code of practice proposed by SACHR. It says that it is a "tentative draft" to provide a focus for proper consideration of the issue, but if the Government were to accept the principle of what we are urging we should be happy for them to produce a better

[Mr. McNamara]

draft. The key elements of the draft code suggested by SACHR are as follows. The minimum possible force should be deployed, force should be used only when it is unavoidable, and senior officers should be held responsible for the actions of their subordinates if they permit violations of the code of practice.

The first principle differs from the existing provision in so far as it replaces the concept of reasonable force with the concept of minimum force. Such a standard would facilitate public understanding of the limits of legitimate use of force by the security forces. Using force only when it is unavoidable also differs from existing practice in so far as the existing law allows for the use of lethal force to apprehend a person who cannot otherwise be arrested. The logic behind it is that the failure to arrest an individual may allow that person to escape and commit further crimes of violence at a later date. While that is understandable, the practical consequences have been damaging as it has become lawful to use lethal force to apprehend a person who, it subsequently becomes apparent, is not a terrorist. The code of practice is designed to prevent recurrence of such incidents by ensuring that firearms can be used to effect an arrest only if there is immediate danger of a grave threat to life.

The purpose of making superiors responsible for avoidable breaches of the code of practice is to provide an incentive to maintain high standards of discipline. In addition, given that the preparation of an operation by superior officers may have a substantial influence on the behaviour of subordinates during an operation, the code of practice considers the responsibility of those who plan and those who conduct operations.

Paragraph 12 of the schedule deals with a problem that has caused some concern. When members of the security forces are involved in incidents where lethal force is used, RUC officers investigating such operations have experienced some difficulty gaining access to carry out questioning. The schedule would require access to be granted, thus eliminating any suggestion that such incidents are not properly investigated by the authorities.

Lord Colville has paid great attention to this issue over several years. In it report on the concept of the taking of human life, the other place also paid attention to the proposals, some based on the Australian code of practice, made by Lord Colville. Our proposal is based essentially on the recent proposals of SACHR. The code embodies what it is seeking and what it believes, in the interests human rights, should be adopted in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Trimble: The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said that the schedule in the amendment setting out the code of practice is based on the tentative views of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights and it says that its proposals are based in part on a draft resolution prepared by a United Nations body. That makes one a little concerned—I say a little because in some respects I support the objective behind the new clause. There is merit in having a code of guidance on the use of potentially lethal force and in spelling out in more detail the rather old terms of section 3 of the Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967. That is the ordinary criminal law base from which the security forces operate in the use of potentially lethal force, in all circumstances, not just in the emergency provisions.

An examination of the draft code shows that there are problems, which SACHR acknowledged. Comparing its document with the yellow card, it states:

"the yellow card expressly permits the use of lethal force to effect an arrest of someone who has just killed or injured another person, where there is no other way to make an arrest, while the UN Basic Principles permit the use of lethal force to effect an arrest only where the person continues to present an imminent threat of death or serious injury and where less extreme means are insufficient. It should be noted that this difference is probably an accurate statement of the current judicial interpretation of the terms of section 3 of the Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967".

The code is not an accurate statement of the law.

Paragraph 7 of SACHR's report—which I think hon. Members received—states:

"In the second place the UN Basic Principles include more detailed provisions in respect of the responsibility of superior officers for the actions of their subordinates. There is no such provision in the yellow card. This again reflects a distinction which is inherent in the prevailing judicial interpretation . . . in . . . section 3 of the Criminal Law Act."

SACHR acknowledges that its code does not correspond with the law.

If the code were enacted, we should have to change section 3 of the Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967. If we enacted the code at present, we would be inaccurate and would give effect to something much narrower than section 3. Under new clause 17, failure to comply with the code will be an offence punishable on conviction by imprisonment for two years. The code is inappropriate. I have great difficulty understanding how one could comply with it.

According to paragraph 3 of the proposed schedule,

"No live rounds are to be carried in the breech"

unless a weapon is about to be fired. In that way, members of the security forces will give terrorists that extra vital second or two that it takes to make a weapon ready for use. Paragraph 4 states:

"Firearms shall not be used against a person except in the following circumstances—

(1) in self-defence or defence of others against the imminent threat of death or serious injury;

(2) to prevent the commission of a particularly serious crime involving a grave threat to life".

How does one work out that the commission of a serious crime will involve a "grave threat to life"? How does one work out that there will be

"imminent threat of death or serious injury"?

The paragraph refers to "serious" injury rather than just injury. A soldier is expected to deal with those complex issues in the agony of the moment, when a terrorist may use lethal force without the slightest compunction. Having decided that his action comes within those provisions, he is not to use force unless he gives the warning, "Army: stop or I fire", or words to that effect. The proposed schedule states that those words "are to be used". If they are not used, it will mean a failure to comply, which is an offence punishable by imprisonment for a certain term. That is not an appropriate measure.

I am not familiar with United Nations proceedings, so I do not understand why the United Nations document is only a draft resolution and did not proceed further—perhaps it was because it was unrealistic. I hesitate to add to my criticisms of SACHR on other occasions, but I am not surprised that it adopted an unrealistic set of principles. SACHR does not have the competence to draw up such a code because it does not understand the position that soldiers and policemen will face. Although SACHR pointed out the difference between the code and the law,

it did not give due weight to the fact that under the law soldiers and policemen are under a duty to arrest persons whom they believe to be law breakers. They must use such force as reasonable to achieve that arrest. The code appears to weaken the duty on the police and the Army. The net effect will be that persons guilty of crime, or those whom the security forces suspect to be guilty, will go free.

I know that tragic mistakes have been made in Northern Ireland which have affected all sides of the community. Sometimes one wonders about the mistakes that generate concern and the principles that operate in such circumstances.

10.30 pm

No one likes to see mistakes made, but they are unavoidable. The recent conflict in the Gulf has served to show that in a war, or in a situation where arms are used, mistakes will be made. When those mistakes occur, however, we must not lose sight of the fact that the ultimate responsibility for them rests with those who have created the violence. When members of the security forces act negligently and incorrectly and mistakenly kill others, we must not forget that the ultimate responsibility lies with the terrorist organisations.

Although I feel some sympathy with the concept of a code of practice, the present code of practice is not good. I do not like the provision in subsection (3) of the new clause to make that code of practice legally enforceable with criminal sanctions. For that reason, I cannot support the new clause or the schedule.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I agree with the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble). If one looks at the current situation in Northern Ireland realistically, one must recognise that the schedule would put the terrorist at a tremendous advantage compared with the security forces.

I do not believe that the House appreciates the seriousness of the situation in Northern Ireland. A close friend of mine is approaching the end of his life in the Royal Victoria hospital. I cannot go to visit him without three Land Rovers of police and three Land Rovers of soldiers. I was speaking to another clergyman who also visits that hospital and he goes there in the same way. We are up against a serious situation in Northern Ireland.

Members of the security forces seek to provide protection and to defend the community against terrorism. If they were not allowed to draw their guns unless a superior officer tells them to do so, and so on, those people would have no defence and would be shot down. Terrorists will look upon the code of practice as a magna carta for success. We must be realistic.

I agree with the hon. Member for Upper Bann that there should be such a code of conduct, but it must be realistic in view of the terrorist threat. The code of practice is unrealistic. Members of the security forces may as well not be armed if they are unable to defend themselves and those who need to be defended. The code of practice envisaged in the new clause would make it impossible for members of the security forces to provide such protection from the current terrorist threat that we are up against.

Mr. Canavan: I support my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), who moved the new clause.

We all agree that there is far too much use of lethal force in Northern Ireland and that there is too much killing. Both sides of the House deplore the use of force by paramilitary organisations. We should also deplore the unjustified use of force by members of the security forces. Such unjustified use of force by the security forces is even worse in a sense than the use of lethal force by terrorist organisations. When the security forces resort to the unjustified use of lethal force, they are not just placing themselves at the same level as the terrorists they are supposed to be combating, but reducing if not eradicating respect for law and order. That can have serious repercussions in any society.

Sadly, over the past 20 years or more, there have been far too many instances of the use of unjustified force by members of the security forces. Hon. Members have said that mistakes are made, but we have a responsibility to try to create a legislative framework that will minimise the possibility of mistakes which may result in people being wrongfully killed. The account of former Assistant Chief Constable Stalker and his evidence points to a shoot-to-kill policy by the RUC. The Army and the Ulster Defence Regiment have killed people in circumstances which, to say the least, have been questionable.

Quite apart from those killed by the use of what might be called conventional weaponry, some people have been killed by plastic bullets fired by the security forces. We should not lose sight of that. Three or four years ago, I introduced a Bill that sought to abolish the use of plastic bullets in Northern Ireland or in any other part of the United Kingdom. At that time, the statistics showed that about 15 people had been lethally injured by plastic or rubber bullets. Most of them were children or young people who by no stretch of the imagination could have been described as suspected terrorists. Some of them were killed by plastic bullets fired at point blank range.

I do not know whether amendment No. 39 covers plastic bullets. I suspect that they might be covered, because that amendment refers to people "about to fire a weapon" and mentions "an explosive device".

Hon. Members spoke about the yellow card and the existing code of conduct, which may or may not be observed in all circumstances. It is plain that the code of practice is grossly inadequate, so we should accept the new clause and its related schedule.

Mr. Mallon: I invariably shudder when I hear the word "accident" used in relation to lethal weapons. I vividly remember an occasion when Mr. Gerry Adams spoke on behalf of the organisation that he leads after a baby had been shot in Belfast. He pontificated to the world and said there would always be accidents when firearms were used, but he offered his organisation's apologies to the baby's mother and father and to all concerned for the death of the child. That is appalling. It is also appalling to use the word "accidents", especially in relation to circumstances in which there were other alternatives.

Public concern in the north of Ireland has made a clear distinction down through the years between a soldier, perhaps under threat from a sniper or a sudden movement, acting instinctively and using his weapon, and those incidents which have become issues of great contention, almost all of which happened during a concerted effort by the armed forces—in other words, when they were involved in a specific manoeuvre which would itself have made possible an arrest with the minimum use of force, not a matter of being overpowered or of superior fire power

[Mr. Mallon]

coming from those whom the armed forces might have intended to arrest. In the real shoot-to-kill incidents, those people were unarmed.

If we look at the trend through the years, we see that not only have such incidents arisen during a manoeuvre, but they have been accompanied by erroneous intelligence. Almost invariably, when there is a controversial incident, one finds that the Army personnel involved were pumped up with adrenalin as a result of intelligence which ultimately proved faulty. I can be specific about that. We have only to look at the last three serious incidents in the north of Ireland to see that grossly faulty intelligence was at the root of them.

The problem is that, once an Army patrol is given intelligence and is primed to believe that, at a certain place and time and in a certain way, it will be facing dangerous and heavily armed people, the men in that patrol will naturally be in an aggressive frame of mind. When they are working on crucially faulty intelligence, the guilt lies with those who presented them with that intelligence and the direction under which they are operating. That is the substantial difference between what are now known in the north of Ireland as shoot-to-kill incidents and other incidents in which people have been killed as a result of other circumstances.

I remember clearly in my constituency when a bus driver was shot at the permanent checkpoint in Middletown as a result of a conversation that he was having with a member of the security forces. Does one class that as a shoot-to-kill incident? That was a tragic circumstance for that man and his family, and for the young soldier involved. But when people have been stopped and searched and it has been established that they are not in possession of weapons and within a short time and less than 100 yards they are shot dead, one has to ask substantial and serious questions. Therein lies the difference.

I accept some of the criticisms of the new clause and schedule. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) himself acknowledges how difficult it is to draft with a high degree of accuracy a schedule that meets every situation. Nevertheless, I support the schedule, because I do not accept the Gerry Adams thesis that in a war—we talked earlier about the use of that dangerous term—there will always be accidents. That argument plays right into the hands of people such as Mr. Adams, who spuriously apologised for the killing of a little child some years ago.

The new clause is the nearest that we have come to facing a problem that the Bill does not address, and I hope that it will be supported on the ground that a substantial change is needed.

10.45 pm

Rev. William McCrea: I oppose the new clause. We have seen tonight that there is no shortage of armchair critics who know little about facing terrorists and what it is for a young man to go out to defend the innocent people of a community and risk being shot at any and every corner.

It is easy for hon. Members who sit in the comfort of the House and do not have to share the experiences of our soldiers, UDR members, police and reserves, who have to face the terrorist threat in our community. It is disgraceful to link our security personnel and their responses to anything that has come from the lips of the hypocritical Gerry Adams. That is not worthy of any further reference.

Some hon. Members—perhaps one cannot blame them for this, because they are far removed from the situation—seem to think that we in Ulster are in the midst of a picnic rather than in the midst of cruel warfare. Irrespective of whether the Government want to face this fact, the IRA has openly declared war on the British establishment and the British Ulster people. Sinn Fein means "Ourselves Alone"—and that certainly does not mean the British Ulster man or woman.

We are facing a bloodthirsty animal in the IRA terrorist. One might also think—if one attaches any credence to some of the remarks made a few moments ago—that our security forces are on the rampage, looking for innocent victims to shoot to kill, and that they have not performed their duties with great honour and diligence. I want to place on record the fact that our security forces and the forces of the Crown have acted with great courage and exemplary restraint over the past 20 years of murder and destruction in Northern Ireland.

No doubt everyone can recount an incident in which someone has stepped outside the law—but they will have received their proper and due judgment. I wish, however, that hon. Members who are so quick to criticise and find fault were equally eloquent when it came to giving due praise to the security forces in the Province for facing the dastardly enemy in our midst.

Our security forces operate under a severe disadvantage every time they go out. Unfortunately, they are often reacting—the Government have decided on a policy of reaction—rather than acting against the terrorists and their enclaves. The advantage is in the hands of the terrorists. For example, they have the element of surprise.

Terrorists can watch the movements of the security forces. Doubtless they can watch a young man walk up the street to go on duty. They can watch young UDR men as they leave and return to their homes and establish what time they go on duty. That has happened too often. They have been allowed to go up the road safely for as long as a year, but then they let down their guard and the IRA murders them on their way to the UDR camp or the police station. That chapter has been written over and over again.

Mr. Mallon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Rev. William McCrea: In a moment.

We must sit back for a moment and reflect on whether we should make it more difficult for members of the security forces to carry out their duties. It is easy to say that they should have done it differently. With hindsight, it is easy to pontificate about the manner in which they should have arrested someone and to question whether minimum force was used.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) talked about Stalker, but I do not remember how many times Mr. Stalker had to face an IRA bullet or bomb. I cannot recall the number of times that he was out on duty in Northern Ireland and faced terrorists on the streets. I cannot remember the number of times that he went on duty to find out the reality of the situation. If people put their minds together they will find, I think, that he was never on the streets of Northern Ireland in uniform. It was easy for him, who came from the comfort of some plush office, with his airs and graces, and had no understanding whatsoever of reality.

Hon. Members have paraded the shoot-to-kill policy in the House tonight. Yes, there is a shoot-to-kill policy in Northern Ireland. The IRA has a full-blooded shoot-to-kill policy and intends to shoot every policeman, every UDR man and every Army lad or lassie who comes to the Province. That is the reality, and there is little or no hindrance whatsoever to their efforts. The House ought to give credit and honour where it is due—to members of our security forces.

In relation to the plastic bullet issue, it was suggested that no young person could be responsible for terrorist activity. If the hon. Members for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) and for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) were listening, they would find it interesting to learn that there is a new terrorist cell in our locality. We have information that those who are being trained as the major gunmen are between 14 and 16 years of age. That is a new departure. I do not know whether they cannot get older people into the IRA groups. However, it is interesting that information from the security forces shows that, in our locality, the people who are going out to pull the trigger are very young.

Mr. Mallon: I hope that I misheard the hon. Gentleman. Did he confirm that the information that formed the basis of the allegation came directly from the security forces in the north of Ireland? Is he willing to put that on record?

Rev. William McCrea: I do not think that that was what the hon. Gentleman wanted to say when he tried to intervene earlier. Let me tell him, however, that the people of Northern Ireland have often heard him parading, in the media, what he has been told by some member of the security forces. It is ridiculous for him to suggest that he alone should be allowed to hear things on the grapevine.

Mr. Mallon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Rev. William McCrea: No. I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman once, and I want to finish what I am saying.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said that no one could suggest that young people would be involved in the use of plastic bullets. Does he not realise that the IRA do not care who they use as a human shield—that fancy term that was coined during the Gulf war? They do not care if the child whom they put in the front line is killed by a plastic bullet. In the past, they have been willing to put not only women and children but even their own members in the front line, as long as they benefit from the propaganda.

I vividly remember the tragic case of the two young soldiers in west Belfast—two young men in a car who thought it wiser to hand themselves over to the republicans

[Rev. William McCrae]

than to draw their guns to defend themselves. They were killed. Anyone who remembers that incident will know that there was nothing pleasing in it: it was one of the most despicable, disgraceful and horrifying things that have ever been witnessed, as the films and photographs that were taken at the time will confirm. Many observers believe that those two young men died because they were afraid to break the yellow-card restrictions, fearing that, if they escaped with their lives, they would end up in court being treated as criminals.

I oppose the new clause, and I think that anyone who has any knowledge of what it is like to be a serving member of the security forces will do the same.

Mr. Stanbrook: I have two main objections to the new clause and amendment No. 39. First, if they were adopted, the substantive law on self-defence would be fundamentally and radically changed in a way that would have important consequences for our criminal law. The Opposition have cooked up an amendment which they admit is based on tentative conclusions derived from a draft document laid before the United Nations. That gives no authority to the proposition that the general law of this country should be changed. If it is to be changed—if there is anything in the contention that the existing law is inadequate or wrong—surely the matter should be properly discussed outside the House.

The opinions of military and legal experts should be obtained and, if possible, some agreement should be reached. Until that is done, it would be highly irresponsible to accept such changes to the substantive law.

11pm

My second objection is that the new clause is rather airy-fairy. It is an idealised conception of what rules can be imposed on persons who must act in the agony of the moment. Her Majesty's forces are trained to use their weapons at such times, but no hon. Member can imagine what he would do. It is virtually impossible to lay down rules governing their behaviour in such circumstances.

Amendment No. 39 says:

"No live rounds are to be carried in the breech of a firearm . . . unless they are about to be fired."

What an absurd suggestion, given the realities of war, violence and terrorism and the possibility that lurking around a corner ahead of a soldier is an armed man ready to open fire. Those rules will be imposed not on the IRA but on our representatives, who are protecting the ordinary people of Northern Ireland. It is absurd that we should say to them, "You cannot carry a live round in the breech of your gun because you have not had your superior officer's permission to do so. You must wait until you see your adversary aiming a gun at you before you are entitled to put a round in the breech of your gun."

That is so manifestly unreal that one reaches the conclusion that the Opposition have no faith in what they are doing but simply want to handicap the Government in their prosecution of the war against terrorism in Northern Ireland. For that reason, the new clause is a perfectly reprehensible idea.

Dr. Mawhinney: When the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) moved the new clause he said that we had discussed the use of lethal force several times in Committee. It is right that we should do so again this evening because it is of considerable importance. As has been reflected in the debate, it leads to misconceptions. It is not frequently understood that split-second decisions must be taken when an incident is in progress. It also leads to the mistaken perception that there is, or has been, a shoot-to-kill policy in Northern Ireland.

I acknowledge the strength of the concern expressed about the use of firearms by the security forces and the emotiveness of the issue in parts of the community in Northern Ireland. I recognise the argument advanced by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights that a code, as proposed in the new clause, would provide a clear set of rules, with statutory effect, on the circumstances in which the security forces might use firearms, thereby showing the Government's commitment to the principle that the security forces are tightly governed by the rule of law and recognising the special circumstances in which the security forces operate in Northern Ireland.

The issues involved are complex. As he did in Committee, the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), with his legal training, illustrated some of the complexities and difficulties associated with the issue and with these proposals in particular. As I said in Committee, the use of firearms and the law on the use of force are matters that go beyond the emergency provisions legislation, since they affect the criminal law as a whole. It would be anomalous, in the Government's view, to make special provision for the circumstances in which policemen might open fire in dealing with suspected terrorists, but not in a range of other circumstances. We must also consider whether it would be desirable that the law on such a fundamental matter as the use of force in Northern Ireland should be distinct from that in England and Wales. These are thus issues which take the new clause and the amendment outside the scope of the Bill.

A statutory code of practice on the use of force, if such were to be introduced, would more properly belong in the ordinary criminal law, where the law on the use of force is to be found. As I explained to hon. Members in Committee, however, the Government will keep the issues under consideration. My Department accepted the offer of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights to prepare a draft code so that we could see what it might look like and whether it was feasible or practicable for such a code to be drafted.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I have listened intently to the exchanges. In the analysis of a draft code of practice, will the Minister and his officials examine comparative evidence? Is it the case that such codes of practice exist in other states?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am sorry that I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's last question. Certainly, we would want to take wide cognisance of whatever information was available to us in the drafting of such a code, were we to decide to proceed in that way.

Mr. Mallon: My question is much more fundamental. It relates to the central thrust of what the Minister has said so far. Is he of the opinion that a war is taking place in Northern Ireland?

Dr. Mawhinney: What is taking place in Northern Ireland is a lot of criminal activity by criminals, by people

who are called terrorists and by thugs, but it is certainly not anything comparable to what we have just seen in the Gulf states. That was a war. I am not sure whether there is a lot to be gained from debating the semantics of the position.

We all recognise that there is the illegal use of force in Northern Ireland. The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) was right. There is a shoot-to-kill policy in Northern Ireland; it is conducted by terrorists, primarily by the Provisional IRA, but also by others, including loyalist terrorists. Whether the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) wants to call that war is a matter for him. The House clearly understands the circumstances of what is happening in Northern Ireland and the need to address those circumstances in a way which is within the law, but nevertheless gives the security forces the opportunities to respond on behalf of the people whom they are there to serve and to protect to the maximum possible extent.

Mr. Mallon: The Minister has used the word "semantics". I agree that the debate is not about semantics. He has surely referred to the nub of the problem. He said in his answer that criminals are involved. Criminals are answerable to the law. Yet in all our debates we have the juxtaposition of one hon. Member saying that it is a war situation, the next saying that it is a matter for the ordinary law, and the next saying that it is a question of criminality. Certainly, some of the speeches made by Conservative Members show the need to make it clear that we are not talking about war. That is exactly what the Provisional IRA want us to talk about. It wants us to regard the situation as such because of the implications of that for the IRA. We are talking about trying to cope with criminal activity with the most normal law available to us.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is for right hon. and hon. Members of the House to make their own speeches. I am not responsible for the speeches of other hon. Members. I am responsible on this occasion for expressing the view of the Government. I confirm to the hon. Gentleman that we are talking precisely about the law. That is what we have before us this evening. We have before us a Bill which, subject to the wish of this House and of another place, will become the law of the land. It will become the legal framework which governs the activities of security forces, police and others, in relation to those who go about terrorising, killing, maiming and breaking the law in Northern Ireland. The Bill will be used as law within the legal system for the protection of those who live in Northern Ireland. On that the hon. Gentleman and I are in agreement.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Surely there is a distinction between dealing with ordinary criminal activity and facing up to terrorist activity. Surely the Minister agrees that in Northern Ireland we face intense terrorist activity by people who are prepared to kill by all possible means.

Dr. Mawhinney: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. If I may bring us back to the Bill, it is emergency provision legislation. It is an emergency provision for the reason that the hon. Gentleman has so eloquently stated, but it is still legislation. That is the way in which the House must proceed and the framework within which the security forces also have to proceed.

As the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North said, the new clause appears similar to that which the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights has produced, as indeed it is. It is a useful contribution to our consideration of the issue. We have been giving our thought and consideration to that issue since we received the proposal from the commission, and our dialogue with the commission will continue—it has not ended just because we have had a suggestion from the hon. Gentleman.

The House will appreciate, however, that such issues require careful consideration. Indeed, some of the reasons why they need to be carefully considered were mentioned by several hon. Members. The consideration that the issues deserve and require will take the matter well beyond the immediate timescale of the Bill. Indeed, I understand that the commission itself said that it would have preferred to have more time to consider the proposals that it made to the Government.

Against the background that I have described, I invite the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North to withdraw his new clause. It raises issues which go beyond the Bill. Therefore, and for the reasons that I have stated, the Government are unable to accept it. But I give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that we shall continue to review the position with SACHR in the weeks ahead.

Mr. McNamara: I am grateful for what the Minister has just said, but I am afraid that I am not satisfied with it. Before I press the new clause to a division, I would like to respond to some of the points made by other hon. Members.

Part of the code would require that firearms always be made safe. That was laughed at. Should firearms be unsafe? Is that what the hon. Members for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) and for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) are saying?

I spoke about warning and said that the words "army", "police", "stop or I fire", or words to that effect, should be used. Should they not be used when the code says that security forces

"shall give a clear warning of their intent to use firearms, with sufficient time for the warning to be observed, unless to do so would expose others or themselves to undue risk or would be clearly pointless or inappropriate in the circumstances."?

One cannot be allowed to get away with partial quotations. People delight in using partial quotations when they do not like a concept that is proposed. In this case, the concept is that members of the security forces who are in possession of firearms of tremendous power ought to use those firearms responsibly. Normally, the arms should be carried safely, and anyone who appears to have used a weapon wrongly should be answerable under the law. It is not good enough for the hon. Member for Upper Bann to say, "It is terribly sad if a member of the security forces negligently or mistakenly discharges a firearm and kills somebody." The hon. Gentleman used the words, "negligently or mistakenly"; I took them down. It is indeed very unfortunate if a person is killed. Victims too have certain rights.

Mr. Trimble: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

11.15 pm

Mr. McNamara: Not at the moment.

We are not arguing that this House should give way to terrorists. Nor are we suggesting that there is equality

[Mr. McNamara]

between terrorists and the armed forces. There is no such equality. Terrorists are terrorists—people with a shoot-to-kill policy. No one should deny that for one moment. Indeed, it has been driven home by the events of the past week, but that is not what the argument is about. The argument is about the proper use of force. The security forces act in our name, under the rule of law, so their use of force must be controlled.

Mr. Trimble: The hon. Gentleman quoted me as having used the words, "negligently or mistakenly". He seemed rather surprised that I should have done so. Is he seriously suggesting that when a mistake is made—even if there is negligence—criminal sanctions should follow?

Mr. McNamara: The answer is yes. "Negligently" means without taking due care or precautions.

Mr. Trimble: And criminal sanctions should follow?

Mr. McNamara: Criminal sanctions should follow. Indeed, that is already the law.

Mr. Trimble: It is not.

Mr. McNamara: Under military law, it is a criminal offence to discharge a firearm negligently. Anyone doing so ends up in the glasshouse.

The hon. Gentleman said that we should be changing the law if we were to pass this new clause. Of course we should. We introduced the new clause because we want to change the law. It cannot be acceptable to the House that a person who cannot be charged with murder must be discharged. In respect of the use of firearms, there are different levels of culpability.

There are cases in which people kill others as a result of negligent, mistaken or careless action. In such circumstances, the crime may not amount to murder as such, but the people involved must be held responsible. Under current criminal law, that is not the case. The hon. Gentleman says that this should be part of the general law of the land rather than of emergency law, but we are concerned here with the emergency use of troops in support of the civil power. This legislation is designed to deal with that situation, and that is our reason for tabling the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 24, Noes 131.

Division No. 88] **[11.19 pm**

AYES

Canavan, Dennis
Clelland, David
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Dixon, Don
Foster, Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Lewis, Terry
McGrady, Eddie
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Meale, Alan
Nellist, Dave
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Skinner, Dennis
Strang, Gavin
Turner, Dennis

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Thomas McAvoy and Mr. Harry Barnes.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beggs, Roy
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Conway, Derek
Cope, Rt Hon John
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trimble, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and Mr. Neil Hamilton.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 18

POWERS OF ARREST AND SEIZURE OF MEMBERS OF HER MAJESTY'S FORCES

11.30 pm

Dr. Mawhinney: I beg to move amendment No. 16, in page 13, line 5, after 'seize' insert
', and detain for not more than four hours,'.

The amendment gives effect to a commitment which I gave in Committee. Clause 18(4) provides a new power for the armed forces to seize items which are, have been or are intended to be used in the commission of an offence under clauses 24 or 25.

I gave a commitment to the Committee to consider whether it would be desirable to limit the new power of seizure to a maximum of four hours, as with the power to arrest and detain persons under clause 18(1). The Government have decided that it would be desirable to make this change, and the amendment makes the necessary provision.

The effect of the amendment is that, if after four hours the items had not already been returned to their owners, they would have to be returned, unless the police considered it necessary to retain them under their powers in clause 17(3).

I hope that the House will welcome the amendment.

Mr. McNamara: On behalf of the Opposition, I should like to say that I am glad that the Government have met our concerns. I am happy to accept the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 19

POWER TO SEARCH FOR MUNITIONS, RADIO TRANSMITTERS AND SCANNING RECEIVERS

Dr. Mawhinney: I beg to move amendment No. 17, in page 13, line 28, after 'above' insert 'reasonably'.

Clause 19(4) enables members of the police and armed forces carrying out a search of a dwelling house or any other premises to place restrictions on the movements of the occupants of the place of search, or to require other persons to refrain from entering it, where they believe that it is necessary to do so for the purpose of effectively carrying out the search or of preventing the frustration of its object.

In Committee, I undertook to change the statutory test in clause 19(4) to require the police and armed forces reasonably to believe that it is necessary for the purpose of effectively carrying out a search or of preventing the frustration of its object before imposing restrictions. The amendment gives effect to my undertaking. I hope that the House will welcome it.

Mr. McNamara: Again, we are happy to accept the amendment. We are happy that, at least on this occasion, the Government have met our wishes.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 22

EXAMINATION OF DOCUMENTS

Mr. Jim Marshall: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 15, leave out lines 31 to 48.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments No. 40 and 41.

Mr. Marshall: I hope that amendment No. 5 obtains the unanimity given to Government amendments Nos. 16 and 17.

Clause 22 gives the security forces the power to examine and remove documents found in the course of searches of premises, vehicles or persons. As the Minister will remember, in Committee we tried to amend the clause. I believe that he had some sympathy with our arguments but was not prepared to accept our suggestions.

We are returning to this subject because we are still unhappy with clause 22 and we are not convinced that amendments Nos. 40 and 41 will be an improvement. We believe that they will make the clause unworkable. That is why we continue to press for the emasculation of the clause. The amendments, if agreed to, would make the clause ineffective.

Lord Colville of Culross ruled out the proposed innovation in the Province until such time as the relevant Police and Criminal Evidence Act provisions had been tested in the courts. The Minister will recall that that statement appears in paragraph 2.9.6 of Lord Colville's report. Lord Colville alluded to difficulties that the proposed power would create:

> "I have a reluctance to recommend extensions of emergency powers, especially when they expand the powers to search. Private papers are not lightly to be laid open to a rummage."

That is strong language for Lord Colville. I am sure that the Minister agrees that the consequent confrontations could give rise to considerable potential friction between the security forces and members of the public.

As we said in Committee, we believe that the penalties that are attached to refusal to co-operate are excessively severe. It should be recognised that many ordinary people will be incensed by these draconian powers. Any premeditated attempt to disrupt a search is already covered by existing law—for example, obstruction, breach of the peace and other offences within the criminal code. The penalties that are attached to offences under the clause are excessive and unnecessary, given the provisions of the criminal law.

I congratulate the Government on tabling amendments Nos. 40 and 41, to the extent that the Minister accepted some of the arguments that we advanced in Committee. I presume that the Government's amendments are designed in part to try to meet the criticisms that we expressed at that stage. The Minister will recall that, in Committee, we prayed in aid in support of our views the Law Society of Northern Ireland and the Bar Council. I hope that the Minister has had discussions with those two bodies. I hope also that he will be able to convince us that those two bodies think that amendments Nos. 40 and 41 are suitable.

As I understand amendment No. 40, it is an attempt to introduce the concept of legal privilege so that certain documents will be exempt from the power that is defined

[Mr. Marshall]

in the clause. I am sure that the Minister will agree that that concept was absent as the clause was drafted originally.

We welcome the concept of legal privilege. Indeed, it is one that we introduced in Committee. We have grave doubts, however, about the practicality of the clause if amendment No. 40 is agreed to. On what basis is it possible for a soldier at a checkpoint to determine whether an item is subject to legal privilege? A check can be made, but that will involve the soldier reading the material, and by reading it he would be committing an illegal act. How can the Minister reconcile that? A soldier can only ascertain that a document is legal by reading it, but, by doing so, he commits an illegal act.

The new subsection 2A strengthens the argument for the complete removal of an unworkable and counter-productive clause. Given the Government's view on the operation of PACE in the Province, the remainder of Government amendment No. 40 is ironic. In Committee, the Government rejected the PACE-type safeguards we proposed on the ground that they would lead to unnecessary bureaucracy.

Amendment No. 40 is a cynical attempt to amend the unamendable rather than accept that clause 22 is impractical. Unless I receive assurances from the Minister, we intend to press amendment No. 5 to a vote. We have grave doubts about the practicalities of amendments Nos. 40 and 41—we trust that the Minister will be able to give us further reassurances about them—but, despite those doubts, we do not intend to oppose the amendments in the Lobby.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am sorry that the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) used the word "cynical", as it was a departure from his normal generosity of spirit when we have not agreed on the Bill on the past. I am also sorry that he believes that amendments Nos. 40 and 41 are so unappealing.

One of the terrorist's most vital weapons is intelligence and the collection of information. I am sure that most people would agree with that statement. I therefore find it difficult to understand why the hon. Gentleman believes that amendment No. 5 should be pursued and that amendments Nos. 40 and 41 are "unworkable and unnecessary". If the terrorist sets such store by the collection of information—he needs that information to target his attacks on individuals or places—surely it must be appropriate for the House to address that issue. At present, the security forces are poorly equipped to profit from such opportunities as they may have to get hold of such information.

Although it is an offence to possess information which is likely to be of use to terrorists, there is no related power to examine material that may be found during the course of a lawful search to ascertain whether it contains such vital information for the terrorists. We went over this in Committee, and it is the basis of clause 22. The existing provisions in the PACE order, which require prior application for a warrant, are not adequate for this purpose.

As the law stands, it works greatly in the terrorists' favour. The Government regard the new powers in clause 22 as an appropriate way in which to enhance the security forces' ability to obtain evidential material, as well as offering the potential to deter and disrupt terrorist operations. Unlike the hon. Gentleman, we believe that these powers are justified and necessary. Nevertheless, I announced in Committee on 15 January that we had received representations from a number of bodies about the scope of the powers in clause 22. As the hon. Gentleman said, we had a thorough debate about the issue in Committee, when concerns were expressed by both sides about that clause.

The bodies that made representations to us included the Law Society for Northern Ireland, the Bar Council, the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights and the Committee on the Administration of Justice. I told the Committee that we would consult further on the issues, and we have done so.

After consultation with the interested parties, we have reflected on all the issues to establish whether we can provide greater protection for certain categories of document without sacrificing the essential security purpose of the power contained in the clause. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman and I will simply have to agree to differ on that fundamental issue.

I take some pleasure from being able to tell the House that we have been able to introduce some important safeguards. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Leicester, South does not share that pleasure. The proposed changes are in amendments Nos. 40 and 41.

First, amendment No. 40 provides that the power in clause 22 shall not be taken to authorise the examination, removal or retention of a document or record when there is reasonable cause for believing it to be an item subject to legal privilege. That was urged on us in Committee and it is an important limitation on the scope of the new power. The point was made to us by a number of bodies, including those to which I have just referred, that legal documents are given absolute protection under the ordinary law and should be similarly protected under clause 22. That was also urged on us in Committee. After careful reflection, we have concluded that it would be right to exclude such documents from the scope of clause 22.

11.45 pm

Secondly, the amendment places a duty on the police and armed forces to make a written record where a document or record is examined under clause 22, and to provide a copy of the record to any person whose documents have been examined. The record would also state the date and time when any document or record was removed and retained for examination, and it would identify the constable or member of the armed forces making it. The record would therefore constitute a receipt where documents are removed and retained for examination. The Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights considered that point to be important.

Thirdly, the amendment would set limits on the length of time that any document or record may be removed and retained for examination by the police or armed forces. It is right and proper that documents should not be removed for an indefinite period. The amendment would require the police and armed forces to return retained documents to their owners before the expiry of 48 hours from the time when they were removed, unless they were seized for evidential purposes.

However, we have thought it right to provide the police with powers, exercisable only on the authority of an officer of the rank of chief inspector or above, to extend the

period for another 48 hours in cases of particular difficulty, making a 96-hour maximum. Authorisation by a relatively senior police officer is an important safeguard against the possibility of documents being held for longer than is absolutely necessary.

Finally, the amendment prohibits the photographing or copying by the police and armed forces of any document or record which is examined. That should provide valuable reassurance that the confidentiality of documents will be respected.

Amendment No. 41 deals with a consequential change to clause 26. It simply provides that, where a document or record is found in the course of a search of a vehicle, vessel or aircraft, then the copy of the record of the examination shall be provided to the person in charge of the vehicle, vessel or aircraft, and will contain appropriate details.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South asked a practical question about what he saw as the difficulties of ascertaining whether a document was subject to legal privilege, and of someone having to read it in order to make that judgment. A police officer or member of the armed forces can examine documents only so far as is reasonably required to ascertain whether the document contains information likely to be useful to terrorists. The term "reasonably required" means that the matter is a subject for the courts.

The Government believe that the powers in clause 22 are necessary and justified. We listened to representations by members of the Committee, as we were urged to do, and to representations by others. We have responded to those representations, and we propose to provide important protection for legal documents and to build into the clause a series of procedural safeguards. I hope that, if amendment No. 5 is pressed to a vote, the House will feel able to reject it and to accept amendments Nos. 40 and 41.

Mr. Jim Marshall: First, I should like to comment on my use of the word "cynical". I do not usually reflect and then agree that I may have used an inappropriate word. On this occasion I have thought about the use of the word "cynical" and I agree that it was perhaps inappropriate to use such a word at this juncture. I put my use of it down to the lateness of the hour. I realise that I cannot get the *Hansard* reporter to change the word, but I should like the record to show that I have withdrawn the word "cynical" and would have liked to use the word "sceptical" instead.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his gracious withdrawal.

Mr. Marshall: Before the Minister is too grateful, I suggest that he looks at the dictionary definitions of "cynical" and "sceptical"—but let my retraction stand.

There is not much difference between the Government and the Opposition on the use of documents by terrorist organisations and the need for security forces to have some powers to inspect such documents. As the Minister will appreciate, however, in Committee we placed great emphasis on legal documents. The Minister said then that under existing criminal law such documents have absolute privilege, but from what the Minister has now said, that will clearly not apply under this emergency legislation.

Again we come back to the old conundrum of who will judge reasonableness and at what stage in the process it will be ascertained. I presume that a judge or a court will decide, but that will be at a stage far removed from the soldier looking at the document and having to read either a short or long extract before he is able to decide whether it is subject to legal privilege.

That is why we are sceptical of Government amendment No. 40. The introduction of the concept of legal privilege is good and coincides with the Opposition's view, but in practice it will have little or no effect, and the average legal document which should be subject to privilege will be treated no better or worse than any other document.

That is the basis of our doubts about Government amendment No. 40. As I have already said, however, it is not our intention to oppose it. Nevertheless, despite the Minister's criticism of amendment No. 5, we shall seek to divide the House on that amendment.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 22, Noes 126.

Division No. 90] [11.52 pm

AYES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Clelland, David
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Foster, Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Haynes, Frank
Lewis, Terry
McGrady, Eddie
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Meale, Alan
Nellist, Dave
Primarolo, Dawn
Skinner, Dennis
Strang, Gavin
Turner, Dennis

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Thomas McAvoy and
Mr. Don Dixon.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beggs, Roy
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Conway, Derek
Cope, Rt Hon John
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dykes, Hugh
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Paice, James

Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trimble, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Boswell and
Mr. Neil Hamilton.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment made: No. 40, in page 15, line 40, at end insert—

'(2A) This section shall not be taken to authorise the examination, removal or retention of a document or record by a person at a time when he has reasonable cause for believing it to be an item subject to legal privilege (within the meaning of the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989).

(2B) Where a document or record is examined under this section it shall not be photographed or copied.

(2C) Where a document or record is examined under this section the person who examines it shall make a written record of the examination at once or, where it is not practicable to make one at once, as soon as is practicable.

(2D) A record of an examination of a document or record which is made under this section shall specify—

(a) a description of the document or record;
(b) the object of the examination;
(c) the address of the premises, or a description of the place, where the document or record was found;
(d) where the document or record was found in the course of a search of a person, the name of that person;
(e) where the document or record was found in the course of a search of any premises or other place, the name of any person appearing to the person making the record to be the occupier of the premises or other place or to have had custody or control of the document or record when it was found;
(f) where the document or record was removed for examination from the place where it was found, the date and time when it was removed from that place; and
(g) where the document or record was examined at the place where it was found, the date and time when it was examined.

(2E) Such a record shall identify the person by whom the examination was carried out—

(a) in the case of a constable, by reference to his police number; and
(b) in the case of a member of Her Majesty's forces, by reference to his service number, rank and regiment.

(2F) Where a record of an examination of a document or record is made under this section a copy of the record shall be supplied—

(a) in a case where the document or record was found in the course of a search of a person, to that person; and
(b) in a case where the document or record was found in the course of a search of any premises or other place, to any person appearing to the person making the record to be the occupier of the premises or other place or to have had custody or control of the document or record when it was found.

(2G) Subject to subsection (2H) below, a document or record may not be retained by virtue of subsection (2) above for more than forty-eight hours.

(2H) An officer of the Royal Ulster Constabulary not below the rank of chief inspector may authorise the retention of a document or record by a constable for a further period or periods; but no such authorisation shall permit the retention of a document or record beyond the end of the period of ninety-six hours from the time when it was removed for examination from the place where it was found.'.—*[Mr. Brooke.]*

Clause 26

SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

Amendment made: No. 41, in page 18, line 15, at end insert—

'(1A) Where a document or record examined under section 22 above was found in the course of a search of a vehicle, vessel or aircraft, the references in that section to the occupier of the premises or place where it was found shall be construed as references to the person in charge of the vehicle, vessel or aircraft.'.—*[Mr. Brooke.]*

Clause 27

DIRECTING TERRORIST ORGANISATION

12 midnight

Mr. McNamara: I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 19, leave out lines 10 to 13.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 1, in page 19, line 10, leave out ', at any level,'.

No. 11, in page 19, line 10, after 'the' insert 'criminal'.

No. 2, in page 19, line 10, leave out 'an' and insert 'a proscribed'.

No. 3, in page 19, line 11, leave out 'which is concerned in' and insert 'with regard to'.

No. 12, in page 19, line 13, leave out 'imprisonment for life' and insert

'imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years'.

Government amendment No. 33.

Mr. McNamara: Clause 27 was introduced by the Government, rather strangely, during the final stages in Committee. It creates a new offence of directing

"the activities of an organisation which is concerned in the commission of acts of terrorism",

the punishment for which shall be life imprisonment.

There are several objections to this clause. It creates a new offence, but fails to define it. The concept of directing is totally unknown in existing law. Concepts such as permitting, allowing, suffering and controlling all exist and have a definite meaning, but there is no such precision in this clause.

It is also noteworthy that the draft criminal code drawn up by the Law Commission in 1989 does not refer to the concept of directing anyone in the commission of any crime. Given that lack of precision and definition, the Government are likely to argue—as they did in Committee—that the courts will provide the necessary definition. Such an argument amounts to claiming that good judges in Northern Ireland will rescue us from bad law passed by the House of Commons.

Not only does the clause lack precision; it is unnecessary. It is already illegal to take part in the preparation, instigation or commission of acts of terrorism. The definition is already wide enough to encompass any behaviour that could legitimately be considered to direct the activities of an organisation involved in terrorism. Furthermore, the clause is, to a degree, dishonest. Its practical effect would be to make virtually every member of a proscribed organisation liable to a life sentence. As such persons would inevitably be involved in directing activities at some level, almost any involvement in any such organisation would make them so liable. If the Government intend to increase the penalties —there may or may not be an argument for that—they should say so openly, and do it directly rather than through the back door.

It can be argued that the failure to keep sentences proportionate to crimes poses an additional danger for the security forces, as there would be little difference between the consequences of less severe crimes and those of murder. The provision of the new offence would have strange, almost absurd, consequences. It relates not to the direction of terrorist activities, but to the direction of organisations concerned in such activities. Anyone responsible for bringing about a decision to cease terrorist activities would be liable to life imprisonment. People who engaged in conversations with terrorist organisations with the aim of persuading them to lay down their arms and pursue their goals democratically would be penalised by the clause.

Clause 27 is not tied to the present emergency, in that it does not confine itself to terrorist activities engaged in by proscribed organisations, or to terrorism connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland. It seems to be an example of the consequences of an error known to the Central Intelligence Agency as "blowback". "Blowback" occurs when official propaganda feeds back into official policy-making—when people act on the belief that their own propaganda is necessarily true. The theory behind it is that of the godfather hypothesis, which posits the existence of a directorate that plans, but does not carry out, acts of terrorism. Apart from the fact that anyone so involved is already guilty of a wide range of criminal offences, everything that is known about terrorism in Northern Ireland suggests that the credibility of the paramilitary leaders among their supporters depends on their being, or having been, personally implicated in specific acts of terrorism. A surprising number of them have been found by the courts to be involved in specific crimes.

We cannot accept clause 27. The Government have not said that they are prepared to accept any of the amendments. Amendment No. 1, which was tabled by Ulster Unionist Members, seeks to make clause 27 more specific. It removes the phrase, "at any level", thereby restricting its scope to the leaders of proscribed organisations. If they push it to a vote, we shall vote for it.

Amendment No. 2 would ensure that the clause applies only to organisations that have been proscribed, so that leading an organisation that may be involved in violent incidents does not lead to conviction unless it has been proscribed. I am not too happy with the amendment because a front organisation may condemn some acts of violence while sponsoring terrorist activity or benefiting from it. The amendment will need more careful consideration.

Amendment No. 3 makes the clause more specific by restricting guilt to those involved in the direction of terrorist activities. The legal activities of the organisation would not be covered. My hon. Friends in the SDLP have tabled an amendment to achieve a similar purpose, and I should have thought that it would recommend itself to the Government.

In amendment No. 12, my hon. Friends in the SDLP seek to change the blanket charge or the indeterminate or mandatory life sentence to up to 10 years' imprisonment. Given the vagueness of the clause and the possibility of conviction under it for varying responsibilities for paramilitary campaigns, preserving judicial discretion would allow for sentences to be proportionate to the offence.

Clause 27, which has no parallel in criminal legislation, introduces a dangerous new concept. In Committee, the Government said that it is necessary, yet members of the various terrorist organisations are already caught by the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973 and the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989. By creating a new offence to pretend that they are doing something about the godfathers, the Government are not helping the fight against terrorism. The new clauses that we discussed earlier contained sensible provisions, but clause 27, which seems to be an emotional spasm, should not be in the Bill.

Mr. Mallon: I should like to speak specifically to amendments Nos. 1 and 12, which were tabled by SDLP Members.

Amendment No. 1 inserts "criminal" before the word "activities".

Mr. Trimble: That is amendment No. 11.

Mr. Mallon: Amendment No. 11.

Under clause 27, any person who directs the activities of an organisation which is concerned in the commission of acts of terrorism is guilty of an offence. The clause is open to an interpretation that could be quite erroneous. Someone could direct several activities within an organisation—an organisation that supports and is involved in terrorism—that are not terrorist acts and that could not be considered criminal acts. The clause must be clearly defined, or it will rightly be described as loose, imprecise and bad legislation.

In Committee, it was suggested that we shall rely on good judges to protect the accused from bad law. I described clause 27 as resembling something that had been written on the back of an envelope by someone on his way home on the Underground—if the Underground had not been disrupted by someone who had been directing the activities of an organisation involved in terrorism.

The purpose of amendment No. 12 is to try to soften the notion that somehow such activity merits a life sentence. The clause invites the judge to consider a life sentence. The Minister of State will argue that it would be nonsense for a judge not to use his discretion. If discretion is being left to the judge, that should be defined in the legislation. It is for that reason that we tabled the amendments.

12.15 am

Mr. Trimble: When the clause was discussed in Committee, we said that we could see merit in its general objective, but we were concerned about the width of its terms. In Committee, I put a number of questions to the

[Mr. Trimble]

Minister of State on the point. In the light of his answers, we decided to table amendments to put on record our reservations, doubts and unhappiness about some aspects of the clause. I should like to speak to those briefly.

Reference has been made to amendment No. 1, which would delete the phrase "at any level". As the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said, the object is to tighten the legislation. If it inflicts life imprisonment on the person who directs the activities of the organisation at any level, it will sweep up people who are engaged in low-level activity. We think that life imprisonment may not be appropriate when members of a proscribed organisation pay heavy penalties simply through membership, and any criminal activity that can be proved will carry its own penalty.

The object of the clause is to give a special additional heavy penalty in the shape of life imprisonment to people who are, as is said, the godfathers. The godfathers are not the small fry. We can see merit in the legislation, because it is reasonable to believe that there are circumstances in which persons who are not members of proscribed organisations are directing their activities. I take the point made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, but in some cases they are former active members of proscribed organisations who have moved on to other activities which are not formally proscribed but none the less, from that position of relative safety, they still direct terrorist activities. It is right that severe penalties should be available for them. I should like to think that they would be used, but we will wait and see.

In Committee I asked the Minister of State why the clause was not directed specifically to proscribed organisations. He said that he did not want to refer to proscribed organisations because of the width of the power to proscribe. In clause 28(3), the Secretary of State may proscribe an organisation if it

"appears to him to be concerned in terrorism or in promoting or encouraging it."

The Minister of State said that he did not want to cover all those organisations. He did not want to cover organisations that were simply promoting or encouraging terrorism; he wanted to focus on organisations which were concerned in terrorism. The spirit of his reply was that "proscribed" was too wide, that he wanted a narrower focus.

In framing the amendments, I tried to get the best of both worlds by referring to proscribed organisations and then by making it clear that the offence would apply not just to directing any activity of a proscribed organisation but to directing the terrorist activities of proscribed organisations. I think that in those circumstances life imprisonment is not inappropriate.

With regard to other organisations which are not proscribed, there are two answers—either the organisation should be proscribed or the criminal or terrorist activities themselves could be brought in. The clause would bring in other organisations not proscribed where it might not be appropriate.

In Committee the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North gave an example. He referred to the Animal Liberation Front as an example of an organisation which has been engaged—or there is reason to believe that it has been engaged—in activities which would come within the definition of terrorist activities. In this clause, a person who directs any activity, whether criminal or non-criminal, within a body such as the Animal Liberation Front could be exposed to life imprisonment. We felt that was perhaps a little too draconian.

If we are to have a penalty of this nature, it is appropriate that it be more narrowly focused. We tabled the amendments to put our position on record and I hope that the Government will consider the matter further.

Dr. Mawhinney: Several important amendments have been tabled to the clause, and several hon. Members have spoken to them. I will do my best to meet the standard that I set myself at the beginning of the proceedings to be as concise as possible but to do justice to the arguments made.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) does not like clause 27. He did not like it in Committee, and he does not like it today. He has the virtue of consistency and we all admire him for that. I like clause 27. We have the same consistency and it seems that we shall have difficulty in achieving a meeting of minds on the subject. I ask the hon. Gentleman to consider the ordinary, common-sense meaning of this simple clause. A significant feature of all the amendments is that they focus on individual words.

Clause 27 is short and needs to be taken in the round. The word "directing" has its ordinary common-sense meaning. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North does not like the word "direct"—he wants it to be defined—but if the House defined "direct" the courts would still have to reach a judgment about what the words meant. It seems much better that they should have to interpret a simple sentence with its common-sense meaning rather than complicated definitions of the word "direct", which they would still have to interpret. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has looked up the definition in the Concise Oxford Dictionary. The meaning of the word "direct" is clear and straightforward.

Amendment No. 1 is designed to remove the phrase "at any level". I advise the House that that phrase was included deliberately in the provision. Indeed, the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) acknowledged that I made that clear in Committee. The phrase was included to make it clear that anyone who directs the activities of one of the organisations, whether at headquarters, regional or local level, is equally open to prosecution.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North suggested that the clause was not necessary because those involved in terrorist organisations could always be got for something else. But some of them cannot be got for something else. That is precisely why the clause has been inserted in the Bill.

As I said in Committee, the expression "at any level" was chosen to give specific recognition to the types of structure that terrorist organisations adopt. I am slightly surprised at the hon. Member for Upper Bann. I should have thought that, with his knowledge, he would have recognised that the structures of terrorist organisations gave the phrase "at any level" genuine meaning. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North has never accepted that concept, either in Committee or today, but I should have thought that the hon. Member for Upper Bann would recognise it.

Mr. Trimble: Perhaps in my haste to make progress I passed over that point when I should have dealt with it in detail. I remember the points that the Minister made in Committee. He referred to cell-like structures, and so on. I formed the opinion then—and I am still of the opinion now—that the Bill would catch people directing cells of terrorist organisations if it simply used the phrase "directing the activities". I believe that "at any level" is still too wide.

Mr. Mawhinney: I thank the hon. Gentleman for explaining his view. I am afraid that we shall have to agree to disagree. It is gratifying that he recognises that there are structures which make the inclusion of the words "at any level" arguably defensible, even if he is not persuaded by the argument.

As the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) said, the purpose of amendment No. 11 is to narrow the scope of the offence. It would apply to those directing the criminal activities of organisations concerned in the commission of acts of terrorism. Of course, I accept that in certain circumstances some of the activities of terrorist organisations may not be overtly criminal—that is to say, they may not, in themselves, be breaches of the criminal law. For example, activities which may be directed by a person holding the position of quartermaster may not in themselves be criminal activities. It is not a criminal offence to purchase or acquire items such as gloves, balaclavas, overalls, two-way radios or walkie-talkies. On the other hand, we can have no doubt about the purpose behind the quartermaster's direction that such items should be acquired. I therefore suggest to the House that it is right that those against whom there is evidence of the direction of such activities, even when those activities may not in themselves be unlawful, should be open to prosecution.

With regard to amendments Nos. 2 and 3, it may interest the hon. Member for Upper Bann to know that when the clause was being drafted our initial inclination —in line with the hon. Gentleman's own thinking—was to define the offence in terms of proscribed organisations. Clearly, it was—and is—our expectation that, in practice, it is against the leaders of those organisations which are currently proscribed, at whatever level, that the offence will be used. It became apparent, however, that there could be potential complications in using that definition. As hon. Members will recall, clause 28(3) empowers the Secretary of State to add to the list of proscribed organisations

"any organisation that appears to him to be concerned in terrorism or in promoting or encouraging it."

The use of the definition "proscribed organisation" for this offence would have opened up the theoretical possibility that those who might be directing the activities of organisations which had been proscribed only for promoting or encouraging terrorism, rather than because they were concerned in terrorism, would be open to prosecution for this serious offence. That is not a situation that we wish to see arise.

I see difficulties also in respect of amendment No. 3. It is clear that, as the amendment is drafted, the offence applies to anyone involved in directing the activities of terrorist organisations without seeking to put limits on the types of activities concerned. The point here is that every organisation is composed to some extent of different groups with different specialisations. In addition to those who actually plan and carry out acts of terrorism, there are those who perform other functions such as intelligence-gathering, recruitment and quartermastering which are vital to the existence of the organisations. It is therefore right that those responsible for those various functions should be subject to prosecution for the offence if there is evidence of their directing role, although in individual cases that role may well not be such as to justify the maximum penalty.

Mr. Trimble: I understand what the Minister is saying about activities other than those of a directly terrorist nature—gathering information, for instance—but he must realise that the cooks and bottlewashers are included.

Mr. Mawhinney: If cooks and bottlewashers are members of terrorist organisations, it is possible that we are gathering them in.

Amendment No. 3, however, appears to limit the application of the offence solely to those directing the activities of these organisations with regard to actual acts of terrorism. Not only would that represent an unacceptable narrowing of the offence, but it would place an additional heavy burden on the prosecution to demonstrate that that was precisely the suspect's role within the organisation's command.

The purpose of amendment No. 12 is straightforward —it would reduce the maximum penalty for the offence from life imprisonment to 10 years. The Government cannot support that amendment. As hon. Members know, the offence is aimed at those who direct the activities of terrorist organisations, and it simply would not be credible for those in control of such organisations to be subject to a lesser maximum penalty than their subordinates. Rank and file members of those organisations are liable to sentences of life imprisonment where serious offences are committed, and it is right that those who are responsible for directing such activities should be subject to no less a penalty.

The purpose of Government amendment No. 33 is to add the offence in clause 27 to the list of scheduled offences in schedule 1. It would clearly be inappropriate for the offence to be dealt with before juries, and the amendment will ensure that cases will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures in part I of the Bill.

For all those reasons, I invite the House to resist amendments Nos. 6, 1, 11, 2, 3 and 12, but to accept Government amendment No. 33.

12.30 am

Mr. McNamara: It is not my intention to keep the House long, but the Minister of State has confirmed the point that we made earlier—he is boxed in by his own propaganda. He accused me of being consistent. On this issue, I am consistently right and he is consistently wrong and has dug a big pit for himself. He started by saying that everyone knew what "directing" meant. I asked him what he meant, and he replied that it would be foolish to define it. The Bill contains clauses that consist of nothing but definitions, so everything will be defined except the major new offence.

The Minister said that we needed the new offence because there would be occasions when the people involved would not otherwise be, to use his charming and immortal word, "got". He did not give an example of what he meant, but he then said that he had thought of one and talked about quartermasters who, when sending out

[Mr. McNamara]

people to collect items such as balaclavas and two-way radios, would be directing. They would be caught under clause 30 on obtaining possession of items intended for terrorist purposes.

The Minister gave a list of other examples. He rightly said that it would be wrong for people who direct terrorism to be given more lenient prison sentences than those who carry out the crimes. But there are offences, including being an accessory to a crime and conspiracy, that cover every example given by the Minister. Someone felt that the Government had to appear to be tough. The proposal is nothing but an emotional spasm, and we should get rid of it.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 18, Noes 123.

Division No. 91] **[12.32 am**

AYES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dixon, Don
Foster, Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Lewis, Terry
McGrady, Eddie
McNamara, Kevin
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Meale, Alan
Nellist, Dave
Skinner, Dennis
Strang, Gavin
Turner, Dennis

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beggs, Roy
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Cope, Rt Hon John
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Hague, William
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shelton, Sir William
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trimble, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Boswell and
Mr. Neil Hamilton.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 52

RIGHT TO COMPENSATION

Amendment made: No. 18, in page 34, line 44, at end insert—

'(8) Subsection (1) above does not apply to anything done under Part (*Confiscation of proceeds of terrorist-related activities*) of this Act or Schedule (*Confiscation orders: supplementary provisions*) to this Act.'—*[Dr. Mawhinney.]*

Clause 54

RESTRICTION OF PROSECUTIONS

Dr. Mawhinney: I beg to move amendment No. 19, in page 35, line 20, leave out from 'prosecution' to 'except' in line 21 and insert—

'in respect of an offence under this Act shall not be instituted in Northern Ireland'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 20.

Dr. Mawhinney: Clause 54 provides that no proceedings for an offence under the Bill shall be instituted except by or with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland. I am sure that hon. Members agree that private prosecutions for an offence under the Bill would be inappropriate.

The offences in relation to authorised investigators apply to England and Wales and to Scotland and the offences in relation to the confiscation scheme are capable of being extended to those jurisdictions.

Dr. Godman: I ask for the Minister's tolerance and sympathy. As a Scots Member, I am puzzled about why there is no mention of Scotland. When I was on a local review committee inquiring into Edinburgh prison, I had to assess for parole purposes a number of men who were in gaol in Scotland for committing terrorist acts involving groups in Northern Ireland. I ask the question because the Director of Public Prosecutions has no responsibility in Scotland. Why is there no reference to Scotland in the clause?

12.45 am

Dr. Mawhinney: If the hon. Gentleman had allowed me to move on to the next paragraph of my reply, his question would have been answered.

To ensure that there are no private prosecutions for offences under the Act, the amendments provide that proceedings in Northern Ireland and in England and Wales shall not be instituted except by or with the consent of the respective Directors of Public Prosecutions. No equivalent provision is necessary for Scotland, because private prosecutions cannot be brought in Scotland. I understand that prosecutions in Scotland have to be brought by the Lord Advocate.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 20, in page 35, line 22, at end insert

'or in England and Wales except by or with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions.'—*[Dr. Mawhinney.]*

Clause 56

ORDERS AND REGULATIONS

Amendments made: No. 21, in page 36, line 4, leave out from '(2)' to 'shall' in line 5 and insert

'No order under section 1 or 28 above or 58(3) below or paragraph 18(1)(a) of Schedule *(Confiscation orders: supplementary provisions)* to this Act and no regulations under section 48 above'

No. 22, in line 12, leave out from '(3)' to 'shall' in line 13 and insert

'Orders and regulations under the provisions mentioned in subsection (2) above'

No. 23, in line 16, after 'made', insert 'such'

No. 24, in line 21, leave out subsection (4) and insert—

'(4) Subsection (1) above does not apply to any order under section 25 Schedule 3 or paragraph 6(1)(d) of Schedule 4 or any order under regulations made by virtue of section 48.

(4A) Any regulations under section 8 and any order under section 14(5), 15(8), *(Confiscation orders)*(5), 50 or 51 above or under paragraph 7(3) of Schedule *(Confiscation orders: supplementary provisions)* to this Act shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'—*[Dr. Mawhinney.]*

Clause 58

COMMENCEMENT, DURATION, EXPIRY AND REVIVAL OF PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT

Amendments made: No. 25, in page 36, line 35, after 'Act', insert

'except Part *(Confiscation of proceeds of terrorist-related activities)*'.

No. 26, in line 36, at end insert

'and that Part shall come into force on such date as the Secretary of State may by order appoint.'

No. 27, in line 37, at end insert

'and Part *(Confiscation of proceeds of terrorist-related activities)*'.

No. 28, in line 41, leave out second 'and'.

No. 29, in line 42, at end insert

'; and

(c) paragraph 19 of Schedule *(Confiscation orders: supplementary provisions)*,'.

No. 30, in line 44, leave out 'this section' and insert 'subsection (3) below'.—*[Dr. Mawhinney.]*

Clause 60

SHORT TITLE AND EXTENT

Amendment made: No. 31, in page 38, line 23, leave out 'section 47, Schedule 4 and paragraph 2(2) and (3)' and insert

'sections *(Assisting another to retain proceeds of terrorist-related activities)*, *(Concealing or transferring proceeds of terrorist-related activities)* and 47, paragraph 18 of Schedule *(Confiscation orders: supplementary provisions)*, Schedule 4, this Part of this Act so far as relating to those provisions and paragraphs 2(2), (3), (7) and (8)'.—*[Dr. Mawhinney.]*

New Schedule

CONFISCATION ORDERS: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

Interpretation

1.—(1) Section *(Interpretation of confiscation provisions)* of this Act also has effect for the purposes of this Schedule.

(2) The following provisions have effect, in addition to those of that section, for the interpretation of this Schedule.

(3) Proceedings for an offence are concluded—

(a) when (disregarding any power of a court to grant leave to appeal out of time) there is no further possibility of a confiscation order being made in the proceedings;

(b) on the satisfaction of a confiscation order made in the proceedings (whether by payment of the amount due under the order or by the defendant serving imprisonment in default).

(4) An order is subject to appeal until (disregarding any power of a court to grant leave to appeal out of time) there is no further possibility of an appeal on which the order could be varied or set aside.

(5) References to "acting as an insolvency practitioner" shall be construed in accordance with Article 3 of the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 except that for the purposes of such construction paragraph (5) of that Article (which provides that nothing in the Article is to apply to anything done by the official receiver) shall be disregarded; and the expression shall include the official receiver acting as receiver or manager of the property.

(6) References to the Registration of Deeds Acts are to the Registration of Deeds Act (Northern Ireland) 1970 and every statutory provision for the time being in force amending that Act or otherwise relating to the registry of deeds, or to the registration of deeds, orders or other instruments or documents in such registry.

Application of procedure for enforcing fines

2.—(1) Where the Crown Court makes a confiscation order against a defendant, section 35(1), (2) and (4) of the Criminal Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 1945 (powers of Crown Court in relation to fines) shall have effect as if—

(a) the amount which the order requires him to pay were a fine imposed on him by the Crown Court; and

(b) in section 35(2) (imprisonment in default), for the reference to twelve months there were substituted a reference to the periods set out in the second column of the following Table applicable respectively to the amounts set out opposite thereto—

	Table
An amount not exceeding £50	7 days
An amount exceeding £50 but not exceeding £100	14 days
An amount exceeding £100 but not exceeding £400	30 days
An amount exceeding £400 but not exceeding £1,000	60 days
An amount exceeding £1,000 but not exceeding £2,000	90 days
An amount exceeding £2,000 but not exceeding £5,000	6 months

An amount exceeding £5,000 but not exceeding £10,000	9 months
An amount exceeding £10,000 but not exceeding £20,000	12 months
An amount exceeding £20,000 but not exceeding £50,000	18 months
An amount exceeding £50,000 but not exceeding £100,000	2 years
An amount exceeding £100,000 but not exceeding £250,000	3 years
An amount exceeding £250,000 but not exceeding £1 million	5 years
An amount exceeding £1 million	10 years

(2) Where—

(a) a warrant of commitment is issued for a default in payment of an amount ordered to be paid by a confiscation order in respect of an offence; and

(b) at the time the warrant is issued, the defendant is liable to serve a term of custody in respect of the offence,

the term of imprisonment or of detention under section 5 of the Treatment of Offenders Act (Northern Ireland) 1968 (detention of persons aged sixteen to twenty-one for default) to be served in default of payment of the amount shall not begin to run until after the term mentioned in paragraph (b) above.

(3) The reference in sub-paragraph (2) above to the term of custody which the defendant is liable to serve in respect of the offence is a reference to the term of imprisonment or of detention under section 5 of the said Act of 1968 which he is liable to serve in respect of the offence; and for the purposes of this sub-paragraph—

(a) consecutive terms and terms which are wholly or partly concurrent shall be treated as a single term; and

(b) there shall be disregarded—

(i) any sentence of imprisonment or order for detention suspended under section 18 of that Act which has not taken effect at the time when the warrant is issued; and

(ii) any term of imprisonment or detention fixed under section 35(1)(c) of the Criminal Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 1945 for which a warrant of commitment has not been issued at that time.

(4) An amount payable under a confiscation order is not a fine, costs, damages or compensation for the purposes of section 76 of the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1968 (enforcement of fines imposed on young offenders).

(5) This paragraph applies in relation to confiscation orders made by the Court of Appeal, or by the House of Lords on appeal from the Court of Appeal, as it applies in relation to confiscation orders made by the Crown Court, and the reference in sub-paragraph (1)(a) above to the Crown Court shall be construed accordingly.

Interest on sums unpaid under confiscation orders

3.—(1) If any sum required to be paid by a person under a confiscation order is not paid when it is required to be paid (whether forthwith on the making of the order or at a time specified under section 35(1) of the Criminal Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 1945), that person shall be liable to pay interest on that sum for the period for which it remains unpaid and the amount of the interest shall for the purposes of enforcement be treated as part of the amount to be recovered from him under the confiscation order.

(2) The Crown Court may, on the application of the prosecution, increase the term of imprisonment or detention fixed in respect of the confiscation order under subsection (1)(c) of section 35 of the said Act of 1945 (imprisonment in default of payment) if the effect of sub-paragraph (1) above is to increase the maximum period applicable in relation to the order under subsection (2) of that section as it has effect by virtue of paragraph 2(1)(b) above.

(3) The rate of interest under sub-paragraph (1) above shall be that for the time being applying to a money judgment of the High Court.

Cases in which restraint orders and charging orders may be made

4.—(1) The powers conferred on the High Court by paragraphs 5(1) and 6(1) below are exercisable where—

(a) proceedings have been instituted in Northern Ireland against the defendant for a relevant offence;

(b) the proceedings have not been concluded; and

(c) the court is satisfied that there is reasonable cause to believe that the defendant has benefited from terrorist-related activities.

(2) Those powers are also exercisable where—

(a) the High Court is satisfied that, whether by the making of a complaint or otherwise, a person is to be charged with a relevant offence; and

(b) it appears to the court that there is reasonable cause to believe that he has benefited from terrorist-related activities.

(3) For the purposes of paragraphs 5 and 6 below at any time when those powers are exercisable before proceedings have been instituted—

(a) references to the defendant shall be construed as references to the person referred to in sub-paragraph (2)(a) above;

(b) references to the prosecution shall be construed as references to the person who the High Court is satisfied is to have the conduct of the proposed proceedings; and

(c) references to realisable property shall be construed as if, immediately before that time, proceedings had been instituted against the person referred to in sub-paragraph (2)(a) above for a relevant offence.

(4) Where the High Court has made an order under paragraph 5(1) or 6(1) below by virtue of sub-paragraph (2) above, the court shall discharge the order if proceedings in respect of the offence are not instituted (whether by the making of a complaint or otherwise) within such time as the court considers reasonable.

Restraint orders

5.—(1) The High Court may by order (a restraint order) prohibit any person from dealing with any realisable property, subject to such conditions and exceptions as may be specified in the order.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-paragraph (1) above, a restraint order may make such provision as the High Court thinks fit for living expenses or legal expenses.

(3) A restraint order may apply—

(a) to all realisable property held by a specified person, whether the property is described in the order or not; and

(b) to realisable property held by a specified person, being property transferred to him after the making of the order.

(4) This paragraph shall not have effect in relation to any property for the time being subject to a charge under paragraph 6 below.

(5) A restraint order—

(a) may be made only on an application by the prosecution;

(b) may be made on an ex parte application to a judge in chambers; and

(c) shall provide for notice to be given to persons affected by the order.

(6) A restraint order—

(a) may be discharged or varied in relation to any property; and

(b) shall be discharged when proceedings for the offence are concluded.

(7) An application for the discharge or variation of a restraint order may be made by any person affected by it.

(8) Where the High Court has made a restraint order, the court may at any time appoint a receiver—

(a) to take possession of any realisable property; and

(b) in accordance with the court's directions, to manage or otherwise deal with any property in respect of which he is appointed,

subject to such exceptions and conditions as may be specified by the court; and the court may require any person having possession of property in respect of which a receiver is appointed under this section to give possession of it to the receiver.

(9) For the purposes of this paragraph, dealing with property held by any person includes (without prejudice to the generality of the expression)—

(a) where a debt is owed to that person, making a payment to any person in reduction of the amount of the debt; and

(b) removing the property from Northern Ireland.

(10) Where the High Court has made a restraint order, a constable may, for the purpose of preventing any realisable property being removed from Northern Ireland, seize the property.

(11) Property seized under sub-paragraph (10) above shall be dealt with in accordance with the directions of the High Court.

(12) The prosecution shall be treated for the purposes of section 66 of the Land Registration Act (Northern Ireland) 1970 (cautions) as a person interested in relation to any registered land to which a restraint order or an application for such an order relates.

(13) On the application of the prosecution, the Registrar shall, in respect of any registered land to which a restraint order or an application for such an order relates, make an entry inhibiting any dealing with the land without the consent of the High Court.

(14) Subsections (2) and (4) of section 67 of the said Act of 1970 (inhibitions) shall apply to an entry made on the application of the prosecution under sub-paragraph (13) above as they apply to an entry made on the application of any person interested in the registered land under subsection (1) of that section.

(15) Where a restraint order has been protected by an entry registered under the said Act of 1970 or the Registration of Deeds Acts, an order under sub-paragraph (6) above discharging the restraint order may direct that the entry be vacated.

(16) In this paragraph "Registrar" and "entry" have the same meanings as in the said Act of 1970 and "registered land" means land the title to which is registered under Part III of that Act.

Charging orders in respect of land, securities, etc.

6.—(1) The High Court may make a charging order on realisable property for securing the payment to the Crown—

(a) where a confiscation order has not been made, of an amount equal to the value from time to time of the property charged; and

(b) in any other case, of an amount not exceeding the amount payable under the confiscation order.

(2) A charging order—

(a) may be made only on an application by the prosecution;

(b) may be made on an ex parte application to a judge in chambers;

(c) shall provide for notice to be given to persons affected by the order; and

(d) may be made subject to such conditions as the court thinks fit and, without prejudice to the generality of this paragraph, such conditions as it thinks fit as to the time when the charge is to become effective.

(3) Subject to sub-paragraph (5) below, a charge may be imposed by a charging order only on—

(a) any interest in realisable property, being an interest held beneficially by the defendant or by a person to whom the defendant has directly or indirectly made a gift caught by Part (*Confiscation of proceeds of terrorist-related activities*) of this Act—

(i) in any asset of a kind mentioned in sub-paragraph (4) below; or

(ii) under any trust; or

(b) any interest in realisable property held by a person as trustee of a trust if the interest is in such an asset or is an interest under another trust and a charge may by virtue of paragraph (a) above be imposed by a charging order on the whole beneficial interest under the first-mentioned trust.

(4) The assets referred to in sub-paragraph (3) above are—

(a) land in Northern Ireland; or

(b) securities of any of the following kinds—

(i) government funds or stock;

(ii) stock of any body incorporated within Northern Ireland (other than a building society);

(iii) stock of any body incorporated outside Northern Ireland (other than a building society incorporated in Great Britain) or of any country or territory outside the United Kingdom, being stock registered in a register kept at any place within Northern Ireland;

(iv) units of any unit trust in respect of which a register of the unit holders is kept at any place within Northern Ireland.

(5) In any case where a charge is imposed by a charging order on any interest in an asset of a kind mentioned in sub-paragraph (4)(b) above, the High Court may provide for the charge to extend to any interest or dividend payable in respect of the asset.

(6) The High Court may make an order discharging or varying the charging order and shall make an order discharging the charging order if the proceedings for the offence are concluded or the amount payment of which is secured by the charge is paid into court.

(7) An application for the discharge or variation of a charging order may be made by any person affected by it.

Charging orders: supplementary provisions

7.—(1) Subject to any provision made under paragraph 9 below or by rules of court, a charge imposed by a charging order shall have the like effect and shall be enforceable in the same courts and in the same manner as an equitable charge created by the person or persons who are entitled to make such charges over the realisable property.

(2) Where a charging order has been protected by an entry registered under the Land Registration Act (Northern Ireland) 1970 or the Registration of Deeds Acts, an order under paragraph 6(6) above discharging the charging order may direct that the entry be vacated.

(3) The Secretary of State may by order amend paragraph 6 above by adding to or removing from the kinds of asset for the time being referred to there any asset of a kind which in his opinion ought to be so added or removed.

(4) In this paragraph and paragraph 6 above—

"building society" has the same meaning as in the Building Societies Act 1986;

"dividend" includes any distribution in respect of any unit of a unit trust;

"government funds or stocks" has the same meaning as in the Judgments Enforcement (Northern Ireland) Order 1981;

"stock" includes shares, debentures and any securities of the body concerned, whether or not constituting a charge on the assets of that body;

"unit trust" means any trust established for the purpose, or having the effect, of providing, for persons having funds available for investment, facilities for the participation by them, as beneficiaries under the trust, in any profits or income arising from the acquisition, holding, management or disposal of any property whatsoever.

Restraint and charging orders made by the Secretary of State

8.—(1) The power to make a restraint order or charging order under the provisions of paragraphs 5 and 6 above shall be exercisable by the Secretary of State in any case in which it appears to him that the information which it would be necessary to provide in support of an application to the High Court or a judge under those provisions would, if disclosed, be likely to place any person in danger or prejudice the capability of members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary or a person authorised under section 47 of this Act to investigate a relevant offence.

(2) In their application by virtue of sub-paragraph (1) above paragraph 4 to 6 above shall have effect with the necessary modifications and as if references to the High Court were references to the Secretary of State.

(3) An order made by the Secretary of State by virtue of this paragraph may be varied or discharged under those provisions by the High Court; and the High Court may under paragraph 5(8) above appoint a receiver where a restraint order has been made by the Secretary of State.

(4) A person who contravenes a restraint order made by virtue of this paragraph is guilty of an offence and liable—

(a) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine or both;

(b) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or both.

Realisation of property

9.—(1) Where—

(a) a confiscation order is made;

(b) the order is not subject to appeal; and

(c) the proceedings in which it was made have not been concluded,

the High Court may, on an application by the prosecution, exercise the powers conferred by sub-paragraphs (2) to (6) below.

(2) The court may appoint a receiver in respect of realisable property.

(3) The court may empower a receiver appointed under sub-paragraph (2) above, under paragraph 5 above or in pursuance of a charging order—

(a) to enforce any charge imposed under paragraph 6 above on realisable property or on interest or dividends payable in respect of such property; and

(b) in relation to any realisable property other than property for the time being subject to a charge under that paragraph, to take possession of the property subject to such conditions or exceptions as may be specified by the court.

(4) The court may order any person having possession of realisable property to give possession of it to any such receiver.

(5) The court may empower any such receiver to realise any realisable property in such manner (including the manner of conveyance or transfer of property which is land) as the court may direct.

(6) The court may order any person holding an interest in realisable property to make such payment to the receiver in respect of any beneficial interest held by the defendant or, as the case may be, the recipient of a gift caught by Part (*Confiscation of proceeds of terrorist-related activities*) of this Act as the court may direct and the court may, on the payment being made, by order transfer, grant or extinguish any interest in the property.

(7) Sub-paragraphs (4) to (6) above do not apply to property for the time being subject to a charge under paragraph 6 above.

(8) The High Court shall not in respect of any property exercise the powers conferred by sub-paragraphs (3)(a), (5) or (6) above unless a reasonable opportunity has been given for persons holding any interest in the property to make representations to the court.

Increase in realisable property

10.—(1) Where—

(a) by virtue of section (*Confiscation orders*)(7) of this Act the amount which a person is ordered to pay by a confiscation order is less than the amount assessed to be the value of his proceeds of terrorist-related activities; and

(b) the High Court is satisfied, on an application made in accordance with sub-paragraph (2) below, that the amount that might be realised in the case of that person is greater than the amount taken into account in making the confiscation order (whether it is greater than was thought when the order was made or has subsequently increased),

the court shall issue a certificate to that effect, giving the court's reasons.

(2) An application under sub-paragraph (1) above may be made either by the prosecution or by a receiver appointed under this Schedule in relation to the realisable property of the person mentioned in that sub-paragraph.

(3) Where a certificate has been issued under sub-paragraph (1) above the prosecution may apply to the Crown Court for the amount to be paid under the confiscation order to be increased.

(4) The Crown Court may on an application under sub-paragraph (3) above—

(a) substitute for the amount to be paid under the order such amount (not exceeding the amount assessed as the value of the proceeds of terrorist-related activities) as appears to the court to be appropriate having regard to the amount now shown to be realisable; and

(b) increase the term of imprisonment or detention fixed in respect of the order under subsection (1)(c) of section 35 of the Criminal Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 1945 (imprisonment in default of payment) if the effect of the substitution under paragraph (a) above is to increase the maximum period applicable in relation to the order under subsection (2) of that section as it has effect by virtue of paragraph 2(1)(b) above.

Application of proceeds of realisation and other sums

11.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2) below, the following sums in the hands of a receiver appointed under this Part or in pursuance of a charging order, that is—

(a) the proceeds of the enforcement of any charge imposed under paragraph 6 above;

(b) the proceeds of the realisation, other than by the enforcement of such a charge, of any property under paragraph 5 or 9 above; and

(c) any other sums, being property held by the defendant,

shall first be applied in payment of such expenses incurred by a person acting as an insolvency practitioner as are payable under paragraph 17(2) below and then shall, after such payments (if any) as the High Court may direct have been made out of those proceeds and sums, be applied on the defendant's behalf towards the satisfaction of the confiscation order.

(2) If, after the amount payable under the confiscation order has been fully paid, any such sums remain in the hands of such a receiver, the receiver shall distribute them—

(a) among such of those who held property which has been realised under this Schedule; and
(b) in such proportions,
as the High Court may direct after giving a reasonable opportunity for such persons to make representations to the court.

(3) The receipt of any sum by the proper officer on account of an amount payable under a confiscation order shall reduce the amount so payable, but the proper officer shall apply the money received for the purposes, and in the order, specified in this paragraph.

(4) The proper officer shall first pay any expenses incurred by a person acting as an insolvency practitioner and payable under paragraph 17(2) below but not already paid under sub-paragraph (1) above.

(5) If the money was paid to the proper officer by a receiver appointed under this Schedule or in pursuance of a charging order, the proper officer shall next pay the receiver's remuneration and expenses.

(6) After making—
(a) any payment required by sub-paragraph (4) above; and
(b) in a case to which sub-paragraph (5) above applies, any payment required by that sub-paragraph,
the proper officer shall reimburse any amount paid under paragraph 13(2) below.

(7) The proper officer shall finally pay any compensation directed to be paid out of any sums recovered under the confiscation order under section (*Provisions supplementary to section Confiscation orders*)(7) of this Act.

(8) Any balance in the hands of the proper officer after he has made all payments required by the foregoing provisions of this paragraph shall be treated as a fine for the purposes of section 20 of the Administration of Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 1954 (application of fines).

(9) Where under sub-paragraph (3) above a sum falls to be applied in payment both of compensation and of other outgoings—
(a) the person entitled to the compensation shall be liable to pay into the Consolidated Fund of the United Kingdom such an amount as bears to the remuneration or expenses the same proportion as the amount payable in accordance with the direction mentioned in sub-paragraph (7) above bears to the total amount payable under the confiscation order;
(b) the proper officer shall deduct from the amount falling to be applied in payment of the compensation an amount equal to the amount of any liability arising by virtue of paragraph (a) above;
(c) notwithstanding the deduction under paragraph (b) above, the person entitled to compensation shall be treated as having received the whole of the amount which falls to be applied in payment of it; and
(d) the amount deducted shall be treated as a fine for the purposes of section 20 of the Administration of Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 1954.

(10) In this paragraph "the proper officer" means the appropriate officer of the Crown Court.

Exercise of powers by High Court, Secretary of State or receiver

12.—(1) This paragraph applies to the powers conferred on the High Court and the Secretary of State by paragraphs 5 to 9 and 11 above, or on a receiver appointed under this Schedule or in pursuance of a charging order.

(2) Subject to the following provisions of this paragraph, the powers shall be exercised with a view to making available for satisfying the confiscation order or, as the case may be, any confiscation order that may be made in the defendant's case the value for the time being of realisable property held by any person by the realisation of such property.

(3) In the case of realisable property held by a person to whom the defendant has directly or indirectly made a gift caught by Part (*Confiscation of proceeds of terrorist-related activities*) of this Act the powers shall be exercised with a view to realising no more than the value for the time being of the gift.

(4) The powers shall be exercised with a view to allowing any person other than the defendant or the recipient of any such gift to retain or recover the value of any property held by him.

(5) An order may be made or other action taken in respect of a debt owed by the Crown (including the Crown in right of Her Majesty's Government in Northern Ireland).

(6) In exercising those powers, no account shall be taken of any obligations of the defendant or of the recipient of any such gift which conflict with the obligation to satisfy the confiscation order.

Receivers: supplementary provisions

13.—(1) Where a receiver appointed under this Schedule or in pursuance of a charging order takes any action—
(a) in relation to any property which is not realisable property, being action which he would be entitled to take if it were such property;
(b) believing, and having reasonable grounds for believing, that he is entitled to take that action in relation to that property,
he shall not be liable to any person in respect of any loss or damage resulting from his action except in so far as the loss or damage is caused by his negligence.

(2) Any amount due in respect of the remuneration and expenses of a receiver so appointed shall, if no sum is available to be applied in payment of it under paragraph 11(5) above, be paid by the prosecution or, in a case where proceedings for a relevant offence are not instituted, by the person on whose application the receiver was appointed.

Variation of confiscation orders

14.—(1) If, on an application by the defendant in respect of a confiscation order, the High Court is satisfied that the realisable property is inadequate for the payment of any amount remaining to be paid under the order the court shall issue a certificate to that effect, giving the court's reasons.

(2) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) above—
(a) in the case of realisable property held by a person who has been adjudged bankrupt the court shall take into account the extent to which any property held by him may be distributed among creditors; and
(b) the court may disregard any inadequacy in the realisable property which appears to the court to be attributable wholly or partly to anything done by the defendant for the purpose of preserving any property held by a person to whom the defendant had directly or indirectly made a gift caught by Part (*Confiscation of proceeds of terrorist-related provisions*) of this Act from any risk of realisation under this Schedule.

(3) Where a certificate has been issued under sub-paragraph (1) above, the defendant may apply to the Crown Court for the amount to be paid under the confiscation order to be reduced.

(4) The Crown Court shall, on an application under sub-paragraph (3) above—
(a) substitute for the amount to be paid under the order such lesser amount as the court thinks just in all the circumstances of the case; and
(b) substitute for the term of imprisonment or detention fixed in respect of the order under subsection (1)(c) of section 35 of the Criminal Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 1945 (imprisonment in default of payment) a shorter term if the effect of the substitution under paragraph (a) above is to reduce the maximum period applicable in relation to the order under subsection (2) of that section as it has effect by virtue of paragraph 2(1)(b) above.

Bankruptcy of defendant

15.—(1) Where a person who holds realisable property is adjudged bankrupt—

(a) property for the time being subject to a restraint order made before the order adjudging him bankrupt; and

(b) any proceeds of property realised by virtue of paragraph 5(8) or 9(5) or (6) above for the time being in the hands of a receiver appointed under paragraph 5 or 9 above,

is excluded from the bankrupt's estate for the purposes of Part IX of the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.

(2) Where a person has been adjudged bankrupt, the powers conferred on the High Court and the Secretary of State by paragraphs 5 to 9 and 11 above or on a receiver so appointed shall not be exercised in relation to—

(a) property for the time being comprised in the bankrupt's estate for the purposes of that Part of the said Order of 1989;

(b) property in respect of which his trustee in bankruptcy may (without leave of the High Court) serve a notice under Article 280 or 281 of that Order (after-acquired property and tools, clothes, etc. exceeding value of reasonable replacement); and

(c) property which is to be applied for the benefit of creditors of the bankrupt by virtue of a condition imposed under Article 254(2)(c) of that Order.

(3) Nothing in that Order shall be taken as restricting, or enabling the restriction of, the exercise of those powers.

(4) Sub-paragraph (2) above does not affect the enforcement of a charging order—

(a) made before the order adjudging the person bankrupt; or

(b) on property which was subject to a restraint order when the order adjudging him bankrupt was made.

(5) Where, in the case of a debtor, an interim receiver stands appointed under Article 259 of the said Order of 1989 and any property of the debtor is subject to a restraint order, the powers conferred on the receiver by virtue of that Order do not apply to property for the time being subject to the restraint order.

(6) Where a person is adjudged bankrupt and has directly or indirectly made a gift caught by Part (*Confiscation of proceeds of terrorist-related activities*) of this Act—

(a) no order shall be made under Article 312 or 367 of the said Order of 1989 (avoidance of certain transactions) in respect of the making of the gift at any time when proceedings for a relevant offence have been instituted against him and have not been concluded or when property of the person to whom the gift was made is subject to a restraint order or charging order; and

(b) any order made under either of those Articles after the conclusion of the proceedings shall take into account any realisation under this Schedule of property held by the person to whom the gift was made.

Winding up of company holding realisable property

16.—(1) Where realisable property is held by a company and an order for the winding up of the company has been made or a resolution has been passed by the company for the voluntary winding up, the functions of the liquidator (or any provisional liquidator) shall not be exercisable in relation to—

(a) property for the time being subject to a restraint order made before the relevant time; and

(b) any proceeds of property realised by virtue of paragraph 5(8) or 9(5) or (6) above for the time being in the hands of a receiver appointed under paragraph 5 or 9 above.

(2) Where, in the case of a company, such an order has been made or such a resolution has been passed, the powers conferred on the High Court and the Secretary of State by paragraphs 5 to 9 and 11 above or on a receiver so appointed shall not be exercised in relation to any realisable property held by the company in relation to which the functions of the liquidator are exercisable—

(a) so as to inhibit him from exercising those functions for the purpose of distributing any property held by the company to the company's creditors; or

(b) so as to prevent the payment out of any property of expenses (including the remuneration of the liquidator or any provisional liquidator) properly incurred in the winding up in respect of the property.

(3) Nothing in the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 shall be taken as restricting, or enabling the restriction of, the exercise of those powers.

(4) Sub-paragraph (2) above does not affect the enforcement of a charging order made before the relevant time or on property which was subject to a restraint order at the relevant time.

(5) In this paragraph—

"company" means any company which may be wound up under the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989; and

"the relevant time" means—

(a) where no order for the winding up of the company has been made, the time of the passing of the resolution for voluntary winding up;

(b) where such an order has been made and, before the presentation of the petition for the winding up of the company by the High Court, such a resolution had been passed by the company, the time of the passing of the resolution; and

(c) in any other case where such an order has been made, the time of the making of the order.

Insolvency officers dealing with property subject to restraint order

17.—(1) Without prejudice to the generality of the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 or any other statutory provision, where—

(a) any person acting as an insolvency practitioner seizes or disposes of any property in relation to which his functions are not exercisable because it is for the time being subject to a restraint order; and

(b) at the time of the seizure or disposal he believes, and has reasonable grounds for believing, that he is entitled (whether in pursuance of an order of the High Court or otherwise) to seize or dispose of that property,

he shall not be liable to any person in respect of any loss or damage resulting from the seizure or disposal except in so far as the loss or damage is caused by his negligence in so acting; and a person so acting shall have a lien on the property, or the proceeds of its sale, for such of his expenses as were incurred in connection with the liquidation, bankruptcy or other proceedings in relation to which the seizure or disposal purported to take place and for so much of his remuneration as may reasonably be assigned for his acting in connection with those proceedings.

(2) Any person who, acting as an insolvency practitioner, incurs expenses—

(a) in respect of such property as is mentioned in paragraph (a) of sub-paragraph (1) above and in so doing does not know and has no reasonable grounds to believe that the property is for the time being subject to a restraint order; or

(b) other than in respect of such property as is so mentioned, being expenses which, but for the effect of a restraint order, might have been met by taking possession of and realising the property,

shall be entitled (whether or not he has seized or disposed of that property so as to have a lien under that paragraph) to payment of those expenses under paragraph 11(1) or (4) above.

Enforcement of orders outside Northern Ireland

18.—(1) Her Majesty may by Order in Council make provision for the enforcement of confiscation orders and restraint orders—

(a) in England, Wales and Scotland; and

(b) in any of the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man.

(2) An Order under this paragraph may apply or modify any of the provisions of this Schedule so far as appears to Her Majesty to be appropriate for the purposes of the Order.

Compensation

19.—(1) If proceedings are instituted against a person for a relevant offence or relevant offences and either—

(a) the proceedings do not result in his conviction for any such offence; or

(b) where he is convicted of one or more such offences—

(i) the conviction or convictions concerned are quashed; or

(ii) he is pardoned by Her Majesty in respect of the conviction or convictions concerned,

the High Court may, on an application by a person who held property which was realisable property, order compensation to be paid to the applicant if, having regard to all the circumstances, it considers it appropriate to make such an order.

(2) The High Court shall not order compensation to be paid in any case unless the court is satisfied—

(a) that there has been some serious default on the part of a person concerned in the investigation or prosecution of the offence concerned, being a person mentioned in sub-paragraph (5) below; and

(b) that the applicant has suffered loss in consequence of anything done in relation to the property by or in pursuance of an order under this Schedule or Part (*Confiscation of proceeds of terrorist-related activities*) of this Act.

(3) The High Court shall not order compensation to be paid in any case where it appears to the court that the proceedings would have been instituted or continued even if the serious default had not occurred.

(4) The amount of compensation to be paid under this paragraph shall be such as the High Court thinks just in all the circumstances of the case.

(5) Compensation payable under this paragraph shall be paid—

(a) where the person in default was or was acting as a member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, or as a person authorised under section 47 of this Act, by the Police Authority for Northern Ireland;

(b) where the person in default was a member of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland, by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.

Transitional provisions

20.—(1) In the case of a confiscation order made before the coming into operation of the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, section (*Realisable property, value and gifts*)(4) of this Act shall have effect as if for paragraph (b) there were substituted—

"(b) pay any sum which, if the defendant had been adjudged bankrupt or was being wound up, would be among the preferential debts.";

and in that paragraph "the preferential debts"—

(a) in relation to bankruptcy, means the debts to be paid in priority under Article 19 of the Bankruptcy Amendment (Northern Ireland) Order 1980 (assuming the date of the confiscation order to be the date of the order of adjudication); and

(b) in relation to winding up, means the preferential debts listed in Schedule 18 to the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 (assuming the date of the confiscation order to be the relevant date for the purpose of that Schedule).

(2) Until the coming into operation of the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, paragraphs 11(1) and (4) and 17 above shall have effect as if for references to an insolvency practitioner there were substituted references to an Official Assignee, trustee, liquidator, provisional liquidator or a receiver or manager appointed under section 68 of the Bankruptcy (Ireland) Amendment Act 1872.

(3) In any case in which a petition in bankruptcy was presented, or an adjudication in bankruptcy was made, before the coming into operation of the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, paragraph 15 above shall have effect with the following modifications—

(a) for references to the bankrupt's estate for the purposes of Part IX of that Order there shall be substituted references to the property of the bankrupt for the purposes of the Bankruptcy Acts (Northern Ireland) 1857 to 1980;

(b) sub-paragraph (2)(b) shall be omitted;

(c) for the reference in sub-paragraph (2)(c) to Article 254(2)(c) of that Order there shall be substituted a reference to Articles 28(4), (5)(c) and (11) and 30(6)(c) of the Bankruptcy Amendment (Northern Ireland) Order 1980;

(d) for the reference in sub-paragraph (3) to that Order there shall be substituted a reference to the Bankruptcy Acts (Northern Ireland) 1857 to 1980;

(e) for the reference in sub-paragraph (5) to an interim receiver appointed under Article 259 of that Order there shall be substituted a reference to a receiver or manager appointed under section 68 of the Bankruptcy (Ireland) Amendment Act 1872; and

(f) for the references in sub-paragraph (6) to Articles 312 and 367 of that Order there shall be respectively substituted references to section 12 of the Bankruptcy Amendment Act (Northern Ireland) 1929 and paragraph 16 of the Conveyancing Act (Ireland) 1634.

(4) In any case in which a winding up of a company has commenced, or is treated as having commenced, before the coming into operation of the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, paragraph 16 above shall have effect with the substitution for references to that Order of references to the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986.'—*[Dr. Mawhinney.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

Schedule 1

THE SCHEDULED OFFENCES

Amendments made: No. 32, in page 41, line 43, at end insert—

'(e) paragraph 25A(4) of Schedule 4 (restraint orders by Secretary of State).'

No. 33, in page 42, line 3, at end insert—

'(aa) section 27;'.

No. 34, in line 10, at end insert—

'(ha) section *(Assisting another to retain proceeds of terrorist-related activities)*;

(hb) section *(Concealing or transferring proceeds of terrorist-related activities)*;'.

No. 35, in line 11, at end insert—

'(j) paragraph 8(4) of Schedule *(Confiscation orders: supplementary provisions)*;

(k) paragraph 4 of Schedule 4.'—*[Dr. Mawhinney.]*

Schedule 4

AUTHORISED INVESTIGATORS

Mr. Mallon: I beg to move amendment No. 13, in page 47, line 36, leave out from beginning to 'require' and insert

'A circuit judge may, on an application made by an authorised investigator,'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 14, in line 41, leave out from beginning to 'require' and insert

'A circuit judge may, on an application made by an authorised investigator'.

Mr. Mallon: In Committee, I opposed giving to a lay person powers that are normally reserved for a police officer. The amendments are designed to introduce a judicial requirement into an order for a person to attend and answer questions, or an order to produce documents. The legitimate power of a police officer should not be given to a lay person, however qualified. A lay person should not be able to initiate and continue a specialised investigation. That is why the amendment provides that the powers should be given to a judge and not an authorised lay person.

Mr. Trimble: I am puzzled by the drafting of the amendment, which refers to a circuit judge. Are there circuit judges in Northern Ireland? Is the hon. Gentleman not confusing Northern Ireland with the Republic, where there are circuit judges?

Mr. Mallon: The hon. Gentleman's intervention shows his youth. When I was about the hon. Gentleman's age, county court judges were known as circuit court judges. I happen to live close to the border and I have some knowledge of judges south of the border, who are also known as circuit court judges.

Dr. Mawhinney: The amendment would confer on circuit court judges a novel inquisitorial role. As drafted, it would authorise them to require persons to attend before them. Such a person would be required to answer questions put by the judge. I suspect that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) may not have intended to introduce such a far-reaching reform, and that his intention was to require an authorised investigator to obtain authority from a ciruit court judge before exercising the powers that are set out in paragraph 2(1) of schedule 4. If that was the hon. Gentleman's intention, I must tell him that it has not been achieved by the amendment. I therefore hope that he will be willing to withdraw it.

I must tell the hon. Gentleman also that amendment No. 14 is defective for the same reason. I hope that he will feel able not to move it.

Mr. Mallon: I do not accept that the amendment is defective. If someone is required to attend, to produce documents and to answer questions, his attendance should be the result of a judicial decision and not that of a lay person. Given the time of night, however, and an ever-bludgeoning thirst, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedule 5

CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendments made: No. 36, in page 50, line 43, at end insert—

'*The Rehabilitation of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1978*

1A. In Article 3(2)(a) of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 the reference to a fine or other sum adjudged to be paid by or imposed on a conviction does not include a reference to an amount payable under a confiscation order made under section (*Confiscation orders*) of this Act.

The Bankruptcy Amendment (Northern Ireland) Order 1980

1B. Article 31 of the Bankruptcy Amendment (Northern Ireland) Order 1980 shall have effect as if amounts payable under confiscation orders made under section (*Confiscation orders*) of this Act were debts excepted under paragraph (1)(a) of that Article.

The Fines and Penalties (Northern Ireland) Order 1984

1C. In Article 17(2) of the Fines and Penalties (Northern Ireland) Order 1984 after paragraph (i) there shall be inserted—

"(j) the Table in section 35(2) of the Criminal Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 1945 as it has effect by virtue of paragraph 2(1)(b) of Schedule (*Confiscation orders: supplementary provisions*) to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991.".'

No. 37, in page 51, line 36, at end insert—

'(7) In paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4, in the definition of "a Northern Ireland order" after the words "paragraph 23" there shall be inserted the words "or 25A".

(8) In paragraph 18(1) of Schedule 4, in the definition of "a Northern Ireland order" after the words "paragraph 23" there shall be inserted the words "or 25A".

(9) After paragraph 25 of Schedule 4 there shall be inserted—

"25A.—(1) The power to make a restraint order under the provisions of paragraphs 23 and 24 above shall be exercisable by the Secretary of State in any case in which it appears to him that the information which it would be necessary to provide in support of an application to the High Court or a judge under those provisions would, if disclosed, be likely to place any person in danger or prejudice the capability of members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary or a person authorised under section 47 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 to investigate an offence under Part III of this Act.

(2) In their application by virtue of sub-paragraph (1) above paragraphs 23 to 25 above shall have effect with the necessary modifications and as if references to the High Court were references to the Secretary of State.

(3) An order made by the Secretary of State by virtue of this paragraph may be varied or discharged by the High Court under paragraph 23(5) or 24(2) above.

(4) A person who contravenes a restraint order made by virtue of this paragraph is guilty of an offence and liable—

(a) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine or both;

(b) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or both.".'

No. 38, in page 52, line 7, at end insert—

'*The Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989*

4. Article 255 of the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 shall have effect as if the reference to a fine included a reference to a confiscation order made under section (*Confiscation orders*) of this Act.

The Criminal Justice (Confiscation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1990

5. In Article 2(4)(b) of the Criminal Justice (Confiscation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1990 after "1989" there shall be inserted the words "or a relevant offence within the meaning of Part (*Confiscation of proceeds of terrorist-related activities*) of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991".'

—[Mr. Brooke.]

Order for Third Reading read.

12.49 am

Dr. Mawhinney: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Today we have had serious and constructive debates on the important issues relevant to the Bill. In the past four months, the House has given most careful consideration to the proposals. I recognise the strength of feeling that hon. Members have brought to that consideration of the Bill. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House accept that, where they have been unable to accept the arguments advanced by the Government, the Government have nevertheless listened carefully to what has been said and have sought to respond with genuine argument.

I acknowledge and thank those outside the House who have played their role in our consideration, who have taken an active interest and made contributions. I have particularly in mind the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, the Committee for the Administration of Justice, the Northern Ireland Law Society and the Bar Council. I hope that those organisations feel that their contributions have been taken seriously and have added to our considerations.

It would be wrong if I did not refer again to the crucial contribution made by Lord Colville. His report formed the backbone of our debates and I know that I speak for the whole House when I say that his report did us all a service. Lord Colville, through his skilled and penetrating analyses, laid out clearly for us the various issues that needed to be addressed.

The Bill has benefited from the consideration that right hon. and hon. Members have given it, here and in Committee. I am grateful to all those who took part for the spirit in which they have contributed to the debate. I also thank and pay tribute to all those who have advised and worked with Ministers as we have studied the issues involved in the Bill.

Those who served on the Committee will appreciate that the Bill has sought to find a balance, which is always a matter of judgment. That important balance is between the need for effective security legislation that offers protection to the people of Northern Ireland against those who would kill and maim and use the bomb and bullet because their arguments are not persuasive at the ballot box and the powers that are given to the security forces and police. When granting such powers, we must be aware of the rights of individuals and the fact that they too require protection in a democratic society. The Government have been conscious of that need for balance throughout the proceedings on the Bill. We believe that we have achieved that balance.

We believe that the Bill will be a valuable and important contribution to security in Northern Ireland. On that basis, I commend it to the House.

12.53 am

Mr. McNamara: The Opposition do not intend to divide on Third Reading, nor on the order that follows.

We have already demonstrated our hostility to the Bill on Second Reading, in Committee and on Report. Because of the situation in Northern Ireland, we recognise that paramilitary campaigns of violence require emergency legislation. We do not believe, however, that the Bill represents the best instrument to meet that threat.

We have tried to adopt a rational approach to the Bill. Terrorism arouses understandable emotions, but we cannot allow those emotions to override the necessity for a rational response to the threat posed. After all, terrorism represents a failure of reason. Democracies cannot surrender reason.

All of us who have given serious consideration to the Bill are mindful of the fact that it has serious consequences for those who are charged with operating it on our behalf. The members of the security forces have to live and work with the legislation, so the House must be careful not to place them in positions which make their task more difficult, nor which condemn them to further decades of conflict in Northern Ireland. Too many elements of the Bill would do so.

In Committee and on Report, the Minister of State often referred to the need for balance within this legislation. We accept that the Government have had to use their judgment in choosing between sometimes conflicting demands. Our objection is that they have systematically and continuously come down on the wrong side of the argument. Nowhere is that more clearly seen than in the Government's treatment of Lord Colville's careful and thorough reports. Glowing tributes have been paid to his work; then most of it has been ignored.

Lord Colville's reviews have provided a focus for reasoned argument over the logic and nature of emergency legislation. If devolved institutions emerge in Northern Ireland, and when perhaps security powers are transferred, the people of Northern Ireland will be able to ensure proper democratic scrutiny of much of this legislation.

Too many of Lord Colville's recommendations have been travestied or ignored by the Government. For instance, clause 30 on the possession of items connected with terrorism contains a completely distorted version of a proposal by Lord Colville. Similarly, Lord Colville proposed a switch to the certifying in of scheduled offences rather than scheduling out. This modest reform, which would have helped to ensure that the Diplock courts were employed for the purpose for which they were designed —trials involving terrorist offences—was completely ignored.

Worst of all has been the Government's decision to pay no attention to Lord Colville's eloquent plea for the removal of the power of internment from the statute book. The Opposition are convinced that that is a serious mistake which undermines the credibility of efforts to create a normal and democratic society in Northern Ireland. It represents a commitment by the Government to cling to every last ounce of arbitrary executive authority. It is a hangover from the special powers Act. It reveals a state of mind which is not conducive to a focused, rational and intelligent security policy.

Hegel may be alive and well in Craigavon, and he is also active in Hillsborough, but Belfast and Northern Ireland in the 1990s should not be confused with Berlin in the 1820s. To the Opposition, order and freedom do not appear as conflicting alternatives. We believe that political order is best guaranteed by freedom.

Lord Colville's recommendations provided the Government with an opportunity to make a fresh start in a difficult and sensitive field. They came down on the side of coercion rather than reason. Eventually the Government will have to accept that reason alone is the main weapon to defeat terrorism in all its forms.

12.57 am

Mr. Mallon: After 44 hours of debate on the Bill, which has twice been in the House, and in Committee, concluding in the week in which we had to deal with a motion on the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989, we should not prolong the agony. I thank the Minister and officials for their courtesy during our consideration of the Bill. I also thank the Chairman of the Committee for his unfailing help and courtesy at all times.

12.58 am

Mr. Canavan: I am not in favour of giving the Bill an unopposed Third Reading, and I shall briefly explain why.

The Bill is indicative of the hypocrisy and double standards of the British Government and the whole British establishment. The Government claim to believe in the unity of the United Kingdom and they say that Northern Ireland is and should remain a part of the United Kingdom. If the unity of the United Kingdom means anything, the Government should be consistent and ensure that equal standards of justice apply to all parts of the United Kingdom.

The Bill reinforces and continues inferior standards of justice in Northern Ireland compared with the rest of the United Kingdom. The people there are subjected to powers of arrest, search and detention, and, above all, are deprived of the opportunity of a fair trial according to the principles and standards of justice which apply elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

The Government's excuse for that is the emergency situation in Northern Ireland. How long will the emergency last? An emergency, by its very nature, should be temporary. When this legislation was first introduced in the early 1970s, it was considered to be a temporary measure. Then it was renewed and now we are getting further measures, albeit with some amendments.

The Government have lamentably failed to solve the problems of Northern Ireland. Their cure is clearly not working. People are still being killed almost daily in Northern Ireland. To imagine that those problems will be solved by more and more repressive legislation is naive, or worse, it is to try to fool the people inside and outside the House. Those problems will never be solved simply by repressive legislation. It is about time that the Government started to look more seriously at the underlying political reasons for the insecurity and instability in Northern Ireland.

It could be argued that Northern Ireland has been an unstable entity since its inception. It has been unstable politically, economically and socially. That instability is inherent within the system and the constitution of the Province. The sooner that the Government recognise that problem and address it and work towards the peaceful reunification of Ireland the better.

1.2 am

Mr. Harry Barnes: My hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) suggested that the Bill is inadequate. I agree, but I do not agree with much of the rest of his analysis about how to begin to solve the problems of Northern Ireland. It is oversimple to suggest that a move to a united Ireland would in some way solve the problems.

Measures which allow the use of extra force to establish the authority of the state begin to make the state less acceptable to minorities which might be disenchanted and see their loyalties as lying elsewhere. We need serious measures to improve economic and social welfare in Northern Ireland. The Government's enterprise culture in Northern Ireland and the unemployment there have not assisted in that.

We need to tackle the basis of terrorism in Northern Ireland. Emergency powers may be necessary in certain periods, but other factors are more important.

Next week, the House will debate Northern Ireland appropriations—which will be like discussing Northern Ireland's budget. We can debate then matters of significance, rather than problems such as whether windows need to be fitted correctly in the Divis flats and other issues that, unfortunately, hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland constituencies sometimes choose to raise rather than bread-and-butter matters.

Democracy is difficult to achieve in the circumstances because of the need for people to share and to interconnect. Democracy in Northern Ireland in terms of a devolved Government could be possible with a Bill of Rights that guaranteed minority rights. In certain circumstances, Protestants can find themselves in the minority and feel oppressed, just as Catholics do—although their experience in that respect may be greater. That is why we must introduce measures such as fair employment legislation.

Even more important is the need to encourage all those brave people in Northern Ireland who take a stand against terrorism and try to take the ground from under it. Earlier, I mentioned Nancy Gracey and the movement comprised of families who campaign against intimidation and terror techniques such as knee-capping. I must refer also to those who run the peace trains between Belfast and Dublin, who attempt to ensure that the line is not disrupted by IRA terrorism of the kind that we are now experiencing to some extent in this country. We should aim to share to some degree our responses with the people in Ireland.

There also exist three New Consensus groups. One operates from Northern Ireland, another from Ireland, and the third from this country. They stand for the principles of devolved government, a Bill of Rights, and integrated education. The latter should start with teacher training colleges. It is an obscenity that one such college is Protestant-controlled and that another is Catholic-controlled, and that the only integrated teacher training is at Belfast university.

There is a trade union movement that says, "Hands off my mate", which seeks to defend people against oppression. There is much that is good in Northern Ireland, and it should be promoted more.

The failure in Northern Ireland is the failure of the Northern Ireland politicians on all sides——

Rev. William McCrea *rose*——

Mr. Barnes: —one of whom is trying to intervene, who in essence represent sectarian divisions and do not do enough to gain support from other groups.

We should be seeing from the Democratic Unionists and the Ulster Unionists an attempt to alter their stance and gain support from the Catholic community, while the SDLP should try to gain support from the Protestant community. Only two Northern Ireland parties are

attempting to do anything of that kind, but they are finding it difficult to get any grounding. I refer to the Workers party and the Alliance party, which at least try to have a broader appeal.

Rev. William McCrea: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not want to mislead the House. The hon. Member said that there is in Northern Ireland one Catholic-controlled university and one Protestant-controlled university. I have lived in Northern Ireland all my life, and I should like the hon. Gentleman to name the university that he says is Protestant-controlled.

Mr. Barnes *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I remind the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) that we are dealing with the Third Reading of the Bill and that he must relate his remarks to the contents of the Bill.

Mr. Barnes: With your agreement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall briefly respond to that intervention. I understand that there are two teacher training colleges, one which is essentially Catholic-influenced and the other which is Protestant-influenced—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Hon. Members may correct me on the details. I understand that a third avenue for teacher training exists in the university, and is more clearly integrated. I know that some Protestants go to the Catholic-dominated teacher training college and vice versa. I know that some Protestant Members of Parliament have been to the Catholic-dominated college. Nevertheless, that influence needs to be broken down. If we are to get integration in education, it needs to begin with teacher training. Perhaps I am a little short of detailed information——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is again straying from the Bill.

Mr. Barnes: I shall conclude my speech now. I was trying to argue that the emergency provisions could have been different if Lord Colville's full recommendations had been taken into account and that they would then have been more acceptable. Such provisions, even if they are in an ideal form, can be acceptable only if economic and social welfare, democracy, devolved government, a Bill of Rights and community involvement are taking place at the same time, because they are what takes away the grounding for terrorism and, in the end, they are more important than emergency provisions, although I realise the significance of this legislation.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 103, Noes 3.

Division No. 92] **[1.12 am**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bagga, Roy
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Cope, Rt Hon John
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Fallon, Michael
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Hague, William
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Mudd, David
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shelton, Sir William
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trimble, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Neil Hamilton.

NOES

Cryer, Bob
Nellist, Dave
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Canavan and
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Resolved,

That the draft Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 22nd February, be approved.—*[Mr. Brooke.]*

Tin Mining (Cornwall)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

1.22 am

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The last Adjournment debate that I secured on the Cornish tin industry, in 1988, began at 2.26 am. It is a relief that tonight's debate is not starting quite so late.

I thank the Minister for being present. The hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) is here and I know that the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Mudd) will be here shortly.

In the debate in 1988, we regretted the loss of 200 jobs in the industry. It is always tragic when jobs are lost because of the suffering that is caused, not least to the individuals involved. Tonight, we are debating the loss of 415 jobs; 415 families will be devastated.

We are probably now discussing the end, at least for the foreseeable future, of tin mining in Cornwall, purely as a result of a Government decision. It is a tragedy for those who will lose their jobs and for the surrounding communities and it is an untimely death blow to a tradition of mining in our county which goes back 2,500 years. I have no hesitation in blaming the Government for that.

I blame the Government because Carnon has been operating on the basis of a support scheme to which the Government were apparently committed and on the basis of money already promised. The Government have reneged on that commitment. They have broken their promise in a disgraceful manner, informing the company without warning late on Friday afternoon, and without letting hon. Members know what was coming.

The most extraordinary point about the decision is that it defies all logic. The Government had promised a further £1·7 million loan to the mines and RTZ was due to invest, on the back of that, a further £2·4 million, which it is withdrawing as a result of the Government's decision. Having invested £23 million of public funds so far, for the Government to pull out now to save £1·7 million is senseless and a tragic letdown for the people.

Let us remember that the package came about by agreement and set certain targets. The company had to keep to those targets. Had it not done so, the Government decision might have been justified, but the company did keep the targets—indeed, it exceeded them—so what justification can we find for the Government's decision?

The Government might have argued that they could not afford it, but that patently is not the case. Apart from anything else, the money was earmarked and the company asked for not a penny more than it had been promised.

The Government might also have argued that the company had not met its targets for cost cutting, but that is not so. The company had been successful in beating the cost reduction targets set by the Department. The break-even point in 1988 was £6,734 per tonne. For 1990, it was down to £4,340 a tonne. For the last quarter for which figures are available, it was down to £3,703 a tonne and it was still falling dramatically, week by week, day by day. Tin is currently being sold at £3,000 per tonne, so the company is getting close to the break-even point. As most analysts predict that the price of tin will rise in the next year, the company could soon be in a position to make profits once again, as it was only a few months ago.

Why would the Government not give the company a chance? The projected break-even point in the Department of Trade and Industry plan was £3,500 per tonne by 1993. That has already been more than surpassed, as the figures that I have given make clear, so how can the Government justify their decision? The only people who did not meet their targets were the Government themselves. When the deal was agreed, exchange rates were projected at under $1·50 to the pound. If that were so today, the company would be highly profitable. If anything has failed to meet targets, it is Government economic policy.

Another possibility occurs. Perhaps the Government do not believe that the area needs the support that tin mining provides economically and socially. Perhaps they believe that the area is wealthy enough, or sufficiently full of job opportunities. Let me put the record straight. Carnon has a loyal labour force who have not received a pay rise for four years, precisely to improve the chances of making the company a success. The job losses come at a time when employment prospects in the area are particularly bleak. In the Redruth-Camborne area—the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne, who represents the area, will seek to intervene in a moment—unemployment is running at 15·7 per cent. and nearly one in four males in the area are unemployed. Unemployment in Cornwall as a whole has reached a percentage in the teens and is rising more rapidly than anywhere else in the south-west, or in almost the entire country. So it cannot possibly be that the area does not need the support that the Government were in a position and had pledged to provide.

The Government might have argued that the decision was to save taxpayers' money, but in truth they cannot justify such an argument. The costs of unemployment benefit to those losing their jobs will amount to £1·2 million per year, and the indirect knock-on effect on other jobs—on previous occasions the Government have talked about the other jobs supported by the investment—means that the figure is more likely to be £2 million per year. That discounts the loss of tax and national insurance payments. Even if we assume that not all the people will join the unemployment queues directly, it is certain that there will be no net financial gain to the Treasury.

More than that, the Government are in the process of writing off not just a £1·7 million loan but the whole £23 million of public money that has so far been invested in the mines. That is short-sighted, mean-minded and an ill-thought-through waste of public money.

As I speak, the water level in Wheal Jane mine is rising. As it does so, it guarantees that that mine will never be reopened. It is an extraordinary, wasteful and despicable action that the Government have taken. I refuse to accept that it saves the Treasury money in any respect. It may save the Department of Trade and Industry money, but it simply costs the Department of Social Security and other Departments money.

If the Government seriously argue, as they argued this morning, that they do not justify their actions in such terms and that it is not for the DTI to consider other costs, perhaps it is time for the Prime Minister or someone more broad-minded and with a little more sense to reverse the decision that has been taken.

Lastly, the Government may argue that the tin price will not pick up, that current low prices will stretch far into the future and that Cornish tin mining will never be profitable. Where is the evidence for that? I do not believe

that the decision is based on sound reasoning. It is purely political, and bad politics at that. Most analysts predict that the price of tin will rise in the next year. It is hard to argue that it will not rise sooner or later, given that most mines around the world operate at substantial losses.

Even if Ministers are right, the company believes that if the rest of the loan had been paid, the investment would have allowed South Crofty to break even within the year and would have paid for Wheal Jane to be kept on care and maintenance until a rise in the price of tin occurred. Even if we accept that the current price will not increase, there is no logic in pulling out the investment because if it had been allowed to go ahead we could still have seen the company at least on an even keel for the foreseeable future.

The company's figures might have been wrong, but those involved with the company had a lot to lose personally if the figures were wrong. Surely the betting was good enough to put in £1·7 million of Government money, which had already been promised, especially when the cost of not doing so was to write off the £23 million Government investment so far and to put 400 or more people on the dole at a yearly cost in excess of the £1·7 million involved. The mines could have been kept open, men could have been kept in jobs and Cornwall's tin mining tradition could have been kept alive.

For a Government who claim to favour business-like practice, they have adopted an appallingly short-sighted and extremely unbusiness-like approach. I return to my original question: what possible justification is there for their decision? I believe that there is no possible justification.

In response to my Adjournment debate in March 1988, the then Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs, the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher), said:

"The Government are convinced that Carnon can win through—that is why we have continued our support—but it will require considerable—and I emphasise 'considerable'—efforts by all those concerned with the company. I feel sure that this effort will be forthcoming."—[*Official Report*, 29 March 1988; Vol. 130, c. 1064.]

The truth is that the effort was indeed forthcoming. The targets were met, but the Government let us down all the same. They did not stick with it when the company and the people there stuck with it through thick and thin.

Do the Government have the courage to make the change to help now? Will they help first and foremost by reversing the decision? If not, will they at least help by suspending the loan rather than pulling out of the deal altogether? Will they at least give the company and the men the chance to come back and make it work? They should not rule that out. I know that everything will be done to protect South Crofty so that it might open again if the price of tin revives sufficiently. Will the Government at least consider renewing support if that happens? Will the Government help not just the company but also all the men who fear for their redundancy compensation, as well as the supplying firms that fear for their debts, by guaranteeing tonight that the outstanding Government loan will not be called in?

At our meeting with the Minister this morning we learned that the Government have decided only for now not to call in the loan—apparently to see if the company will survive, subject to a satisfactory scheme. Can the Minister suggest what such a satisfactory scheme might be? What is meant by the words "satisfactory scheme"? At this morning's meeting the Minister said, "At a point in time, if the company failed, we would have to put in a submission"—a submission to call in the loan. That would bankrupt the company, and it could also bankrupt many of its suppliers and rule out much-needed redundancy payments for the work force. That is a crucial aspect of the Government's position.

What we were told earlier today was more worrying than the indications that had been given publicly up till then. Can the Minister give a pledge that the loan will not be called in? If the jobs do go, will the Minister help by investing the money that the DTI has already set aside in new jobs in this area—an area of high unemployment in a county where wages are already below the national average? Will the Minister pledge to invest the money withdrawn from the mines in job creation measures for the area?

In response to my Adjournment debate in March 1988, the then Minister, the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West, said:

"I think I can say that Cornishmen have a good friend in the Government, and that our generosity, while not necessarily unprecedented—that would be too strong a word—was certainly considerable".—[*Official Report*, 29 March 1988; Vol. 130, c. 1060.]

This week, the Cornish have found out just how lacking in generosity the Government really are. They have discovered the pain of betrayal. They have discovered that they have no friend in the Government.

All Cornwall Members feel outraged by what has happened. I know that the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne wants to speak, and I look forward to his contribution.

1.37 am

Mr. David Mudd (Falmouth and Camborne): I shall not repeat the arguments that the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) has put forward so eloquently and succinctly. I endorse his every word and his every sentiment. I must however, question some of the seeming inconsistencies in the reasons given by the Department of Trade and Industry over the past 10 days for its decision to end support.

It has been said that the depressed price of tin is a factor. Yet, as has been pointed out by the hon. Member for Truro, the Government's friends in the City—the commodity analysts—have come up with a totally different prediction. It is amazing that the DTI will accept some advice from these people but, when it suits, reject other advice.

It has been suggested that the DTI's precipitate decision was based on an unseemly scramble for safety when it was pointed out that, as Carnon Consolidated was technically insolvent, the Department would be acting illegally in making any more money available.

There are two basic tests of insolvency. The first is cash flow—the ability to pay debts as they fall due. Certainly, for the last three years Carnon has paid all its bills on time, and it continues to do so. It therefore cannot be argued that Carnon is insolvent on that score. On the basis of the second test—whether liabilities exceed assets—the company is technically insolvent because it has £31 million of loans on the balance sheet. However, this peculiar status was arrived at through the DTI's suggested rescue package of 1986. So if that technical argument is put forward, the Department made it inevitable that the company would operate while insolvent and quite improperly advanced it

[Mr. David Mudd]

£23 million. Either way, it seems that over a period of four years there was a leisurely acceptance or accommodation of convenience, which culminated in a mad-dash disengagement decision—a decision taken, and announced, on the evening of 22 February.

I may be a simple soul, but I see a possible scenario which might explain that strange situation. The Treasury wants immediate savings from the DTI; the DTI looks at its books, and Carnon emerges as the most convenient instant victim. The DTI does not want to pull the plug, but is reminded that the alleged failure to comply with the package gives it a let-out. Of course, if the DTI still wants to carry on with the finance, a word to the Public Accounts Committee might be awkward and embarrassing. Afraid of the Treasury heavies on one side and the PAC nasties on the other, the DTI rushes into instant disengagement. Whether that is fact or fantasy, time alone will tell—I suspect that we shall not know tonight.

Something else nauseates me about the Department's attitude and position. It claims that, six months ago, it was beginning to consider suspending support to Carnon. In six months it could have at least prepared contingency plans to offset the predicted loss of jobs and the already recognised worsening economic situation in Cornwall, but it did not and still has not. It claims that since west Cornwall already gets every permitted form of assistance, everything possible is already being done.

Even now, I would like my hon. Friend's assurance that he will consider a few suggestions. First, that the withdrawal of finance should be regarded as a moratorium on payment rather than a cut-off. Secondly, that during that moratorium, the Department of Trade and Industry loans will be restructured to be of a low principal, high premium nature, thus getting the loan off the balance sheet and opening the door to external investment if that is what the Department wants. Thirdly, that during the moratorium, the Department will help meet the costs of keeping South Crofty's pumps operating. Fourthly—the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) touched on this—if £1 million or £1·6 million is theoretically being saved, it is money that has already been allocated to jobs and industries in west Cornwall. I would like an assurance that that money will be allocated immediately to the regeneration, sustaining and attraction of more industrial opportunities in west Cornwall.

In the meantime, for reasons that have still not been explained to my satisfaction or that of many other people, two tin mines, more than 400 jobs, countless small enterprises and the communities that lie between Camborne, Redruth and Truro are under a death threat because, if I am correct, the DTI is scuttling away from what it fears could have been an embarrassing squeeze between the Treasury and the Public Accounts Committee.

As I waited to see my noble Friend the Minister for Industry, I picked up a brochure in the lobby of the Department of Trade and Industry. It lists its objectives, thus:

"Our objectives will be to produce a climate which promotes enterprise and prosperity. In all our work we will take account of the differing circumstances of the region and of the inner cities to enable those who live there to help themselves."

Once, that remark would have caused a ripple of ironic laughter in Cornwall, but tonight, tragically, there is no laughter in Cornwall's mining communities.

1.43 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Edward Leigh): The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) and my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Mudd) are much concerned about the state of Cornish tin mining and the effect on the local economy. I regret the current situation, and appreciate their concern. I pay tribute to the assiduous way in which they argue on behalf of their constituents. I also pay tribute to the assiduous manner in which my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), who is present tonight, acts on behalf of his constituents.

The Department has strongly supported the South Crofty mine in Camborne and the Wheal Jane mine near Truro since 1986. Geology has made Cornwall a land of great beauty. Likewise, geology gave it great mineral wealth. That has been exploited over the years for arsenic, copper, tin, and china clay. I understand the pride Cornishmen feel in their mineral industries, and the way "Cousin Jacks" have spread their mining skills around the world. Trade in metals has long been international. Today, international competition is at the root of the Cornish tin problems.

Hon. Members have expressed concern at the number of jobs lost. Until the recent redundancies, Carnon Holdings Limited employed 415 workers, 160 of whom were to be made redundant anyway from the closure of Wheal Jane announced last year and reductions at South Crofty. The extra number of tin miners losing their jobs is therefore about 255. Most of the workers live in the Camborne and Truro travel-to-work areas. We are advised that some 150 workers are being re-engaged temporarily to run down the South Crofty-related operations on to a care and maintenance basis.

These people have worked hard, justifying the position taken by the Department in 1986 when it offered Carnon, then owned by RTZ, a loan of £15 million. In 1988, at the time of the management buy-out, the £15 million loan was continued and a further £10 million loan was offered. Both loans are interest-free. Repayments are due only if profits rise above a threshold, so the management buy-out received further substantial advantages. The loans were for a project of capital works to lower costs, but they were not automatic. To safeguard the taxpayer, the Department had to be satisfied about the future viability of the company—I stress those words.

As part of the management buy-out in 1988, RTZ offered an interest-free loan of £10 million. In all, the Department has lent Carnon £23·35 milion, and RTZ £7·7 million. Under the buy-out, a workers' trust received 20 per cent. of Carnon's equity. It also has a seat on the board. Two non-executive directors served on the board for a period. In spite of all this, the company has been unable to achieve what it set out to do when the loans were offered to the buy-out in 1988.

In January 1990, the tin price was £4,000 per tonne, although the previous year, 1989, it had averaged £5,300. There was concern that the tin price had shown no sign of recovery even though experts had been taking bullish

views late in 1989. By the end of 1990, the price had not even maintained its January 1990 level. On the contrary, it had dropped to £2,900.

From early 1990 therefore, the company's officials sought to bring new equity and other finance into the Carnon group. Their aim was to gain a buffer to secure the tin business's long-term future. They sought our help in this. We agreed in principle that, as one element of any acceptable deal, we would restructure our loans.

In the middle of last year, it was apparent to us that, without additional finance, tin mining on the then proposed basis was no longer viable. I remind hon. Members of the stress that I laid on the viability of the company. We were therefore compelled to declare the project in jeopardy. Under the loan agreement, this meant that we were not obliged to make further loan advances. Nevertheless, despite serious and growing doubts about the project's future, we took the view that a prospect of loan repayment remained and, at the company's request, we advanced more money during the second half of 1990. We advanced another £400,000 to the company and RTZ more than £800,000 to give the company every chance successfully to finalise its negotiations to raise further equity finance. However, in spite of its efforts, it was, in the event, unable to do so.

Given this situation, and after careful study of Carnon's latest plans, we had to conclude that the project was not viable in the longer term. I stress that this was a decision that took account of all relevant facts, including payment of the remainder of the DTI and RTZ loans.

Today—as I have shown, we have been here before—experts expect the tin price to rise, a point made by the hon. Member for Truro. The question is when, by how much, and sustained at what average level. Brazilian producers increased their output from around 7,000 tonnes in 1978 to 44,000 tonnes in 1988. That was out of world totals of 200,000 tonnes in 1978 but only 155,000 tonnes in 1988. Prices have dropped. Other producers have had to cut their output. The upside for prices is limited by the ability of producers overseas to produce more if prices rise, and by the existence of sizeable stocks.

Costs are the other side of the picture. Tin is the company's only substantial revenue-earning activity. It has a number of outgoings to support. Costs can vary depending on how much is spent on capital works and how much is spent on mine development necessary to replenish reserves of ore as they are consumed. It should be possible to cut costs per tonne in the short term at the expense of the longer term. The analysis of South Crofty's position is certainly not straightforward. Moreover, many other tin producers have been under the same acute pressure to reduce their costs. Carnon's efforts, including the wage deals accepted by the workers, have not therefore given Carnon the relative advantage for which one might have hoped.

All those and other factors were studied before we decided that it would not be a proper use of public funds to advance more money for the project. I hope that I have convinced the House that we have made every effort to secure the future of the Cornish tin industry—short of spending taxpayers' money in a financially improper way.

Hon. Members raised some wider issues about Cornwall. Despite our five years of support, we have been accused in the local press and elsewhere of bad faith and of ignoring the needs of Cornwall—a point made by the hon. Member for Truro. I accept that unemployment in parts of Cornwall is—as regrettably it is elsewhere—far too high. My hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne made that point. Trying to keep unemployment down by sustaining jobs in uneconomic areas of activity is no answer. It has been tried before—in steel, shipbuilding and the motor industry. Inevitably it failed.

The only answer is to provide jobs producing goods and services that people want to buy and to do so at a profit. For that reason, my Department tries to help business to improve its competitiveness. We have done much in Cornwall in recent years to that end. In the past two years, more than 1,000 Cornish businesses have sought our help under the enterprise initiative. More than 330 small companies have received a total of more than £2 million in support under regional enterprise grant schemes, and £3·5 million in regional selective assistance has been offered. We will continue to give all the regional aid help that we can.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 7 March 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock
PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ROYAL ASSENT

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Census (Confidentiality) Act 1991
Standard Life Assurance Company Act 1991

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for further consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Thursday 14 March.

MIDLAND METRO BILL *(By Order)*
As amended, considered; to be read the Third time.

LONDON UNDERGROUND (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second Time on Tuesday 12 March.

Mr. Speaker: As Bills 2 to 12 have blocking motions, with the leave of the House I shall put them together.

CATTEWATER RECLAMATION BILL *(By Order)*

HOOK ISLAND (POOLE BAY) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (LEWISHAM, ETC) BILL *(By Order)*

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (KING'S CROSS) BILL *(By Order)*

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 3) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

MIDLAND METRO (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 14 March.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Television Licences

1. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next intends to review the regulations relating to concessionary television licences for pensioners in sheltered housing.

2. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received on the need for legislation to provide free television licences for all pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced on 28 February our intention to clarify and consolidate the wireless telegraphy regulations. The new ones will be laid very shortly. They will remove the "communal facility" condition for the concessionary television licence, which in practice has proved unnecessary to the operation of the more tightly defined scheme that we introduced in 1988. Since 1 January we have received 30 letters about free or reduced-price television licences for pensioners. We have no plans to review further or to extend the present concessionary scheme.

Mr. McAllion: Concessionary licences are granted to some but not all pensioners who live in warden-controlled houses, they are granted to some whose incomes are well above income support levels, but denied to others whose incomes are on or below income support levels, and they are denied to those who need them most—single pensioners living alone without family or friends to visit them. Has not the time come to end such cruel contradictions? Will the Minister stop such random discrimination against pensioners and undertake to grant concessionary licences to all pensioners who need them?

Mr. Lloyd: Our scheme is fair because it applies to all those in local authority or housing association homes that are clearly within an exclusive boundary and where there is a warden at work for 30 hours a week. The hon. Gentleman suggests that we should extend that to all pensioners. If we did, many pensioners would be enjoying a benefit which is not enjoyed by others who are very much worse off. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) recognised that when he made it clear last week that the concessionary scheme should not apply to all pensioners. He was talking about a scheme that extends to those who are least well-off. The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), whom I hear chuntering, should address their questions to their own Front-Bench spokesmen.

Mr. Skinner: I do not have any problem with that. I addressed questions to Members on my Front Bench when the Labour party was in power and I shall do it again when we return to power after the general election.

There is nothing fair about the system when some pensioners do not get free television licences because there is a means test, some because they are not disabled in a

certain way and some because they do not live on the right side of the street. Now the Government have introduced another anomaly whereby pensioners have to have qualified before May 1988. Why cannot they be treated in the same way as those at Buckingham palace?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman has shown why the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has such difficulty drawing up a scheme that he can agree with his Front Bench, let alone the rest of the Labour party. The scheme that we have is carefully constructed to enable people in the original scheme—those in local authority homes with some warden control—to have the concession, and there it remains.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To illustrate my question to my hon. Friend may I draw his attention to one of my constituents, Mr. Rushton? Perhaps he can visualise Mr. Rushton, who lives in a high-rise block of flats in the middle of Heathtown in Wolverhampton in which many other elderly people live. He has a concierge on duty to look after his needs. Next door——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Could we have a question about it, please?

Mrs. Hicks: I shall be brief, Mr. Speaker. Next door are two high-rise blocks of flats, Tremont house and Lincoln house, which have wardens. People in the two blocks of flats next door to Mr. Rushton have £5 television licences, but the elderly people in the adjacent building, Longfield house, have to pay the full price because they have no warden. Does not he think that there is a ridiculous anomaly in that system and will he investigate it?

Mr. Lloyd: Whichever way one draws up a scheme, there will be someone on the wrong side of the rules. The rules enable local authorities so to organise their provision for the elderly that they can come into the scheme. That is why, since the scheme was introduced in 1988, more people enjoy the concessionary licence than before. It is quite possible for local authorities to organise themselves within the scheme.

Mr. Roger King: Is my hon. Friend aware that the level of licence fees is directly related to the cost of the provision of broadcasting services by the BBC? Is he fully satisfied that we are getting the correct value for money from that organisation, or does he agree with some industrialists that the costs should be gone over with a fine-toothed comb and some of the waste sorted out?

Mr. Lloyd: As my hon. Friend knows, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary allowed the BBC to increase its licence fee by less than the retail prices index for the coming year, because he took on board suggestions that there was scope for the BBC to increase its efficiency. No doubt by addressing itself to that, the BBC will be able to make further savings in due course.

Mr. Corbett: Will the Minister confirm that in the coming changes in the regulations, which have been announced, he will deal with the case of my constituent who is in a block of properties that were otherwise council-tenanted? Under the right to buy, a flat was bought and then sold to someone under pensionable age, so all the people in the block lost that concession. Will the changes at least end that anomaly? Does the Minister understand that Labour will exempt low-income groups, including pensioners, from the licence fee and raise the cash to do so by ensuring that the fee is paid for each set in a hotel or other commercial premises?

Mr. Lloyd: That is the suggestion at the moment. I wonder whether it will be the same when the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends have done their figures, because he proposes to increase the take from the retail and hotel trade from £5 million to £100 million. I hope that the trade knows that this extra impost is being placed on it. Labour will do that only by a massive increase in the fee, but I quite understand that the hon. Gentleman has not yet fully thought out the policy.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether I would make the matter clear. Our rules are clear beyond peradventure. If a local authority sells a flat in a block that qualifies under the rules, it is being extremely foolish, because there is no obligation on an authority to sell in those conditions.

Sir Anthony Grant: Will my hon. Friend take into consideration pensioners—there are some in my constituency—who pay taxes but who absolutely loathe television and do not understand why they should be expected to subsidise it for others?

Mr. Lloyd: As the regulations clearly say, those capable of receiving a British broadcasted programme must pay the licence fee, which goes to the BBC. That matter will come under review as we move towards the renewal of the BBC charter in 1996.

Fire Cover, West Yorkshire

4. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will carry out an urgent review of fire cover in West Yorkshire, and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): It is for the West Yorkshire fire and civil defence authority to assess the fire risks in its area in the light of guidance issued by the Home Office. The authority must then determine what resources are necessary to meet those risks. The Government are concerned to ensure that all fire authorities conform to the minimum nationally recommended standards of fire cover and that they do so as efficiently and economically as possible. Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services will pay particular attention to those points during its next inspection of West Yorkshire fire service, which is to take place very soon—during April this year.

Mrs. Mahon: Is the Minister aware of the damage that the poll tax is doing to authorities such as the West Yorkshire fire service? Does he realise that this year alone the authority—although it has wisely decided to save Sowerby Bridge fire station—faces cuts of £1·5 million, which will lead to the freezing of 100 posts and the axing of seven special firefighting appliances? Is not that disgraceful and does not it show that the Government are exercising double standards? When will they get rid of the poll tax, which is so damaging to both people and services?

Mr. Patten: The authority has been allowed a 19 per cent. increase in standard spending assessment for next year. That shows the Government's considerable commitment to the provision of good fire cover in the interests of people in West Yorkshire and elsewhere.

Mrs. Peacock: Why is the West Yorkshire fire authority being pressured by the Home Office to cut some of its services?

Mr. Patten: Her Majesty's inspector of fire services will go to West Yorkshire in April to carry out a full inspection of efficiency, effectiveness and the cover and needs of the fire service. He will report to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Allen McKay: Will the Minister also consider the problem of firefighting mains in West Yorkshire and other areas? Will he consider the possibility of an agreement between the fire service and the water authorities, so that the cost of an extra main does not fall on the poll tax payer?

Mr. Patten: That point has not been made to me before, but I shall certainly pursue it and write to the hon. Gentleman.

Magistrates Courts

5. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will request the Audit Commission to undertake a comparative study of the efficiency and effectiveness of magistrates courts.

Mr. John Patten: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to an audit gap in the present arrangements for the management of the magistrates court service. We are considering how best to fill that gap, including the possible involvement of the Audit Commission, as part of the process of reaching decisions on the magistrates court scrutiny. At this stage, however, given the scrutiny findings, I do not think that a further value-for-money study would be helpful until my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has made clear his views on the scrutiny in an announcement which I expect not to be too long delayed.

Mr. Mitchell: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a survey carried out recently by the Audit Commission showed that productivity in our courtrooms can vary by a factor of 10—from 250 summonses dealt with in one session to over 3,000? Will he take into account the importance of a survey of not only productivity but the efficiency and effectiveness with which our courtrooms conduct their business?

Mr. Patten: It is perfectly true that the unit costs in magistrates courts vary widely from one place to another and that unit costs have risen considerably in recent years. The outcome of the scrutiny may lead to further value-for-money studies, possibly conducted by the Audit Commission, but at present there is no legislative provision, as my hon. Friend will know from the Local Government Finance (No. 2) Act 1982.

Mr. Randall: Is the Minister aware that it is more than a year since the publication of the scrutiny report? Does he realise that the Government's slowness in deciding what to do about it is delaying the implementation of a number of proposals that could tackle, for example, the serious problem of inconsistency in sentencing and poor cost-effectiveness? Will he be more specific and tell us exactly when we can expect a decision about the report?

Mr. Patten: With respect, the hon. Gentleman seems a little muddled. The scrutiny related to the effectiveness and efficiency of the management of the magistrates court system, which is a £280 million-a-year undertaking. It had nothing to do with sentencing issues. We are committed to preserving both local justice and magisterial independence in sentencing. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will be able to make an announcement in the near future.

Sir John Wheeler: When he is considering the efficiency and effectiveness of the magistrates courts service, will my right hon. Friend look again at the Home Affairs Select Committee report on the Crown prosecution service, in particular the recommendation that draws attention to the efficiency proved by the Hampshire experiment, in which the use of information technology enables the police, the Crown prosecution service and the magistrates courts service to be more effectively used?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend, who is the chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, is aware that I keep all his distinguished reports next to my bed for reference in the evening. I shall certainly dig out the one on the Crown prosecution service and look at the point to which he referred. The Hampshire experiment is excellent. It is within our grasp to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the magistrates courts service.

Anabolic Steriods

6. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it is his intention to introduce legislation to make anabolic steroids controlled drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Baker): No, Sir. The Misuse of Drugs Act deals mainly with drugs of addiction. We have decided instead on a range of measures designed to prevent misuse, particularly among young people.

Mr. Campbell: Does the Secretary of State understand that that is a most disappointing reply, in the light of the fact that as long ago as November 1988 the Home Office announced that it intended to make anabolic steroids prescribed drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act? Does he appreciate that these drugs are freely available throughout the United Kingdom, in gymnasia and fitness centres, that they are acknowledged to cause damage to health and that in at least one case they have caused death? In those circumstances, is not there ample justification for making it a criminal offence to possess the drugs, or to possess them with the intention of supplying them to others?

Mr. Baker: I appreciate the great interest that the hon. and learned Gentleman takes in the subject. The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs has advised that the possession of anabolic steroids should not be an offence, since they are not addictive. That view is shared by our European Community partners. I am, however, concerned about the hon. and learned Gentleman's point that these drugs have dangerous side-effects, particularly for young people in training. We have decided, therefore, that the giving of anabolic steroids to minors—there is no trade in most of these drugs—shall be an offence. We are also undertaking additional research into the extent of steroid misuse and we intend to improve our testing and detecting

methods. In addition, we are increasing our educational efforts, the intention being to demonstrate to people that those drugs can be very harmful.

Mrs. Currie: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the national competition of the amateur powerlifting association will be held in Derby in June and that amateur powerlifters feel very strongly that further controls are needed for anabolic steroids? Will he guarantee to keep the issue under review and to take into account the views of such valuable bodies?

Mr. Baker: Yes, indeed. It is irresponsible of those who are training youngsters to participate in such sports to provide them with these drugs. There is no doubt that they have harmful side-effects. We are taking strong action. I agree entirely with my hon. Friend that as much publicity as possible should be given to their harmful effects.

Juvenile Courts

7. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he intends to make in the way juvenile or youth courts are organised, particularly in relation to waiting room arrangements and supervision once the age limits are raised to 18 years.

Mr. John Patten: Responsibility for listing arrangements in magistrates courts rests with justices' clerks. There are already statutory provisions to ensure that defendants attending juvenile courts are kept apart from adult defendants. The Justices' Clerks Society and the Magistrates Association are being consulted about ways of arranging youth court hearings and we have asked the best practice committee to consider practical best practice procedures for courts to adopt in future, if these are found to be necessary.

Mr. Michael: But it is the Government who are changing the age limit upwards by a year in relation to the juvenile or youth courts. Does not the Minister accept that the message given to young people, particularly young offenders, in the waiting room and in the area around a court, is in some cases almost as important as the message given to them in the court about their activities and future behaviour? Does he agree that the message that they frequently get is entirely wrong and completely contrary to the one that society would like them to receive? Does he further agree that a mechanism should be devised—whether it be advice or instructions—to ensure that 18-year-olds and very young people appearing before such courts are separated, so that very young people do not get the messages that might be given to them by more sophisticated offenders?

Mr. Patten: I agree with both points. The messages that juveniles get from rubbing shoulders with tougher and older accused people who are waiting outside a court can be very bad. That is why, as I pointed out in my initial answer to the hon. Gentleman, we wish to move as quickly as possible towards ensuring that we use the procedures drawn up by the best practice committee, under the Home Office magistrates courts adviser, to ensure that court clerks and others separate younger from older juveniles. We shall also be building into the guidance on the design of court houses exactly the points that cause concern to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government's decision to create youth courts under the Criminal Justice Bill has been widely welcomed throughout the criminal justice system? On the likely bad impression on young offenders, does my right hon. Friend agree that the worst possible impression is made on them when they are held on remand in prison? Does he further agree that the arrangements that the Government have introduced to ensure that we have a better system of looking after young people—whether in bail hostels or in remand prisons, which the private sector might build—will be conducive to ensuring a much reduced rate of recidivism among young offenders?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is right. The provisions for the introduction of a youth court under the Criminal Justice Bill have been widely welcomed across the spectrum—from those who describe themselves as penal reformers to those who want young people to get the punishment that they think they deserve. I also agree that it is important to end as soon as possible the practice of remanding juveniles in custody in prisons. That is why my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary published his consultation paper on the issue two or three weeks ago. That, too, has been widely welcomed.

On the last part of the question, my hon. Friend has already carved out for himself a considerable reputation as a proponent of the involvement of the private sector in prison and remand issues and we listen carefully to what he has to say.

Iraqi Nationals

8. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the Amnesty International report on British treatment of Iraqi nationals.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have placed in the Library a copy of a reply sent to Amnesty International on 18 February. I am satisfied that the action taken against Iraqi nationals is in accordance with domestic law and our international obligations. The International Committee of the Red Cross has visited all Iraqis detained and has stated that they are being treated in accordance with the Geneva conventions.

Mr. Dalyell: In view of the recent heavyweight criticism that current United Kingdom law, which allows people to be detained on grounds of national security without being given a reason for their detention, is in breach of international law, do the Government have plans in any way to synchronise United Kingdom arrangements and bring them into line with the proposed international arrangements?

Mr. Baker: I appreciate the interest that the hon. Gentleman has shown in the matter in recent weeks. I do not accept that the action that we have taken is in breach of international standards. In certain other countries, Iraqis were bundled out very quickly indeed. The hon. Gentleman is familiar with the procedures that operate in such cases. The advisory panel is headed by a lord justice of appeal and it has so far dealt with 54 cases. In his judgment on the Cheblak case, the Master of the Rolls examined the basis of the three advisers' procedures and

took the view that the arrangements struck a proper balance between the protection of individual rights and the requirements of national security.

Mr. Alexander: Have not we behaved impeccably to the Iraqis during the Gulf conflict? My right hon. Friend mentioned, for example, the due judicial process which must be gone through before any of them is ejected. Does my right hon. Friend recollect the threats, emanating from Baghdad of increased terrorist activity? Were not we wise to be safe rather than sorry?

Mr. Baker: I fully support what my hon. Friend says. At the outbreak of hostilities, Saddam Hussein called on Iraqis and other sympathisers across the world to take action to support him. We were absolutely right to follow the principle that it is better to be safe than sorry. Although hostilities in the Gulf have now ceased, it would be imprudent to believe that international terrorism, whether from the middle east or from other countries, will cease. We must therefore continue to be vigilant.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Home Secretary aware that I, for one, totally accept that while we were in military conflict with a notorious terrorist dictatorship it was necessary on national security grounds to take various actions? [HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] I am not going to apologise for that—least of all to those who did not support the military conflict in any way.

Is the Home Secretary aware, however, that I should like to see progess in one form of activity? Is not there a strong case for those who appear before the three advisers to have legal representation or some other form of representation so that our democratic process is not harmed?

Mr. Baker: I have known the hon. Gentleman in the House for many years, dating back to when he represented another seat. I have always thought of him as an hon. Member who is not afraid to stand up and speak his mind on any subject, as he has done with great fearlessness in the past few weeks. I appreciate the concern that he and others have expressed about this matter. In practice, lawyers have made representations—sometimes directly to the three advisers, who have seen those lawyers if that was what was wanted. Representations have also been made to me by the lawyers. There is, therefore, some flexibility. I believe that those cases have been handled fairly—in fact, with impeccable fairness.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the overwhelming majority of people in this country will be gratified and relieved at the action that the Government have taken, which has ensured that no terrorist incident has taken place? Is he further aware that they will equally contrast what has happened to Iraqi nationals in this country with what happened to the Kuwaitis when Iraq moved into that country?

Mr. Baker: The despicable behaviour of some Iraqis during their occupation of Kuwait is not a standard to be followed by any country. We have behaved according to the highest standards. I appreciate that the powers are unusual and as Home Secretary I have therefore been especially careful to ensure that everything has been done to give those people a fair hearing.

South Yorkshire Police

9. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next expects to review manning policy for the South Yorkshire police.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I announced on 20 December 1990 that I had approved 18 additional police posts for South Yorkshire with effect from 1 October 1991, subject to confirmation from the police authority that it is prepared to meet its share of the costs of those posts. Any application that the authority makes for our approval to further establishment increases will be most carefully considered.

Mr. Duffy: Will the Home Secretary confirm that those 18 posts did not meet the application of the South Yorkshire police? Given the findings of the Sheffield *Star*, which I conveyed to him through the post in recent days, about the erosion of the fabric of the South Yorkshire police force, does he agree that those 18 posts do not meet the needs of that police force either? Will he confirm that, during the November inspection, South Yorkshire came out as the least resourced but the most productive of the family of six forces? My hon. Friends and I know what the problem is—it is not the Home Secretary, but the Department of the Environment. Will the right hon. Gentleman seek a firm assurance from the Department of the Environment that it will not allow the capping criteria to prevent the South Yorkshire police from manning up to his standards?

Mr. Baker: The South Yorkshire police asked for a further 50 police officers and we allocated a further 18. However, as I said in my main answer, it may be possible to increase that number later in the year. I am concerned that police services are maintained at a proper level. The level of budget of each authority is not my responsibility. With the agreement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, I have set out the criteria according to which the police authorities should set their budgets. In a letter to Councillor Bundred on 18 February, I stated:

> "It is now for each authority to set its budget. In doing so, it should take into account all relevant considerations, including its statutory duties, the approved level of police manpower, the Government's intended capping criteria, the need, as appropriate, for expenditure restraint and the scope for greater efficiency."

Mr. Shersby: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that if South Yorkshire encounters difficulties over its police manpower, he will be willing to consider whatever representations South Yorkshire police authority may make on that important point?

Mr. Baker: I will, of course, undertake to do that. As I have said to the House before, I have provided for an increase in police resources for the country as a whole in the coming year of 700 uniformed police officers and 1,100 civilians. However, I am well aware that hon. Members are interested in their own police forces and I can give my hon. Friend the undertaking for which he has asked.

Mr. Hattersley: Is the Home Secretary aware that the South Yorkshire police authority told me on Friday that, far from expanding to meet its new establishment, it will be cutting the number of officers because of poll tax capping? How many other police authorities are similarly afflicted? Will the Home Secretary confirm the estimate given by the

chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, that poll tax capping is likely to mean 1,700 fewer police officers than last year?

Mr. Baker: That is highly unlikely. It depends on whether the authority is a multi-purpose authority or a single service authority such as South Yorkshire. Within that context, I expect metropolitan police authorities to set their budgets to maintain operational police manpower at the level that I and my predecessors have approved. I do not expect that to be done by moving police officers into posts held by civilians. I expect police officers to pursue vigorously a policy of streamlining administration, cutting out waste and maximising value for money.

Radio Stations

10. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last discussed the future of incremental radio stations with the chairman of the Radio Authority.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend meets the chairman of the Radio Authority from time to time to discuss a range of matters, but he has not specifically discussed with him the future of incremental radio stations.

Mr. Hughes: I thank my right hon. Friend for his answer. Will he and the Secretary of State note the success and popularity of Sunrise Radio, an Asian radio station operating in west London and my constituency? Despite its popularity, it is rather hemmed in by an inadequate frequency on the medium wave, which means that people living within the reception area find it difficult to receive that station. Will my right hon. Friend talk to the Radio Authority to see whether successful incremental radio stations which broadcast to a loyal audience, as Sunrise does, can move on to a better frequency so that people who want to enjoy it can do so?

Mr. Lloyd: Sunrise Radio is to be congratulated on offering a varied programme which is proving particularly successful in attracting Asian listeners. It suffers from some interference, especially at night. Increasing broadcast power might help, but it would be expensive. Sunrise should contact the Radio Authority—I understand that it has not yet done so—but I will draw my hon. Friend's concerns to the attention of the Radio Authority.

Mr. Darling: When the Minister next meets the chairman of the Radio Authority, will he discuss the growing problem of local and smaller radio stations being increasingly acquired by larger conglomerates? The first casualty is often local output, especially local news, with increasing dependency on Independent Radio News which, however good it may be, is not a local news output. Does the Minister agree that local radio stations such as Sunrise should be encouraged? If concentration continues, it will create little more than another national radio station.

Mr. Lloyd: Local stations should certainly be encouraged. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the licence is given to a broadcasting company to produce a particular sort of broadcasting. If ownership changes, the licence does not change and the station is expected to continue the same output.

Domestic Violence

11. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions he has had with chief constables about the law and domestic violence.

Mr. John Patten: Chief officers were consulted over the drafting of a Home Office circular on domestic violence which was issued last July. It has been widely welcomed.

Mr. Ashley: I welcome the setting up of domestic violence units, but when will they be open at night, when many women need them? When will there be enough of them to give access to those who require them and when will social workers be attached to them?

Mr. Patten: I am extremely grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, who has a long-standing interest in the subject. Domestic violence units exist in police force areas such as the Metropolitan area and West Yorkshire. There is none yet in the Greater Manchester area or in the right hon. Gentleman's area, although I am happy to report that the force general order states that all allegations of domestic violence should be treated as crimes—and quite right, too. There is also close co-ordination with other agencies, such as social workers and the probation service.

By July, Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary will have visited exactly half the forces in this area, asking for a specific answer to the question, "What has been done so far on domestic violence?" I shall report back to the House at that stage, in July this year.

Mr. Holt: Will my right hon. Friend take five minutes to discuss with the chief constables the problem of young and juvenile crime in relation to the school leaving age? The highest crime level is currently among those in the year below the school leaving age and has been for 80 years. Would not a more flexible approach to the school leaving age allow those who wish to study to do so, those who wish to train to do that, while those who wish to play truant would not have the opportunity to do so? Our current rigid school leaving age is out of line with that of our colleagues in the European Community and should be looked at by the Government.

Mr. Patten: The school leaving age is not a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, but I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) that we need to do more about truancy, on which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is to make an announcement in the near future.

Remand Prisoners

12. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to bring forward any new proposals for the treatment of remand prisoners.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): We intend to provide cardphones at all establishments holding unconvicted prisoners and we are abolishing routine censorship of the correspondence of unconvicted prisoners, except those in category A. In addition, planning is in hand for the provision of fuller

regimes for unconvicted prisoners as new accommodation comes on stream and overcrowding is reduced over the next two years.

Ms. Quin: The Minister will be aware that the number of remand prisoners has risen dramatically during the Government's period of office. Is he aware that the Woolf report stated that conditions for remand prisoners were often worse than those for convicted prisoners? That is disgraceful. Will the Government undertake to implement in full the recommendations of the Woolf inquiry in relation to remand prisoners?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am aware of the hon. Lady's interest in remand prisoners and I note her interest in the outcome of our deliberations on the Woolf inquiry. I am sure that she will join me in congratulating the Government on tackling the problem of provision for the unconvicted prisoner by providing 13 new prisons and 8,000 more places, and ensuring that bail hostels and bail information schemes are available to unconvicted prisoners.

Mr. David Shaw: Does my right hon. Friend agree that accommodation provision for remand prisoners could be allocated to the private sector and that the introduction of privatisation would be welcomed?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend will know that the Criminal Justice Bill, which has just completed its passage through the House, contains provision for remand prisons to be contracted out to the private sector. I share my hon. Friend's optimism that they will provide adequate and good accommodation for unconvicted prisoners.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is the Minister aware that police stations in South and West Yorkshire will have great difficulty in housing some of the young remand prisoners, which they have not done hitherto, because of the budgets set for South and West Yorkshire police? The budgets were set in accordance with the standard spending assessment, which means that hundreds of police officers will have to come off the beat to man police stations. Will the Home Secretary assure us that, at this late stage and bearing it in mind that the police budgets in South and West Yorkshire have been set outside the criteria given this afternoon, he will give further consideration to the prospect of meeting the authorities and will assist them in maintaining the force that he requires them to have?

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman will be relieved to know that the problems of young offenders who are unconvicted prisoners in police cells will be alleviated in the West Yorkshire district by the opening of Moorland prison, which will provide accommodation for young remand prisoners. It will take out of police cells a number of the young offenders who are currently in them, and thus save money.

Ashford Remand Centre

13. **Mr Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future of the Ashford (Middlesex) remand centre site.

Mrs. Rumbold: We are at present carrying out a review of the prison estate as a whole. The future of the Ashford site will be considered in the context of that review. In the meantime, we plan to make the site suitable for recreation by local people and are discussing with Spelthorne borough council the detailed arrangements for this.

Mr. Wilshire: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply, but does she recall that at a meeting before Christmas she told Spelthorne borough council that the site could be made available for between five and 10 years? Is she aware of my recent letter pointing out that her local officials now say that it can be made available for one year? Will she please clear up the confusion once and for all?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend will be glad to know that a letter is in the post to him, following my discussions with officials on that matter. I think that he will find the answer satisfactory.

London Traffic

14. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions he has had with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis about traffic in London: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have had no recent discussions with the Commissioner on that subject. Regular contact is, however, maintained by officials with the Metropolitan police on a number of traffic issues.

Mr. Adley: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Conservative party is still the party of law and order? That being so, is he aware that in the Commissioner's view, the effect of coach deregulation on his police force has been "horrendous", with the proliferation of illegal parking and coaches leaving their engines running for hours on end? Will my right hon. Friend please have a word with the Secretary of State for Transport to see whether it is not too late to amend the Road Traffic Bill to deal with such serious considerations?

Mr. Baker: I assure my hon. Friend that no resources are spared in dealing with the problems of keeping traffic moving in London: 2,500 police officers and traffic wardens are on traffic duty; in 1989, there were 2·5 million traffic and parking offences; in 1990, there were 160,493 wheel clamps, and special wheel clamps have been arranged for coaches. I assure my hon. Friend that we are busy in that area.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 7 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Colvin: The House will wish to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on being the first allied leader to visit the Gulf since the successful cessation of hostilities. When he spoke to our forces there, he spoke for the whole nation. Can he now tell the House when we can expect our forces home so that we may give them the heroes' welcome that they deserve? Does he agree that it

might not be a bad idea to send out to the Gulf 10 builders to assist with the reconstruction of Kuwait for every service man and service woman whom we welcome home?

The Prime Minister: I can assure my hon. Friends that we are making plans for an appropriate welcome home when the majority of our troops are back. We hope to announce details of that quite soon. I am sure that the House will be pleased to have the excellent news that our forces will start to return home this weekend. The first to come back will be medical reservists, including 205 general hospital, which is returning to Glasgow. The first Tornados, their crews and support staff will also be starting for home in a few days' time. Some ships are already on their way home. The House will be especially pleased to know that 7th Armoured Brigade, which has been in the desert under the command of Brigadier Cordingley since last October, will begin to leave early next week and we hope that its withdrawal can be completed in two weeks or so. That brigade includes one of the Scottish regiments in the Gulf—the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will publish details later this afternoon.

Mr. Hattersley: I, too, congratulate the Prime Minister on his visit to the Gulf yesterday, but may I now ask him to turn his mind to domestic politics? Why is Britain the only western European economy in which manufacturing exports are falling, manufacturing output is falling, manufacturing investment is falling and manufacturing employment is falling, all at the same time?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks, but less so for the rest. As the right hon. Gentleman knows—but, alas, neglected to mention—the United States and Canada are in recession and growth is slowing in France, Italy and a number of other major economies. In our own economy, inflation is falling and interest rates are beginning to fall. The effects of our policies are beginning to be felt benevolently.

Mr. Hattersley: The Prime Minister has not even attempted to answer my question. He will not be able to run away from these issues for ever. As he has failed to attempt an answer, I offer him the answer provided to my question by the House of Lords yesterday—that the problem for British manufacturing industry is doctrinaire Government policies and incompetent Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman should read the report more carefully. If he does so, he will find a number of recommendations welcoming actions that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has taken in recent months. They have advanced further since their report's publication and include, for example, the doubling of support for technology transfer and extra support for smaller firms. The right hon. Gentleman should be less selective and more accurate.

Mr. Hattersley: The Prime Minister must know that the two criticisms that I quoted are exactly the view of the House of Lords. I have no doubt that even the least literate members of the other place will regard the Prime Minister's answer as a bogus sham.

The Prime Minister: I had not expected to find such a literate right hon. Gentleman guilty of such tautology. The policies that we have followed are those which assist success in all sectors of the enterprise economy. The right hon. Gentleman forgets the reductions in inflation, on which his party had no policy, the change to one of the lowest rates of corporation tax in the world, when his party would raise taxation, and a labour market surplus which has given this country the lowest number of days lost in strikes for 50 years.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a start cannot even begin to be made to bringing Iraq back into the peace-loving family of nations while Saddam Hussein remains in power in Baghdad?

The Prime Minister: I can most certainly agree with my hon. Friend about that. As I said in the House last week, and am happy to repeat, I believe that Iraq will remain a pariah among nations while Saddam Hussein is there and rules it.

Q2. **Mr. Leadbitter:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 7 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Leadbitter: Will the Prime Minister now turn to some specifics of the highly critical report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, which was published this week? Is he aware that the report makes it clear that there has been no support for industry from the Government's policies? The report concludes that there is a grave risk of having no British owned and based manufacturing industry as a result of present policies. Does the Prime Minister agree with the final conclusion in the report—that the Government's policies show no commitment to industry and no commitment to the national interest?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can explain why manufacturing productivity grew faster in this country in the past decade than in almost any other major industrialised country. As the hon. Gentleman should know, a great deal of the ground lost in previous decades has been made up. We still need to be better at implementing the scientific discoveries made in this country and we are determined to improve on that.

Mr. Jessel: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the victory parade will include British Army bands trained at the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller hall in Twickenham?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have heard my hon. Friend, even if my right hon. Friend is not at the House.

Q3. **Mr. Archy Kirkwood:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 7 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kirkwood: I congratulate the Prime Minister on his recent visit to the Gulf. Now that he has been able to see for himself the ecological consequences of the Gulf war, does he agree that it is necessary to mount an ecological task force almost on the same scale as the military task force that was needed to liberate Kuwait in order to deal

with those consequences? Will he do what he can to ensure that the United Nations takes an international initiative to deal quickly with the pollution in the Gulf?

The Prime Minister: The action necessary to cure the pollution in the Gulf will require an international effort. Quite how that will be organised is a matter which is still open. The hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment made a cash donation yesterday towards clearance of the pollution.

Mr. Oppenheim: Bearing in mind the Government's economic policy and the fact that some people claim that credit controls represent a painless cure for inflation, would my right hon. Friend care to comment on where, under such a system, home buyers might come in the queue for credit, and how, in any case, such a system could be effective without the reimposition of exchange controls?

The Prime Minister: It is extremely unlikely that credit controls could make any worthwhile contribution to economic management. They are a legacy of the sort of economic management that existed in the 1950s, to which the Opposition seem keen to return.

Unemployment (Scotland)

Q4. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Prime Minister when he next expects to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss unemployment in Scotland.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Mr. Clarke: Does the Prime Minister recall that during his last brief visit to Edinburgh he said that he would not forget Lanarkshire? Given the huge job losses that we have seen since then, including 3,000 in the steel industry, is not the Prime Minister appalled at the stage of employment training in Lanarkshire? Do a 32 per cent. reduction in funding, trainer job losses and lost trainee places, including places for those with special needs, represent the Government's commitment? Will the Prime Minister, tomorrow, meet real people with real problems or will his visit to Lanarkshire be simply a public relations charade?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that the Lanarkshire working group has been set up to co-ordinate action to tackle the problems facing Lanarkshire on the back of the steel job losses that have occurred. The working group met for the first time on 11 January and will report to me around the end of April.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Does the Prime Minister agree that the admittedly serious problems in Lanarkshire and elsewhere in Scotland would become much worse if the House of Commons were daft enough to accept the Labour party's proposal for an elected assembly with tax-raising powers? Does he agree that such an arrangement would simply scare jobs away from Scotland?

The Prime Minister: I am in no doubt about that. Were Scotland to have a tax-raising assembly, it would undoubtedly become the highest taxed part of the United Kingdom. That, in turn, would drive away the investment which in the last decade has increasingly made Scotland more efficient, effective and wealthy.

Official Visits

Q5. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make an official visit to Nottingham.

The Prime Minister: I am making a series of visits to all parts of the country, and very much hope to include Nottingham among them.

Mr. Allen: The right hon. Gentleman will be very welcome. When he comes, will he make a point of meeting mothers and children who have been robbed of £2·30 per week by the Government's failure to link child benefit to inflation? Arising from the deceitful words in the Conservative manifesto, which said

"Child benefit will continue to be paid as now",

will the Prime Minister, first, answer a question—something he has not done so far today—and, secondly, will he tell the House, and mothers at home—*[Interruption.]* May I continue, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is making rather a meal of it.

Mr. Allen: Will the Prime Minister tell mothers at home of his own complicity in the drafting of those very words in the 1987 manifesto—words which cheated mothers and their children?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government have an obligation to review child benefit annually, and do so. On each occasion that child benefit has not been fully uprated, those on the lowest incomes have been fully compensated or more through other social security benefits.

Engagements

Q6. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 7 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that under his outstanding leadership we have become a united party determined to defeat inflation and the Labour party when the general election comes? Does he approve of all of us on this side of the House paying our community charge, supporting the prevention of terrorism Act and supporting our troops in the Gulf? If so, is that not in stark contrast with that lot on the other side who are busy scheming to remove their leader and his deputy through supper clubs —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that that is enough.

The Prime Minister: I certainly hope to be in sharp contrast with Opposition Members on many issues. I am delighted to see that normal service has now been resumed.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business of the House for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): Yes, Sir. The business of the House for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 11 MARCH—Until seven o'clock Estimates Day (1st Allotted Day, 2nd Part). There will be a debate on class VII, vote 3, transport industries, in so far as it relates to London Regional Transport, followed by a motion on the Northern Ireland (Appropriation) Order.

At ten o'clock the Question will be put on all outstanding supplementary estimates and votes.

TUESDAY 12 MARCH—Second Reading of the Planning and Compensation Bill [Lords], followed by a procedure motion relating to the War Crimes Bill.

WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH—Opposition Day (9th Allotted Day). Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate on an Opposition motion described as "The crisis in national health service hospitals". Afterwards there will be a debate on an Opposition motion, subject to be announced, followed by a motion to take note of the report by the European Court of Auditors for 1989. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 14 MARCH—Motion for the Easter Adjournment followed by proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill.

FRIDAY 15 MARCH—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 18 MARCH—Second Reading of the War Crimes Bill.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee A will meet at 10.30 am on Wednesday 13 March to consider European Community Documents Nos. 9228/88 and 10333/90 relating to seat belt wearing.

European Standing Committee B will also meet at 10.30 am on the same day to consider European Commuity Document No. 9025/90 relating to nuclear fusion.

It may be for the convenience of the House to know that, subject to the progress of business, it will be proposed that the House will rise for the Easter recess on Thursday 28 March until Monday 15 April.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I wish to refer to a matter which is not part of the business for next week. I understand, Mr. Speaker, that you have today announced that you do not propose to stand as a parliamentary candidate at the next general election, whenever that may be. This is not the occasion for tributes, and, indeed, since this is not part of next week's business, I run the risk of being called to order, Mr. Speaker, but as Leader of the House I should like to say on behalf of us all that we gladly acknowledge that since you were unanimously chosen Speaker you have presided over the proceedings of the House with distinction, fairness and impartiality in historic times. I would like particularly to draw attention to how well you have looked after the interests of Back Benchers on both sides of the House.

Your decision today, Mr. Speaker, means that you will not serve in the Chair in the next Parliament, and, as I have said, the time for proper tributes will come later. Can I say now that we are all delighted to know that you will continue to preside over our proceedings until then.

[European Standing Committee A
Wednesday 13 March
Relevant European Community Documents
(a) 9228/88 } *Compulsory use of seat belts in*
(b) 10333/90 } *road vehicles*
Relevant Reports of the European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 15–vi (1988-89), HC 15–xxxi (1988-89) and HC 29–xiii (1990-91)
(b) HC 29–viii (1990-91)

European Standing Committee B
Wednesday 13 March
Relevant European Community Documents
(a) 9025/90 Nuclear Fusion Research
(b) 8305/90 Nuclear Fusion Programme
Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 29–i (1990-91)
(b) HC 11–xxxiii (1989-90)

Floor of the House
Wednesday 13 March
Relevant European Community Document
Unnumbered Court of Auditors' Report for 1989
Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee HC 29–xiii (1990-91)]

Dr. Cunningham: I begin by echoing the sentiments expressed by the Leader of the House on behalf of the Government and associate my right hon. and hon. Friends with them. You have today, Mr. Speaker, announced the beginning of the end of a long and honourable career as a Member of the House, serving the people of Croydon for 27 years, and culminating in the distinguished holding of the historic office of Speaker of the House of Commons.

That election to the Chair by your colleagues must have been the highlight of your career, indicating the trust and confidence that Members in all parts of the House placed in you when they unanimously elected you the Speaker. I can well understand that, among other things, your ultimate retirement will allow you to devote more time to your hobbies, among which, I notice, you number your grandchildren.

May I ask the Leader of the House, who has announced an inordinately long Easter recess, why an important measure that completed its Committee stage more than a month ago, the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill, has still not come to the Floor of the House for its Report stage and Third Reading? If the Government can find time for such a long recess, surely they can find time to complete the consideration of such an important measure. Why has the Bill suddenly disappeared down some black hole in the Department of Education and Science?

Frankly, if the Government can find time for such a long recess and are not interested in bringing business before the House, they should simply announce the dissolution, have a general election and let us bring more important business before the House for consideration.

The Leader of the House announced the Government's intention to employ provisions of the Parliament Acts 1911 and 1948 in respect of the War Crimes Bill. There is a certain irony in the Conservatives, of all Governments, invoking the provisions of that Act against their

colleagues, in the majority, in the other place. But for the moment, since we shall be debating the matter at length next week, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman to confirm that he is following the normal processes and procedures in introducing the provisions of the Parliament Acts next Tuesday?

If the Government ever reach a conclusion about their review of the poll tax—we hope that they will, since each day we learn of further horrendous costs to local authorities and their poll tax payers—may we be assured that an oral statement about that matter will be made in the House and that an announcement will not be slipped out on Maundy Thursday as the House rises or at some time during the Easter recess?

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Chris Patten): Don't you worry.

Dr. Cunningham: From a sedentary position, the Chairman of the Conservative party tells me not to worry. I suggest that right now he has more to worry about than I have—*[Interruption.]* We shall be first in the real election when it comes.

Has the Leader of the House seen the story on the front page of the *Daily Mirror* today about yet another increase in prescription charges? Does he recall the promise made to the nation by the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) in 1979, when she said,

"We have no intention of raising prescription charges"?

There have been 13 increases in prescription charges under this Government.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): What has this got to do with next week's business?

Dr. Cunningham: Will the Leader of the House assure us that, if the *Daily Mirror* story is true, the Secretary of State for Health will face the House and make an oral statement about why, for the 14th time under this Government, the Government have ratted on their promise on prescription charges which hon. Members like the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) supported on every occasion?

Mr. MacGregor: It seems to me that most of the right hon. and hon. Friends of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) have already left for the recess. They did not seem to complain very much about the length of the Easter recess.

The House will have completed a great deal of business in the 11 weeks that we will have been sitting by Maundy Thursday. We have dealt with a considerable amount of Government legislation and a great deal has been done in Standing Committees. We have also debated events in the Gulf at some length. I believe that the arrangements that I have announced will be for the general convenience of the House. Arrangements will be made for the private Members' day set down for Friday 12 April to be rescheduled.

The hon. Member for Copeland must not become over-anxious about the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill. It is essential next week to pass the Northern Ireland (Appropriation) Order and the Consolidated Fund Bill and hence the allotted estimates day. Next week, there will be the Second Readings of two major Bills referred to in the Gracious Speech, as well as an Opposition Supply day. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that it is a few weeks since we had one of those. If I had not come forward with one, I suspect that he would have criticised me. That is a full programme by any standards, and I remind the hon. Gentleman that the House will not rise until Thursday 28 March. He must contain his enthusiasm for the rest of the Government's programme for a little longer.

The hon. Member for Copeland is aware that the Gracious Speech contains reference to the War Crimes Bill. I can confirm that the procedure with regard to that Bill is consistent with the usual practice in these matters. Indeed, it is entirely consistent with the last time that it occurred. It may be for the convenience of the House to learn that the procedure motion that we are taking next week before the Bill's Second Reading is a procedural means to keep open the possibility of the use of the Parliament Acts if the Lords were to propose changes that the Commons could not accept; but of course the Government hope that we will end up with a Bill in a form that commands the support of the majority in both Houses.

As for the community charge, we always make statements where and when appropriate. It was hardly for the hon. Member for Copeland to complain about the comparative positions on prescription charges. I remind him that 70 per cent. of the population do not pay prescription charges and 80 per cent. of the items are dispensed free, compared with 60 per cent. in 1978 under the Labour Government at the time about which he was speaking. There is a big difference between us. We shall make an announcement on charges for 1991-92 at the proper time and in the usual way.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): As, in his statement about the end of Mr. Speaker's tenure, my right hon. Friend, though saying that he was unanimously elected, omitted to state that he is the first Speaker in living memory to be elected against the wishes of the Government of the day by the House of Commons, can my right hon. Friend find time during this week to make a statement reminding the House that, for the first time in living memory, it has brought back to itself not only the fiction but the fact of electing its Speaker, and to give an undertaking that, while he is Leader of the House, no Government will again attempt to impose a Speaker upon the House?

Mr. MacGregor: It will be at least some time before that matter will have to be considered. I am sure that my hon. Friend will happily agree with all the tributes that I paid to you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I am not suggesting that you, Mr. Speaker, do not have the right to make such an important personal decision, but it will be received with much regret not only on this Bench but by all Northern Ireland Members of Parliament. The Leader of the House mentioned the next Parliament, which we fear will be very much poorer as a result of your retirement.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that every Back Bencher will wish to be associated with the tributes that have been paid to you.

Will my right hon. Friend reconsider what he said about the War Crimes Bill? Is he aware that many people will think it grotesquely inappropriate that, while the butcher of Baghdad remains in power, we are turning our attention to aged men? I am not suggesting that some of

[Mr. Patrick Cormack]

them may not have done terrible things, but will my right hon. Friend please at least guarantee a free vote on that Bill?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, indeed. My hon. Friend expresses his own view on the matter, but I know from the pressures on me that many hon. Members feel differently. The House should have another opportunity to debate the Bill. I confirm that there will be a free vote on it.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Mr. Speaker, may I join the Leader of the House and the shadow Leader of the House in expressing gratitude for your services in the Chair? Despite your somewhat shady past in a previous incarnation, you have been assiduous in dealing fairly with the minority parties, for which we are grateful.

Is the purpose of the two-week Easter recess to enable the Government to prepare for a general election? If so, will the Leader of the House be kind enough to give us the date of it as soon as possible—the sooner the better for most of us?

Before the election is held, will the right hon. Gentleman, as a Scotsman, pay attention to the scandal that the Scottish Office remains the only Department of State that is not scrutinised by a Select Committee? As the Government resist all wider constitutional change in Scotland, when will they respond to the comments of the Select Committee on Procedure on the issue?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not associate myself with the right hon. Gentleman's remarks about you, Mr. Speaker, having a shady past. I remember that period, which you will also well recall, with much affection.

I entirely agree with the right hon. Gentleman that you, Mr. Speaker, have acted in the interests of the whole House throughout the period in which you have served with such distinction as our Speaker. We look forward to you continuing for some time.

There is no connection between my announcement of the Easter recess and the date of the general election. The right hon. Gentleman will have to wait patiently to decide where and when, and in what country, he wishes to stand. I have nothing to add to what I have already said many times about the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Hostilities in the Gulf have ceased and the allied prisoners of war have begun to return, but is my right hon. Friend aware that a number of Conservative Members are concerned to ensure that human rights abuses in Kuwait are properly investigated, and that they are concerned that the Iraqi Government seem unable or unwilling to acknowledge that they are holding no fewer than 30,000 Kuwaiti civilians and soldiers, contrary to the Geneva convention and to United Nations resolution 686, which underpins the ceasefire? May we soon have a debate on those important issues?

Mr. MacGregor: As always, we must decide when it is appropriate to make statements or hold debates on the Gulf. I cannot comment on the number of detainees whom my hon. Friend mentioned, but he will know that both the points that concern him concern the whole House and are being pursued by the Government.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Has the Leader of the House received a request from the Minister who has responsibility for the Stock Exchange for an opportunity to make a statement on the sale of the shares in Bioplan Ltd., which has built 10 hospitals on NHS land and which apparently is holding talks with a French company and an American health company about taking over those facilities? If it did so, American Medical International would have a monopoly of private health care, including facilities within the NHS. I trust that, by next week, his hon. Friend will come forward with a statement before the deal goes ahead, without any consultation with the NHS.

Mr. MacGregor: I know nothing of such a matter. The short answer to the question is no.

Sir Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): When we discuss transport votes on Monday in relation to London Regional Transport, can my right hon. Friend confirm that it will be within the restrictions of such a debate to refer to such matters as the deregulation of London buses, for example, and the possibility of road pricing in central London to discourage some commuters from bringing in their cars as they do at the moment?

Mr. MacGregor: I would think that it would be possible to discuss any matters that relate to London Regional Transport.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): I shall hope to pay my respects to you, Sir, in due course. Those valuable words can wait a while.

Since it appears that it is my private Member's Bill to deal with the illegal sale of cigarettes to children under 16 that cannot be pursued now on 12 April, may I have an assurance from the Leader of the House that it will be dealt with on the first Friday after we come back, since I was No. 1 in the ballot?

Mr. MacGregor: Clearly we shall have to reschedule the business for that day, as I have already said. I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. Obviously I have no wish to do anything that would upset the arrangements that were already in train.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Is the Leader of the House aware that many of my hon. Friends are very concerned about the continued anti-Government bias shown by the BBC, especially through the agency of the "Today" programme? Is my right hon. Friend aware that that view was also shared by the leader of the Liberal Democrat party in an article in *The Sunday Times* last weekend? Will he therefore arrange for us to have an urgent debate on the continuing anti-Government bias and invite the leader of the Liberal Democrat party to take part in that debate?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot promise my hon. Friend a debate on the matter next week.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The Leader of the House will recognise that the House of Lords report on manufacturing industry, already referred to today, is of enormous importance. It is of sufficient importance to justify perhaps the unusual step of suggesting that this House, as well as the other place, debates it. If he will not agree to a debate on the broader issue, will he at least consider the urgent problem which is developing in heavy energy-using industries, not least in Rotherham

Engineering Steel, which faces enormous difficulty as a result of impending electricity price rises? Will he accept that our competitor countries will make jolly sure that they do not leave their similar industries at the mercy of market forces? Do we really have to see the remaining significant industry in my area being wiped out, along with coal, glass and everything else?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not want to get into the policy issues now, because that would be inappropriate. The hon. Gentleman will know that the Budget statement will be made on 19 March and that there will be the usual Budget debates thereafter, when matters relating to the economy and to manufacturing industries can all be discussed.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): My right hon. Friend will have seen reports of President Bush's address to the joint session of Congress in which he referred to the importance of a major peace settlement in the middle east, including Israel, and referred to resolutions 242 and 338. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, having won the war, it is as important to win the peace, and that we should have an early debate to discuss the whole peace issue in the middle east while it is at the forefront of our minds?

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has frequently talked about these matters. Certainly I shall bear in mind my hon. Friend's request. We shall have to consider at what appropriate time we should debate them.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Will the Leader of the House make time for a debate on foreign affairs in relation to the middle east so that, among other things, the House can debate the recent report by UNICEF, which shows that tens of thousands of civilians in Iraq face death by cholera and typhoid because of the effects of bombing on the water supply, sewerage, communications and medical services?

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that the hon. Lady is even more concerned about what has happened in Kuwait as a result of Saddam Hussein's aggression. Those matters are debated frequently. I have already said that we will have to find an appropriate time to debate affairs in the Gulf.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): First, Mr. Speaker, I should say that London Members wish you well.

Is there any chance of a statement in the House next week on the management of the London borough of Lambeth, which seems to have singular difficulty in setting a fair community charge, and where there are thousands of uninhabited council houses and millions of pounds worth of uncollected rent? Even Labour Members of Parliament from that borough seem to be tearing their hair. As the situation there is almost as bad as it was in Liverpool a few years ago, should not something be done about it?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that many of my hon. Friends and others will wish to refer frequently in the House to the maladministration of the London borough of Lambeth and its proposed community charge. I myself referred to that during Prime Minister's Question Time on Tuesday. I understand that we are still waiting to hear what its community charge will be, but hon. Members will undoubtedly frequently refer to the contrast between Lambeth and Wandsworth, as well as to the fact that some members of Lambeth council are still not paying their community charge.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): May we have a statement next week on the poll tax, which apparently still has to be paid by members of the armed forces serving in the Gulf, a problem which I understand arises from a recent High Court ruling? Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that members of the armed forces serving in the Gulf are more keen to know the Government's attitude on that than on war medals or victory parades?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for asking that question. He will have heard the statement that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has already made about that in order to reassure service men and others serving in the Gulf. The Department of the Environment is currently working out proposals on how to ensure that all uniformed service personnel do not have to bear the cost of the personal community charge while serving in the Gulf.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Is it not the case that the procedural motion on the War Crimes Bill will deprive the House of any chance of amending that Bill, whether in order to ensure a fair trial for defendants or in any way at all? Is that not deplorable, and will the vote be whipped?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already replied to the second part of my hon. Friend's question. As to the first part, we had a full debate on the Bill in the House in the last Session, and it was passed with a large majority. It is right to follow the procedures that have been adopted in the past in relation to the Parliament Acts, which is what we are doing; that is why we are having the procedural motion next week, when my hon. Friend can make his points. It will then be a matter for the other place to decide what to do. If it amends the Bill, it will come back to this House.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Has the Leader of the House yet had a chance to study the debate that we had this week after 10 o'clock on the tie-up order for the fishing fleet? Is he aware that that was a debate on an amending order, that the original order is still within time, and that, if the Government chose, they could have a debate on that order in the near future? Having regard to the unsatisfactory nature of this week's debate, will he consider carefully and with some sympathy an early debate on the original order some time next week?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sorry that I cannot promise such a debate next week. We have already debated the matter twice recently in the House.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Is my right hon. Friend aware of strong evidence that his programme for the week's business tends to interfere with the Opposition's dining arrangements? Is he aware that, during the concluding session of debate on the Criminal Justice Bill last week, the shadow Home Secretary was addressing the "thousand club" of 1,000 lawyers paying £1,000 a time?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions should relate to business next week, please.

Mr. King: Will my right hon. Friend arrange the business for next week so that it does not interfere with such arrangements?

Mr. MacGregor: It is for the right hon. Gentleman to decide his own programme. I am sure that he has a capable

[Mr. MacGregor]

and hard-working social secretary who will enable him to do that. I am afraid that I cannot adjust the business of the House around any hon. Member's programme.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Can the Leader of the House arrange an early debate on the police? He was here during Home Office questions, when he heard colleagues from south and west Yorkshire mention the ludicrous situation whereby the Home Office recommends police levels, but if police authorities budget accordingly they are in danger of being poll tax-capped by the Department of the Environment. Will he urgently investigate that, because to many of our constituents it appears to be madness to take bobbies off the streets with crime soaring? Will he look into this matter so that we can provide proper protection for all parts of Yorkshire and for all our constituents?

Mr. MacGregor: We have been carrying through a heavy Government legislative programme and trying to ensure that a number of other issues of major importance, such as the Gulf, get full time in the House. I have also been endeavouring to give the Opposition every opportunity in Supply days, and if the hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue that matter, that is one way in which it can be done.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): When the House debates the War Crimes Bill, will it be in order to volunteer an obvious candidate—Saddam Hussein? Is it not a peculiar religious creed which allows Saddam Hussein to say that the allies must not destroy the holy cities of Iraq when, now that there is civil war there, he seems to have no compunction about fighting in them?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend has clearly made his point in relation to Saddam Hussein. He will know that there is no relationship between the War Crimes Bill and the recent conflict in the Gulf. Both are entirely separate. The measures that we are taking in the War Crimes Bill relate to the second world war, and are no longer necessary for any other conflict.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): To avoid misunderstanding, I shall join my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) in paying my warm tribute to you at a later date, Mr. Speaker. I assure you that it will be worth waiting for.

After the announcement that troops will be returning from the Gulf in the early part of next week, and with particular reference to the Territorial units that will be returning, will the Leader of the House arrange for an urgent statement to be made on Monday or Tuesday of next week about those members of the Territorial forces who were conscripted on the basis that their jobs would be protected and would be there when they returned home?

Clearly that will not be the case for many Scottish Territorial soldiers who volunteered for service in the Gulf. Before they start coming to Members' surgeries, could the Leader of the House arrange early next week for the House to be informed who will honour the commitment to these men—a commitment made by the Secretary of State for Defence to encourage them to join up?

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said this afternoon that our troops will start to return shortly from the Gulf. Obviously, that will be phased over some time. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, as I understand it, is making a statement about that later this afternoon. I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's question to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Those of us who were not in the House before the last election and were therefore not responsible for your election to your place of honour, Mr. Speaker, are grateful to those hon. Members who were responsible for enabling us to benefit from your unfailingly kind, courteous and patient care for new Back Benchers.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House referred to Easter. One aspect of Easter is an area of transport which will not be covered by next week's debate—river transport. Will he bear in mind the anxiety about river safety, especially in Thameside constituencies? Although we cannot discuss the full report on the Marchioness until prosecution has taken place, nevertheless the recommendations of that report, especially regarding visibility of craft and the noise levels on such craft, are known, and it would be helpful if the House could have an early opportunity to discuss them.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend has already pointed out the problem about the timing of a debate on the full report. I cannot promise him a debate in the near future, but I shall bear in mind what he has said.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House find time before the recess for a debate on housing? Is he aware that we are in the midst of the worst housing crisis since the war? People come to hon. Members' surgeries and tell us that their homes are being repossessed because of mortgage problems. They cannot obtain council housing; there are 7,000 people on the waiting list in my authority.

The past 11 years of Tory policies are responsible for all that. Do not the Government owe it to the thousands who have suffered under those dreadful policies to do something about it? Let us at least debate the matter in the House.

Mr. MacGregor: That is an extraordinary distortion of the true position. The progress is very much in the other direction. I am afraid that there will not be time for such a debate in the near future.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will my right hon. Friend reconsider the possibility of a debate along the lines suggested by the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon)? Would it not give him an opportunity to remind the House that there has been a 12 per cent. increase in the rent arrears owed to English housing associations, and that, while £361 million is now outstanding, the overwhelming majority of that arose under Labour? Is it not entirely wrong for the tenants who pay to have to carry the burden that that represents? Is it not about time that high-spending Labour authorities realised that no rent from some means no homes for others?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend has made his point extremely well. Many other points could be made on the subject, and I hope that they will be made continually at Question Time, in Adjournment debates and on other

occasions in the House. I cannot, however, envisage that a debate in Government time will be possible in the near future.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The Leader of the House has already given us an extended Easter break. Yesterday, the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill was passed, along with a Northern Ireland order. In future, may we legislate for Northern Ireland by means of Bills? Our debates would then proceed much faster than the arguments that go on in relation to orders.

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot immediately promise any change in the procedure. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that we have conducted a good deal of Northern Ireland business in the past few days.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): Unfortunately, owing to an appointment with the dentist, I was not present when an extremely important announcement was made about you, Mr. Speaker. Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that many hon. Members on both sides of the House would like to be given a special time at which to pay tribute to the urbanity and good will with which you have presided over our affairs throughout the current Parliament?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that my right hon. Friend speaks on behalf of the whole House from his distinguished position. I entirely share his view. I have already said that this afternoon is not the time for proper tributes to be paid, but I personally want an opportunity to say a great deal more than I have today.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps it would be right if I said now that, although I am grateful to the whole House, I think that we should deal with next week's business. We have a busy day ahead of us.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have a debate next week on proportional representation and the first-past-the-post system, so that we can outline the virtues of the first-past-the-post system and the anti-democratic elements of proportional representation?

The Leader of the House has mentioned the Easter recess. Will he assure the House that he does not propose to introduce legislation after the recess to allow members of the royal family to resign their comfortable offices and take part in the political process, and that until then they should keep their mouths shut?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not know what was said, so I shall not comment on the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question; but I am rather surprised to find myself in agreement with his comments about proportional representation.

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): My right hon. Friend will be well aware of the recent publication of reports by the core curriculum working parties on the teaching of music and history. He will also be aware that great interest and concern has been expressed both in this House and elsewhere about the implications of the reports. Does he have a sufficiently fond regard for his previous incarnation to put pressure on his right hon. and learned Friend the present Secretary of State for Education and Science to arrange for a debate on those most important matters?

Mr. MacGregor: I certainly do have a fond regard for my previous position. The matters that I dealt with then and that my hon. Friend raises now relating to the teaching of history and music are extremely important. The House will certainly have an opportunity to discuss them when the appropriate orders come before the House.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): When we debate London Regional Transport on Monday, will whatever is on the Order Paper be amendable? Will those hon. Members whose constituents have suffered from bus cuts be able to put on the agenda the fact that services should be restored, or that those who are responsible for the overcrowding and shabbiness of our public transport should be sacked? Alternatively, will we have to wait for the general election to do that to this Government?

Mr. MacGregor: It is simply to be a debate on part of the estimates.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Now that the community charges that are being set for the coming financial year are pouring out in a vast torrent from the town halls, will my right hon. Friend try to find time for the House to discuss the rapidly growing disparity between the low community charges set by Conservative authorities and the high ones set by Labour authorities?

Mr. MacGregor: Those matters will be raised frequently in the House and among the public at large. I am sure that the general public will draw their own conclusions—that the vast majority of prudent authorities with reasonable community charges are Conservative ones, and that the high-spending ones are Labour authorities.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): In view of your strictures, Mr. Speaker, that we should confine our questions to debates that are to be held next week, may I ask the Leader of the House to arrange a debate next week on the role of Mr. Speaker in maintaining democracy within the House? In the context of that debate, does the right hon. Gentleman accept from our Bench our view that Mr. Speaker has ensured that the minorities in the House have been heard?

Does the right hon. Gentleman also recollect the statement of Mr. Speaker Selwyn Lloyd when I first arrived here 17 years ago—that we are all minorities? In view of my impending retirement from the House, along with Mr. Speaker, does the right hon. Gentleman also accept that I hope that parliamentary democracy and the recognition of minorities will continue in this Chamber long after we have both retired?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think that it will be necessary to have a debate. As I said at the beginning, there is general agreement in the House that you, Mr. Speaker, have behaved with great fairness and impartiality, apart from all your other qualities. The point is already well taken.

Mr. Holt: My right hon. Friend, and many right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House, will have constituents who lost their savings as a result of the fraudulent and swindling way in which the savings bank on the Isle of Man operated. No one has yet been brought to justice for that. As a veneer of respectability is given to the Isle of Man by virtue of its allegiance to the Queen and by the fact that we supply its judiciary, is it not time that the House held a debate on the Isle of Man and its

[Mr. Holt]

relationship to this House and how we can get justice for our constituents who have lost their life savings as a result of fraud by the gangsters who run that island?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot comment on the points raised by my hon. Friend, because I do not know enough about them. However, I cannot foresee a debate being held in the near future in Government time on these matters.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): As the Leader of the House is an Edinburgh man, he will understand that many of my constituents, particularly those with relatives in the Gulf, feel betrayed. The local comprehensive, Ainslie Park high school is about to close. They feel betrayed because they were never consulted. It has come to light that, several years ago, there was a secret deal with World Markets, a finance house. Telford college, which is nearby, sold ground to World Markets. Part of the kickback system was that Telford college benefited from the grounds owned by Ainslie Park high school.

We believe that the matter should be debated, because it is of vital importance. May we have an early debate—perhaps next week—so that we can go into the fine details of this complex matter? I know that that may upset the right hon. Gentleman's friends in high places—the financiers in Edinburgh, who have certainly benefited at the expense of the local community—but it is most important that we should have the facts. If the right hon. Gentleman believes in open government, I believe in open government. Let us get down to the nitty-gritty so that we can explain the issues to the people back home and to the returning soldiers, who are very angry about this matter.

Mr. MacGregor: I also believe in being precise, and I thought that the hon. Gentleman rambled a bit. Let me correct him on one point: I come from exactly halfway between Glasgow and Edinburgh. I think that the hon. Gentleman will have to find his own opportunity to raise the matter.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate on voluntary bodies as soon as possible so that Conservative Members can raise the question of the so-called "thousand club", which has been set up by the shadow Leader of the House to give wealthy socialists privileged access to the shadow Cabinet at £1,000 a time? Does my right hon. Friend agree that only under a Tory Government can people afford to join such a daft organisation, and that most people would require payment to meet the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott)?

Mr. MacGregor: For once, I am lost for words. My hon. Friend has made some good points most effectively, but I cannot think of a suitable reply. I hope that he will have opportunities to raise the matter again.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): What are the exact plans for debates on the Gulf? Should we not have a series of debates—one on the setting up of a separate Palestinian state, one on the great humanitarian problems in both Iraq and Kuwait, which is covered by United Nations resolution 666, and one on the supply of arms in the area? We also need a debate on the environmental problems in addition to the welcome debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

Mr. MacGregor: I was going to say to the hon. Gentleman that there will be a debate on environmental matters next Friday, on a motion tabled by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), and an appropriate Minister will take part. The hon. Gentleman has raised important matters, and the occasions on which we debate them should be a matter for discussion through the usual channels in the normal way. I am quite sure that these matters will be discussed quite often in the House in the months ahead.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Has the Leader of the House seen the reports in this morning's papers to the effect that the Lord Chancellor has said that he and the Attorney-General would be quite happy to have a Select Committee established to deal with their functions? Does the Leader of the House think that that happy precedent will be followed by the Northern Ireland Office and that that Department will now stop blocking the creation of a Select Committee to deal with Northern Ireland affairs?

Mr. MacGregor: I think I am right in saying that the recent Procedure Committee report on Select Committees deals with the Law Officers, and the Government will be responding to that report in due course.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to look at early-day motion 538?

[That this House calls on the Government to provide parliamentary time at an early day for proceedings on the Veterans Bill.]

The motion has now been signed by nearly 200 hon. Members representing every shade of opinion in the House. Will the Leader of the House consider whether time can be found in the parliamentary schedule to allow the Bill to have its Second Reading at a proper time, when hon. Members can vote on it, as there is clearly some enthusiasm for it?

Mr. MacGregor: On the policy issues and the creation of a veterans' department, the Government's position has been made clear, and I want to concentrate on the procedural matter that the hon. Gentleman raises. As he knows, the allocation of private Members' time is agreed by the House at the beginning of the Session. It has not been the Government's practice to grant additional time, and I therefore cannot undertake to do so in this case.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made by the appropriate Minister about arms sales from this country to the middle east, which are continuing on a grand scale? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that Iran, which is now flexing its muscles in the middle east, is receiving contracts and equipment for computer systems for its weapons technology and that, in spite of all the efforts made to raise the matter, those sales continue? In the past few weeks, we have heard a lot of talk about selling arms and about merchants of death, but arms are still being sold to other countries in the middle east, and it is time that we had a blanket assurance that the Government will stop the arms trade to dictators in any part of the world.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has already made clear the position on arms sales to Iraq. The hon. Gentleman will know that all proposed arms exports beyond Iraq are considered case by case and are subject to stringent licensing procedures.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During business questions, the Leader of the House said that his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence would make a statement—he used those specific words—about the returning soldiers. This is an important topic and a statement would be welcome to the House, but I believe that the Leader of the House was referring to a planted parliamentary question, which is less than satisfactory. However, he used the word "statement".

Mr. MacGregor: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was repeating what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said earlier this afternoon. I believe that he made clear what will happen in the early stages of the withdrawal of our troops from the Gulf and their repatriation. My right hon. Friend gave the main outline of what will happen in the near future.

Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill

4.21 pm

Mr. Speaker: I have a short statement to make about the arrangements for the debate on the motion for the Adjournment, which will follow the passing of the Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill on Thursday 14 March.

Members should submit their subjects to my Office not later than 10 pm on Tuesday 12 March. The list showing the subjects and times will be published the following day. Normally, the time allotted will not exceed one and a half hours, but I propose to exercise discretion to allow one or two debates to continue for rather longer, up to a maximum of three hours. Where identical or similar subjects have been entered by different Members whose names are drawn in the ballot, only the first name will appear on the list. As some debates may not last the full time allotted to them, it is the responsibility of Members to keep in touch with developments if they are not to miss their turn.

BILLS PRESENTED

War Crimes

Mr. Secretary Baker, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary King, Mr. Secretary Brooke, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lang and Mr. John Patten, presented a Bill to confer jurisdiction on United Kingdom courts in respect of certain grave violations of the laws and customs of war committed in German-held territory during the Second World War; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 8 March, and to be printed. [Bill 105.]

Offshore Installations (General Provisions)

Mr. Tony Benn, supported by Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Ms. Diane Abbott, Mr. Harry Barnes, Mr. Bernie Grant, Mr. Ron Brown, Mrs. Audrey Wise and Mr. Dave Nellist, presented a Bill to provide for the trade union representation, security of employment, health and safety, and training, of personnel serving on offshore installations and in vessels and other craft working in conjunction with such installations: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 March, and to be printed. [Bill 99.]

Piper Alpha (Cullen Report)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neil Hamilton.]*

4.22 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. John Wakeham): I am very grateful that time has been found for a full debate on this important subject. There are, as always, a great many demands on the time of the House, but this is a matter which deserves our particular attention, involvement and action.

I received a letter last week from the widow of one of the victims of the Piper disaster. She said that, two and a half years later, his family and friends miss him as much as ever; but they felt that the issue of North sea safety was in danger of being forgotten by the press, the public and Parliament. I said to her, and I say to the House today, that the Government have not forgotten. On the contrary, we are pressing ahead in the endeavour for better arrangements for safety, not least through the prompt and effective implementation of the Cullen report.

The House will recall that I announced on 12 November the Government's immediate acceptance of Lord Cullen's conclusions and recommendations. Since then, the reputation of Lord Cullen's report has grown, and there is no danger of exaggeration in saying that it has won acclaim and respect from all sides.

The report confirms where responsibilities for safety should, and must, lie; and reformulates those responsibilities in a way which will have far-reaching effects on the way in which offshore safety will be organised in the future. It amounts to a fundamentally new regulatory system centring on requirements for operators of offshore installations to carry out formal and comprehensive safety assessments of their operations. These should be presented to the regulatory body as a safety case, demonstrating the adequacy of the company's safety management system; the identification and control of risks to personnel from potential major hazards; and the provision, in the event of a major emergency, of temporary safe refuge for the personnel on an installation, and of means for their safe and full evacuation, escape and rescue.

In the light of those far-reaching recommendations, Lord Cullen considered the most appropriate location of regulatory responsibility. He concluded, on balance, that it would be best located in a separate and identifiable division within the Health and Safety Executive.

Many Members will be particularly interested in this transfer of responsibility, and I think it right to mention at this point that the transfer has been an urgent priority since the publication of the report. Excellent progress has been made on the large number of organisational changes and agreements that are necessary. Subject to the agreement of the Health and Safety Commission, I hope to announce shortly the date on which the transfer will take effect. I hope that that date will be before the end of April.

That transfer to the HSE of the day-to-day responsibility for regulating safety on offshore installations on behalf of the HSC can be effected by administrative action. Consideration has also been given to the legislative implications of Lord Cullen's report, and a package of necessary changes has been identified. I hope those can be introduced as soon as practicable. However, they are mainly technical changes to existing statutes to reflect the intended reallocation of responsibilities, and to lay the foundations for a future programme of new regulations in line with Lord Cullen's recommendations.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Secretary of State say a little more about the likely location of the health and safety inspectorate? Is he aware of the strong feeling among Scottish Members that it should be located in north-east Scotland, with the front end of the industry? It is not just a question of geography but of oil industry psychology. A health and safety inspectorate located in north-east Scotland, where the oil workers are, would have more contact with and knowledge of the industry than if it were located in London, where the oil company executives and headquarters are.

Mr. Wakeham: I understand that view—it has been put to me several times—but the location of the new offshore safety division is a matter for the Health and Safety Executive. The chairman of the Health and Safety Commission has said that he sees the need for a substantial increase in present staff numbers in Aberdeen but that a comprehensive relocation of existing staff at present would cause serious difficulties. It is he who will have the responsibility of deciding.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I shall return to this question later, but before the Secretary of State leaves the issue of transfer of responsibility from his Department, will he say whether agreement has been reached about extra costs necessary to provide the safety regime? Can he confirm that the total amount sought by the Health and Safety Executive has been made available?

Mr. Wakeham: Satisfactory progress has been made on all the negotiations, which has enabled me to say what I said about making transfers next month. A few minor matters are still to be finalised, but I understand that they do not involve any dispute about money. Therefore, there is broad agreement on all those matters, but there are procedures to deal with them.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) need not be concerned. The Government have made it abundantly clear that those arrangements will not be held back through lack of resources; adequate resources for the purpose will be found. I have also said that the other matter that could delay the arrangements—the legislative implications of Lord Cullen's report—affected mainly technical issues, and will not delay the transfer to the HSC.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Wakeham: I think that I had better make a little more progress. I shall give way in a moment.

Safety in offshore petroleum operations is, of course, and always has been, the responsibility of the operators themselves. Lord Cullen makes it clear that a regulator cannot be expected to assume direct responsibility for the ongoing management of safety. There may be circumstances in which inspectors can and should take direct enforcement action, but those are the exception. He says that, for all practical purposes, the management of safety is and remains in the hands of the operators.

Lord Cullen's conclusions draw on, and confirm, the conclusions of many eminent committees and inquiries, not least those of the Robens committee, whose recommendations formed the basis of the Health and

Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974. Lord Cullen goes on, however, to propose a sharpening of the operators' responsibilities. He says that specific duties should be laid upon them to organise their operations in a systematic way; management should structure and document their systems for securing safety, analyse the hazards present or foreseeable, and implement the necessary controls. Most crucially, they should monitor their own performance in every aspect of the system. The role of the regulatory organisation should be to probe the adequacy of the assessments and the controls, audit the monitoring and test the actual results.

The essence of such an approach is not that the regulatory organisation should produce minutely detailed rules prescribing for every necessary safety procedure and every situation. That would in practical terms be impossible, because of the enormous variety and complexity of the actual working situations on offshore installations. Worse, it would be self-defeating, because it would obstruct the flexibility which is necessary to make use of new technology and advances in safety techniques.

The oil industry is one of our most dynamic industries. It has shown great inventiveness and resourcefulness. It ought to have the freedom to apply that drive and ingenuity to providing the best resolution of safety problems.

It is tempting to say that there must be detailed rules and a clearly prescribed approach, but in real life—not least in the very complex and closely packed circumstances of offshore installations—safety objectives often conflict with each other. Achieving a better standard of safety depends on finding the best balance between different approaches or aims, not on some prescriptive, rule-book approach. The right role for Government is to provide a broad framework to ensure that the operator fully discharges his responsibilities for securing safety.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I think that it is right to make the companies responsible for their own safety. However, does not the Secretary of State acknowledge that one problem on offshore installations is the division between the employees of oil companies as operators and contractors? Is there not a case for making oil companies or the operators legally responsible for all personnel on their platforms and for the conditions under which they operate, including their working conditions and their pay?

Mr. Wakeham: That question is not exactly correct—the employer has considerable legal responsibilities. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If he expands on his case, we shall listen to it with interest and take note of what he says.

Effective safety depends on the active involvement of every worker. Each must know what his role is and what is expected of him, and he must be able to contribute from his experience and have a voice.

Where I think that there is a difference between the Government's approach and that of the Opposition is in the necessity that they see for trade union recognition. They believe that there is an inevitable equation between involvement of the work force and representation of trade unions, and that only recognised trade unions can effectively represent the work force in these matters.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wakeham: If the hon. Gentleman will let me continue a little longer, I shall then give way.

The Government's approach is based on the conviction that effective involvement of the whole offshore work force is essential to the promotion and improvement of safety. Every employee working offshore has a right to be represented on a safety committee and to make a positive contribution to improving health and safety in his workplace, whether or not he is a member of a trade union.

Mr. Strang: No member of the Opposition would say that an offshore oil worker who is not in a trade union is not concerned about his safety. We are saying that if an independent safety representative has the backing of a trade union, he is more likely, on average, to be effective and to have power where it matters when compared to one who does not have the backing of a trade union. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the Cullen report was not as clear-cut on that issue as we might have wanted, as was made clear in our exchanges on 12 November. I suggest that there is a strong case for extending the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 to give offshore oil workers the same rights as onshore oil workers. Will the right hon. Gentleman at least say that the Government are prepared to continue a dialogue on the issue?

Mr. Wakeham: I understand the strength of the hon. Gentleman's views, and he has a perfect right to them, but they are not supported in Lord Cullen's report. The Government's position is closer to Lord Cullen's.

Mr. Strang: I shall not intervene again.

Constituents come to our surgeries who are blacklisted by the oil companies or who know that the oil companies have secret information about them from the first day that they start working for them. We know that the companies pursue that policy; that is why it is essential that trade unions should be a countervailing force as, for example, they are in the Norwegian sector.

Mr. Wakeham: Those people should produce evidence to back their allegations. We will not tolerate victimisation, and we should take a serious view of it if it were proved.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): The right hon. Gentleman must be aware that there is a climate of fear among contract workers in the offshore industry. They live in the knowledge that, if they ask questions—even about safety—they will have "not required back" put on their file. That makes people sceptical about the possibility of raising safety issues. Many people who come to my surgery—and to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang)—live in such a climate. Some are faced with the prospect of long periods of unemployment simply because they raised their head above the parapet on issues such as safety.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman speaks with much conviction. Almost every hon. Member has constituents employed in the offshore industry. I believe that, if anybody had evidence of victimisation, he would produce it. Somebody must have some evidence if the allegations are true. It should be sent to us, and we shall deal with it.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I wrote to the right hon. Gentleman about the matter, and his reply can be summarised as, "It is nothing to do with me: it is a matter for the employers."

Mr. Wakeham: That is not necessarily an accurate summary of either my reply or of the question. I am trying to be as conciliatory as I can. I do not deny that trade unions can have a valuable contribution to make in improving safety. I had a useful discussion with Mr. Norman Willis and a delegation from the Trades Union Congress safety committee the other day in which we had a fruitful exchange of views. The trade unions already play a role at the highest level through their representation on the Health and Safety Commission.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I have never worked offshore on a platform, but I have worked in the chemical industry for many years, operating the type of plant on land that the platforms use offshore. Will my right hon. Friend therefore accept from me that safety representatives, when putting their case to the employer, want not power but common sense? Their employer wants to listen with good will, and both need to take a responsible attitude.

Mr. Wakeham: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. We also believe that representatives offshore should have the added authority of being elected by all the staff who work offshore. That is the best way in which to do it.

I referred to the valuable role that the trade unions play in improving safety. Some unions have drawn together real expertise on these matters, and many have relevant expertise to contribute. They can make representations on health and safety matters to the offshore employers at any time and there are established channels of discussion through, for example, the oil industry advisory committee of the Health and Safety Commission. If these unions make genuine representations, there and elsewhere, on behalf of their members, they will have my full support. If they make representations on behalf of offshore workers who are not their members, they will also have my admiration.

As Opposition Members have regularly quoted Lord Cullen in support of their views, I have refreshed my memory on just what he has to say. At paragraph 21.83 of his report he explains that his remit did not extend to matters of industrial relations and that he was therefore not concerned with the merits of the recognition of trade unions offshore. He thought that the appointment of offshore safety representatives by trade unions—I quote his precise words—

"could be of some benefit".

However, he went on to recognise, in paragraph 21.85, that the position offshore is complicated by a number of factors: the limited extent of trade union membership in relation to the total offshore work force, the limited recognition of trade unions and the complex structure of offshore employment.

Lord Cullen did not favour replacing the 1989 regulations with the extension offshore of the 1977 regulations. That would remove safety representatives from a large part of the work force and would undo the progress that was achieved by the making of the 1989 regulations. He endorses the Government's intention to review their effectiveness two years after their coming into force. I think that it is fair to say that that is a pragmatic and balanced view. The Government's approach to the appointment of safety representatives and the constitution of safety committees in this industry is no less pragmatic and balanced. Under the 1989 regulations, safety representatives are elected by the whole work force. That ensures their effective involvement in the development and improvement of health and safety procedures, and promotes co-operation between management and work force towards the common goal of a safer offshore environment. The regulations mark a significant advance towards the greater involvement of the work force, which Lord Cullen's report recommends. The trade unions will have a full opportunity to present their views during the review.

I now turn to the steps that the Government have taken to implement Lord Cullen's recommendations and to the way in which we see this going forward. I have already mentioned progress with the transfer of regulatory responsibilities to the HSE. Lord Cullen commented that this change would take time to implement and would inevitably involve disruption. That is only realistic, but I must point out that we are doing all we can to keep the necessary time, and the extent of disruption, to the minimum.

Intensive and urgent discussions have been going on between my Department, the Health and Safety Executive and the other bodies concerned on the best strategy for taking forward the implementation of the report and on the resources that this will require. We have also been doing all that we can to strengthen and expand the safety directorate. Safety has been upgraded to a full division to reflect the importance of its work. That will also help to pave the way for the transfer.

Mr. Tony Barrell, lately head of the HSE's technology division, has been appointed to head the new offshore safety division. Proposals will shortly be put to the commission on its organisation. Further staff have been recruited to strengthen the division in its existing tasks and to tackle the new responsibilities recommended by Lord Cullen. A major recruitment programme is under way to provide the right mix of skills in a further strengthening of the division. Urgent steps are also being taken to expand the training and instruction of the inspectors, and to reinforce the capacity to probe and assess management's arrangements to secure safety in their operations.

Those important steps have involved close co-operation between the Departments involved, with my Department taking the overall lead. Once the transfer takes place, it will, of course, be for the commission and the executive to consider the priorities for the work of the offshore safety division and for the broader implementation of the report.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for showing his characteristic courtesy.

Will the inspectors he mentioned a few seconds ago be concerned with the assessment of standby vessels? Surely the Secretary of State will recall that one of the major criticisms of Lord Cullen's report was directed against the inadequacy of the aging side trawler Silver Pit. It should never have been used as a standby vessel.

How many similar aging side trawlers are still engaged in the operation of standby vessels in both the southern and northern sectors of the North sea? How many purpose-built standby vessels have been ordered by the companies in addition to the one that is to be built in my constituency at the Ferguson shipyard? I suspect that the single vessel ordered at Ferguson is the only new standby vessel that has been ordered since this terrible tragedy.

Mr. Wakeham: Yes, standby vessels will be of concern to the Health and Safety Executive. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that one of its first tasks will be a full review of the standby vessels. The hon. Gentleman makes some points that are highly relevant to that review, but I do not have the detailed answers, which will come up in the review, which has not taken place yet. I have some expert advisers near at hand, but they cannot tell me the answers to a review that has not taken place. That is beyond even them. The hon. Gentleman makes an important point and the matters are of concern.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The Secretary of State described how the transfer will go ahead and how his Department and other departments—he mentioned the Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive—are involved. He will know that Lord Cullen specifically identified one individual—Mr. Rimington, the director-general of the commission—as responsible for ensuring that sufficient funds are available so that he, as director-general, can carry out his new responsibilities. However, the director-general reports to a different Secretary of State.

Does the Secretary of State accept Lord Cullen's directive that Mr. Rimington will be responsible, as he does not negotiate with the Treasury? The Secretary of State for Employment will have to negotiate with the Treasury. If the Secretary of State for Employment does not find enough money from the Treasury for Mr. Rimington to carry out his responsibilities, how can he be held responsible? Is the Secretary of State for Employment involved in the continuing dialogue during the transfer period?

Mr. Wakeham: Mr. Rimington, who is a senior and experienced man, and I have had discussions, as has my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. The hon. Gentleman is concerned that there should be adequate finance for the tasks that the Health and Safety Executive will have to carry out. Obviously, Mr. Rimington would not accept responsibility for carrying out tasks if he did not have adequate finance. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that adequate resources will be made available. When all the loose ends have been tied up, the transfer will be made. There is no problem about dealing with these matters.

Mr. Ross: Either the Secretary of State does not want to answer the question, or he does not understand it. Lord Cullen identified Mr. Rimington specifically as the person whom he will hold responsible if there are not sufficient funds. If the Secretary of State for Employment is to negotiate with the Treasury, how can Mr. Rimington be held responsible?

Mr. Wakeham: Mr. Rimington is a very senior person in the Health and Safety Executive, but as he does not have resources, the Government will have to ensure that he is given sufficient funds for his task. He and the Health and Safety Commission must be satisfied that they have adequate resources. Those are the arrangements that we are making. There will not be a shortage of finance. This is not a personal responsibility of anybody.

Mr. Ross: That is not what Mr. Rimington told the Select Committee on Employment.

Mr. Wakeham: If the hon. Gentleman were to listen, he would realise that I am giving a very satisfactory answer to the question whether there will be sufficient resources to implement the recommendations of the Cullen report, which the Government have accepted. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that there will be no problem about finding adequate resources—no problem for Mr. Rimington, no problem for me, no problem for the Secretary of State for Employment, and no problem for the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. We all agree on the arrangements that should be made.

The hon. Gentleman can phrase his question 15 different ways, but he will get the same answer. As the Secretary of State who will be responsible for these matters until they have been transferred, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that proper arrangements have been made.

It will be for the commission and the executive to consider the priorities for the work of the offshore safety division and the broader implementation of the report. I understand that strategy proposals are to be put to them, in parallel with the detailed proposals for the transfer of responsibilities. Clearly it would not be right for me to anticipate any of that strategy in detail until they have been able to consider it. I can say, however, that priority is being given to developing the centrepiece of the new regulatory system—that is, the new requirement for safety cases—with a view to putting forward early drafts of the necessary regulations and guidance.

I should like to conclude by saying a few words about two particular aspects of the new regulatory system, and specifically about what should be expected of the companies. These two aspects are the safety cases and the process of learning from experience.

What the safety cases really require is that each operator should assess the risks of its operation, ensure that every measure has been taken to reduce these risks, and demonstrate that it has discharged its responsibilities properly. A safety case should identify all major accidents that could pose a threat to human life, and analyse the causes and consequences of these accidents. Our objective itself is enough to enable all operators to put work in hand straight away towards the preparation of future safety cases. Indeed, I should be very surprised if any operator on the United Kingdom continental shelf had not already initiated work in this direction.

By assessing the risks, companies can then carefully consider ways in which they will control and minimise those risks, and ensure that safety measures and operational procedures are adequate to secure safety in operations and are carefully monitored. Although drawn up and submitted at one point in time—in particular, in the case of a new offshore installation, it will be required that a submission should be made before operations start—a safety case will not be a one-off exercise, an exercise that is carried out once, put on the shelf and forgotten. It should be a live document that develops as the operations, the techniques and the potential control systems, and the men and management themselves, change and evolve. It should reflect a continuing process of improving the controls and reducing the risks in the light of practical experience.

This feedback should come from many sources. It should come from the operator's auditing and monitoring of his own systems, on which Lord Cullen has placed particular stress. That auditing should not be merely a

[Mr. Wakeham]

routine check, but should include serious probing of the earlier thinking. One of the most important sources of feedback should be the analysis of incidents.

For every serious accident, there are many minor accidents or dangerous occurrences, which, although they may not themselves have serious outcomes, can be analysed to uncover weaknesses in the systems, which on some other occasion might lead to serious injury or even fatalities. But the largest and broadest resource out of which lessons can be learned is the work force itself. Every operator should have arrangements for gathering and making use of the experience and observation of the work force. Every worker should have something to contribute, and should have, albeit in a small way, a role as safety inspector.

In conclusion, I again welcome the opportunity for the House to debate a matter of absolutely central importance to the deeply felt issue of offshore safety. I have to own that the timing of the opportunity is not quite ideal for me, in that I am not quite at the point of being able to announce the final details of the agreement on the transfer of regulatory responsibility to the Health and Safety Executive. But hon. Members will make good use of the chance to put their concerns to the Government before the arrangements for the transfer are fixed. I shall consider carefully the matters that have been raised by hon. Members before giving final approval to the necessary arrangements.

4.57 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On the night of 6 July 1988 there were 226 men on the Piper Alpha platform, where they earned their living. At 10 o'clock that night 62 men were working, and 164 men were off duty. Just after 10 o'clock there was an explosion and a fire. Further explosions followed, and the platform became an inferno as gas from other installations continued to be pumped to Piper Alpha. Only 61 of those men survived—scrambling and leaping to safety as best they could. Of those who died, 14 perished while trying to escape. The fire was so intense that it melted the structural steel of parts of the platform, and literally laid waste the fire protection that was intended to help survival.

No words can describe the horror of the explosions and the fire, but the horror can perhaps be gauged by the fact that some of the survivors, and, indeed, some of those who died, jumped into the sea from high up on the platform, although, in training, they had been warned that this would mean almost certain death. Five people even jumped from the heli-deck 175 feet above the water. Great courage was displayed by many on the platform, and this was matched by the bravery and self-sacrifice of the crews of the rescue vessels, some of whom laid down their lives attempting to save people from Piper Alpha.

Lord Cullen's inquiry set out to answer two questions. First, why did the disaster happen? Secondly, how do we try to avoid a future disaster? Lord Cullen's report catalogues fatal shortcomings in the design and operation of the Piper Alpha platform; unforgivable negligence on the part of the operators, Occidental Petroleum; and equally unforgivable failure on the part of the Department of Energy to do its job properly.

The immediate blame rests with Occidental Petroleum. In law and in practice, the primary responsibility for safety rested with it. It failed to discharge that responsibility. Piper Alpha was not a safe place to work. On the fatal night of 6 July, the night shift did not know what the day shift had been doing. The result was a gas leak and the first explosion. The automatic fire pumps did not work because they were switched to manual control. Piper Alpha had no means of stopping gas from being pumped on to the platform. Other installations continued to pump gas to Piper Alpha and so discharged yet more gas on to the already blazing platform.

Safety and rescue equipment on Piper Alpha did not work. Life rafts did not inflate. Lifeboats could not be launched. Practice emergency drills had not been carried out. Staff were not properly trained for the emergency. The standby vessel Silver Pit was, in the words of Lord Cullen, "essentially unsuitable for the purpose of effecting the rescue of survivors."
The searchlight was not working. The Silver Pit was not sufficiently manoeuvrable. Its bow thruster broke down within five minutes, making manoeuvring it even more difficult. Its layout was unsuitable for handling the injured. The Department of Trade and Industry boat was unsuitable, unserviceable and could not be launched and the crew was seriously undermanned.

I have a question for the Secretary of State: is it true that the Silver Pit, found by Lord Cullen to be essentially unsuitable for effecting the rescue of survivors and for handling the injured, was subsequently bought by Cam Shipping of Grimsby, was renamed the Cam Spirit, and is once again on standby duty in the North sea? Has the Cam Spirit been surveyed? If so, does it meet the standards which Lord Cullen said should be required of standby vessels? In other words, does it meet the standards that he laid down in recommendation 89?

Is the vessel highly manoeuvrable and able to maintain its position? Is it rigged out is such a way that it provides full visibility from the bridge of the water line in all directions? Does it have at least 360 degree searchlights, capable of being remotely controlled? Does it have two fast rescue craft fitted with VHF radio and an adequate portable searchlight? Is there a means of rapidly launching those fast rescue craft? Are there adequate means of communication by radio between the Cam Spirit and its fast rescue craft, the installation, nearby vessels and the shore? Does the newly rigged Cam Spirit have at least two methods of retrieving survivors from the sea?

If the Cam Spirit does not meet all those requirements, it makes a mockery of the Government's claim to have accepted all Lord Cullen's recommendations. I am not in a position to answer the question myself because when I approached the Cam Shipping company yesterday, one of its staff was eventually told by the boss that he could not talk to my office. But above and beyond those individual items, however important, Occidental Petroleum was responsible for safe operation, safety training and the arrangements for dealing with an emergency.

Lord Cullen's report referred to failures in training, failures to resolve technical problems, superficial attitudes and deficient practice. He said that the system for coping with an emergency was almost entirely inoperative and little command control was exercised over the movements of personnel. The importance of that is highlighted by the fact that most of those who followed the emergency procedures laid down perished in the fire. Most of those

who survived are alive because they decided instead to chance it. There can be no greater indictment of those responsible for the safety of the platform than that the emergency arrangements led to mortal danger and almost certain death.

In the light of that fact, the Secretary of State was right last November to refer Lord Cullen's report to the Lord Advocate for him to decide whether to prosecute Occidental Petroleum. Almost four months have passed but the Lord Advocate has not yet taken action. I only hope that the delay means that he is building up an unanswerable case and that Occidental will be brought to book. Is a company which runs a rig in the way in which Occidental ran Piper Alpha fit to continue operating in the North sea?

Occidental does not bear all the responsibility for the disaster. Some of the blame lies at the door of the Department of Energy because of its abject failure to establish and monitor a safe system of working in the North sea. Responsibility for that failure does not lie only with the safety directorate or other officials of the Department. It also lies with successive Secretaries of State for Energy and other Ministers at the Department.

Under our system of ministerial accountability, it is Ministers who take the credit when things go well and it is they who must take the blame when things go wrong. According to the Government's own figures, at the time of the Piper Alpha disaster there were 217 installations in the North sea. To inspect those 217 gigantic and complex structures, the Department of Energy employed just six professional full-time field inspectors. Lord Cullen found that their inspections were

"superficial to the point of being little use . . . the inspectors were inadequately trained, guided and led . . . Persistent under-manning had affected not only the frequency but also the depth of their inspections."

Only 40 per cent. of fatal and serious accidents were investigated because, in Lord Cullen's words,

"Limitations on manpower prevented the Department from investigating all accidents."

He went on even to doubt whether the type of inspection practised by the Department was in any case an effective means of assessing or monitoring the management of safety by the operators.

Since Lord Cullen reported, questions that I and others have tabled have revealed further inadequacies in the Department of Energy as a supervisory body for offshore safety. For example, the Department cannot say how many prosecutions of operators have followed accidents and how many have resulted from routine inspections. We know that no prosecutions resulted from routine inspections in 1987, 1988 or 1989 but that seven accidents in that time led to prosecutions.

The Department's statistics currently do not distinguish between accidents to operator staff and accidents to contractor staff, information which everyone recognises as vital to any assessment of the state of offshore safety. The Department does not even seem able to distinguish between the number of serious accidents and the number of casualties. It holds no information on the hours spent on each inspection, whether routine or following an accident. No record has been kept of prohibitions issued under the Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971. All that we know is that only 13 such notices have been issued offshore under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 in the past 12 years.

Lord Cullen's criticisms go much deeper than that. In 1980, the Burgoyne committee reported on offshore safety. It was dissatisfied with

"The current arrangements for offshore safety"

which had

"become a tangle of divided responsibility."

It laid down that the role of the Government—I emphasise this—was to

"set objectives designed to achieve a uniformly high standard of safety throughout the Industry and to ensure their achievement through monitoring and enforcement procedures."

It recommended that the Government should discharge that responsibility for offshore safety via a single agency, whose task would be to set standards and to ensure their achievement.

The only dispute on the committee was about the role of trade unions and whether that single agency should be the Department of Energy or the Health and Safety Executive. All the members of the committee agreed that the tasks laid down for the agency were so important and immediate that no delay in dealing with them could be allowed.

Lord Cullen took a hard look at what had happened to the Burgoyne committee's recommendations and compared the development of safety offshore with the development of safety onshore during the last decade. He concluded harshly that the Department of Energy policy over the last decade had

"set back the development of the offshore safety regime by many years."

He found that, although Burgoyne had recommended that future regulations should specify objectives, there had been

"virtually no progress towards the creation of new goal-setting regulations since the publication of the report of the Burgoyne Committee."

Lord Cullen went on to say that the effect of the policy of the Department of Energy had been to distance offshore regulation from the influence of the mainstream of practice in modern regulations on health and safety. He also concluded that nothing appeared to have been learnt from the experience of the Norwegian Government's petroleum department, with which the Department of Energy was in regular contact. Despite all that, the present Secretary of State was reported by the *Financial Times* as denying that the Cullen report was an indictment of his Department and inspectors.

Lord Cullen endorsed the main recommendations of the Burgoyne committee and accepted the view of the minority report to the Burgoyne committee that the single offshore safety agency should be the Health and Safety Executive and not the Department of Energy. That is the policy of the trade unions involved and the Labour party —a policy for which we voted on 6 November 1980, and which five of the present Cabinet, including the Prime Minister, voted against. I am glad to report that on that occasion, before you reached your present elevated position, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you voted with us for what Lord Cullen said was the right thing.

Why, despite the eminently sensible recommendations of the Burgoyne committee, did the safety directorate of the Department of Energy fall so far short of the standards required? Some blame must attach to some of the officials concerned, but more blame attaches to the politicians. Clearly, none of the succession of Tory Secretaries of State for Energy gave offshore safety the priority it deserved.

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

Four people served as Secretary of State for Energy between the publication of the Burgoyne report and the Piper Alpha disaster—Messrs Howell, Lawson, Walker and Parkinson. All must take some share of the blame. So must the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, the present Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the present Secretary of State for Wales, all of whom served in the Department of Energy at what the lawyers would call the material time. None of them gave top priority to offshore safety.

When we last debated Piper Alpha—on the day of the statement in November—I asked the Secretary of State what was given a higher priority by his predecessor than offshore safety. Answer came there none. Since then, I have discovered a public insight into what those priorities were. In May 1983, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) was asked what had been the principal achievements of his Department. Similar questions were put to the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) in May 1984 and March 1985. Reams of self-congratulation followed—2,405 words in total—but one word was missing, and that word was "safety."

There was much crowing about privatisation, much talk of market forces and whole paragraphs were devoted to oil exploration and development and its benefits to the British economy, but there was not a word about the safety of the 30,000 people whose hard and dangerous work make it all possible. Implementing the recommendations of the Burgyone committee on offshore safety got no mention.

Similarly, no priority was given to safety by other Government Departments. Part of the responsibility for that lies with Lord Young, now discredited as a liar by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. At his instigation, the Government produced the scruffy document that I hold in my hand, a White Paper published in July 1985 entitled "Lifting the Burden." Its stated object was to reduce what it called

"burdens on business imposed by Government regulations."

All that contributed to the atmosphere in which those civil servants responsible for safety, including those at the Department of Energy, had to do their work. In relation to safety, that document encouraged employers to question inspectors' decisions and called for employers to be advised on how to question inspectors. It also called for clearer guidance on the law governing the onus of proof. That was intended not to stimulate the zeal of the inspectors but to stiffen the resistance of the inspected. It was all part of the atmosphere which allowed the development of an ineffective offshore safety directorate.

It is said that when a fish deteriorates, the rot sets in at the head. It is the same with Government Departments. Lord Cullen exposed all of that. He answered the first question about why the disaster happened. He dealt equally incisively with what must be done to try to stop it happening again. He rightly placed great emphasis on the requirement to prepare a safety case—the approach that has been applied successfully onshore and which, to their credit, has been developed by some offshore operators.

Each operator would be required to produce a safety case for each installation, detailing how specified safety objectives have been met in the design and construction, and how they will be met in the operation of the installation and all its equipment, identifying potential major hazards and risks to personnel and providing for measures to protect staff in the event of a major emergency.

That will require a great deal of expertise and effort by the contractors and the regulatory body, now to be the Health and Safety Executive. The report makes a large number of recommendations, but the shift of approach to the safety case and the shift of responsibility to the Health and Safety Executive are probably the most important.

The Government say that they accept all the recommendations, but we must be vigilant. They said the same about the recommendations of the Burgoyne committee in 1980. In 1989, the year after Piper Alpha, the number of serious accidents per 1,000 employees in the North sea fell only from 2·9 to 2·8, and the number of dangerous occurrences per 1,000 employees shot up from 7·7 to 10·2, the highest level ever. There is clearly a long way to go.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) will deal at length with the future arrangements for offshore safety, so I shall confine my remarks to what I see as a number of especially important points. The offshore safety division of the Health and Safety Executive will have an enormous task on its hands. North sea safety arrangements have been shown by Lord Cullen to be a mess. A massive amount of work needs to be done in three spheres—safety cases submitted by operators will need to be assessed, accepted, amended or rejected; new and improved regulations and guidance will have to be drafted; and much more, and better quality, inspection must be carried out.

Mr. Mullin: Is my hon. Friend aware that, even after the Cullen report, things have not changed much on some rigs? I was contacted in January of this year by someone on Brent Bravo who had inquired about how long it would take to allocate the 150 men on his shift to lifeboats in the event of an alert. He was told that it would take between one and a half and two hours. When he said that that was not satisfactory, he was told that the matter was being considered. He made repeated representations to everyone in authority over many days, but he received more or less the same answer, which was capped by, "We're not breaking any law." On 12 January, there was an alert on the Brent Bravo, when about 150 men were stranded for many hours because there was no way to get them off. Is that satisfactory in the light of what we now know?

Mr. Dobson: The situation described by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) is clearly unsatisfactory. I hope that Ministers and those who are here to advise them will have heard what is happening and will ensure that a special visit is paid to that platform to discover exactly what is happening and to ensure that standards are improved.

There is an enormous amount of work to be done. The decision to require the submission of a safety case—which is the correct decision—for all existing and new installations has created an instant backlog that will take a long time to clear. That will be bad enough for the operators responsible only for their own installations, but it will be a truly awesome task for the safety directorate, which will have to cope with all the installations. The likely top priorities will be the oldest installations and those currently being built.

The high level of activity in the North sea will also create additional demands on the time of the offshore safety directorate. The task is enormous and of immense importance. It must be done well, thoroughly and as quickly as possible.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The death of one of my young constituents, to whom I have referred before in the House, demonstrates the need for that job to be done properly. However, would it not be odd and inconsistent for the Government, the Department of Employment and the Health and Safety Executive to be undertaking that task offshore while they were at the same time relaxing, dangerously and excessively, the safety regulations in the mining industry onshore?

Mr. Dobson: I have made it clear to the management and to the workers and their representatives in the offshore industry that I regard the transfer of responsibility for safety from the Department of Energy to the HSE as a necessary, but insufficient, change. The HSE is conniving with British Coal to reduce in British coal mines safety standards which at present are the highest in the world. I want those standards to remain the highest in the world, and so do the miners. Apparently the HSE does not.

There are no guarantees of North sea safety simply because of the transfer of responsibility to the HSE. There must be commitments, one of which must be a Treasury guarantee that the HSE will be given the financial resources to recruit, train and, equally important, retain the staff necessary for the job. Such a guarantee must be made in public before the HSE takes on the job.

However, money may not prove to be the biggest problem. The biggest problem is likely to be finding enough staff with the experience and qualifications to perform the various tasks required. The tasks demand the application of complicated analytical techniques which will have to be applied to every installation. In the light of recent history, it is vital to the restoration of confidence among the work force in the North sea that the HSE adopts a high-profile approach to offshore safety.

That would be assisted if the main office of the offshore safety division was located in Aberdeen. That would also have obvious practical advantages. Equally, it will be necessary not to ignore the needs of the southern-basin gasfields and the interests of the staff involved must also be borne in mind.

People with some or all of the expertise will have to be drawn from the chemical and nuclear industries and their inspectorates, and possibly from the Norwegian sector if they can be spared. They must be drawn from anywhere that the best people are available. It is important not to forget the contribution that can be made by those who earn their daily living in the North sea and who know what they are talking about.

The general principle behind Lord Cullen's report is to apply offshore the safety regime which has been applied onshore. We believe that that will be assisted by the application offshore of the trade union rights to recognition and involvement in safety that apply onshore. Whatever this Government may decide, that is what the incoming Labour Government will ensure.

Good industrial relations are good for safety. Bad industrial relations are bad for safety. Industrial relations in the North sea are bedevilled by the multitide of contractors whose employees do most of the work on the rigs, barges and platforms, and whose relationship with the operators is at times somewhat strange.

The difficulties of organising trade unions on so many separate, distinct and distant workplaces are made worse by the varying interrelationships between the seven unions involved, and between them and the offshore industry liaison committee.

In November, we urged the Secretary of State to take the opportunity presented by Lord Cullen's report to make a fresh start, to call together all involved and to end the blacklisting. He has done little or nothing. Indeed, he denied that there was any blacklisting. The blacklisting, which was admitted by those who were doing it, was ended but more as a result of representations to the oil companies by me and some of my hon. Friends than by anything that the Government did. We have been promoting meetings and discussions between all concerned, and we hope that they will bear fruit.

Our country needs the oil and gas in the North sea, but we do not need it so badly, or so cheaply, that our fellow citizens have to die to get it for us. Lord Cullen has done a fine job in producing his report. We must ensure that those who contributed to the disaster are rightly punished. We must also ensure that future accidents are not allowed to turn into disasters through the fatal combination of poor design, faulty operation and equipment failure revealed in this case.

Dr. Godman: On the basis of his negotiations with the Secretary of State and other Ministers, can my hon. Friend confirm whether a copy of the Cullen report has been sent to the European Commission? Has not the Commission drawn up a draft directive on the health and safety of offshore installation workers as well as for miners and others? Surely that draft directive must take cognisance of the very important recommendations contained in the Cullen report.

Mr. Dobson: I hope that the Secretary of State or officials at the Department of Energy have done what my hon. Friend has suggested is necessary to ensure that the Commission and ultimately the European Parliament are fully aware of Lord Cullen's excellent report and first-class recommendations. I assume that that has happened. However, I have not had talks and negotiations about blacklisting and such matters with the Secretary of State and his colleagues, because it is difficult to have discussions about something with people who deny that it exists. We had discussions with leading people in the oil industry who have actually done something to get rid of the blacklisting.

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): With regard to trade union membership, when the hon. Gentleman raised the mythical spectre of the incoming Labour Government, did he mean to imply that he would force all offshore workers to be members of trade unions?

Mr. Dobson: We could do without such clownish interventions. The hon. Gentleman should know that onshore workers have the right to join a trade union but are not obliged to do so. We agree with Lord Cullen that onshore safety measures should also apply offshore, and the right to trade union recognition and the involvement of trade unions in safety measures onshore and offshore— *[Interruption.]* There seems to be some deafness among Ministers. I am not attributing those remarks to Lord

[Mr. Dobson]

Cullen, but they follow the principle that he enunciated. Lord Cullen's impeccable logic would lead all but the prejudiced buffoons on the Government Front Bench to conclude that trade union recognition is good for safety.

The least that we can do for the memory of those who died unnecessarily on Piper Alpha is to ensure that the safety motto of du Pont de Nemours, the owners of Conoco, is applied on every North sea installation:

"Nothing is so important that it can't be done safely."

5.31 pm

Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith (Kincardine and Deeside): I have a considerable and direct interest in this subject. As I have declared previously, I have some interests in the offshore industry, the most important of which, especially in the light of the speech of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), is that I was responsible for it in the early 1980s. Like my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I do not duck any responsibility that I may have had. By accepting all the recommendations of the Cullen report, he has shown beyond peradventure that there is no question of anyone trying to duck their responsibilities.

I was a little disappointed by some of the speech of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: There have already been many interventions, and I should like to get on with the debate.

I should not like to let the opportunity pass without recording my sympathy, and I believe that of the whole House, for those who were involved in the Piper Alpha accident. I visited all the families in my constituency who were affected by it, so no one is more conscious than I am of what the tragedy meant in human terms.

I add my praise for those who were involved in the rescue. I pay tribute to the crew of the Silver Pit, regardless of the deficiencies in its vessel that were identified. I am sure that I express the view of the whole House when I say that I recognise the gallantry of those who were involved, which was recognised in the recent honours list, and the involvement of those on the shore. Those who have been recognised represent only a tiny fraction of the number who showed gallantry and total disregard for their personal safety in the operation that followed this tragic incident.

Once the moments of emotion and publicity of accidents such as Piper Alpha and the Chinook accident, in which families in my constituency were involved, have passed, there is an understandable feeling among the families of the victims that they have been forgotten. The Piper Alpha support group in Aberdeen was outstanding in supporting the families of the victims. Its work has become an example for others and was copied in the Lockerbie air disaster. The Rev. Andrew Wylie, industrial chaplain to the North sea installations, made a tremendous contribution during and after the accident. The services that he conducted and his continuing commitment to the interests of offshore workers are an example to everyone.

I pay tribute to Lord Cullen not only for the way in which he conducted the inquiry but for the lucidity of the report and its findings. The report will go down in the annals of public inquiries as one of the best conducted and presented. I have heard no criticism of it, and I am sure that the House will join me in paying tribute to him.

Everyone shares the objective of ensuring safety onshore and offshore. There will be times, alas, when deficiencies arise, but the Government, the industry, offshore workers and the unions have a common interest in ensuring that safety is paramount. We must always ensure that that interest is shared. We must make the North sea a safer place in which to live and work. To that extent, I welcome my right hon. Friend's immediate acceptance of all the recommendations.

There is no question but that the Cullen report revealed deficiencies, but I suggest that they related more to the safety structure rather than to those in the Department of Energy who had the daily task of carrying out safety functions. The Burgoyne committee was set up to examine and to make recommendations on safety. The fact that 69 of its 70 recommendations were adopted shows that, on the basis of the best knowledge and experience available at the beginning of the 1980s, the Government set up what was thought to be the correct structure to ensure safety in the North sea.

Perhaps insufficient attention was paid to the fact that safety is a continuing consideration. With the benefit of hindsight and the Cullen recommendations, perhaps steps should have been taken in the mid-1980s—I accept responsibility for this as much as anyone else—to see whether the Burgoyne recommendations were working properly. That is a fair criticism.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that there is insufficient distance between the regulatory body and the body that was responsible for safety? Those who carried out the investigations into safety were subject to the same pressures as those in the Department to achieve the maximum extraction and finance, which the Treasury wanted to use for a range of matters. The oil companies themselves wanted to exploit the extraction rate. We argue that the control of the examination of safety should be within another Department.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I disagree totally with the hon. Member. He is wrong. I shall deal now with objectivity, but I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Burgoyne committee—with a minority report, which I acknowledge, from only two members—recommended that responsibility for safety should rest with the Department of Energy. Therefore, the Government acted on a clear recommendation. At a meeting in the House a few months ago, Dr. Burgoyne said that he did not move subsequently from the original recommendations. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that basic but important historical fact. There are reasons now for a change, which I shall deal with, but that was the basis of the best recommendation and the best advice available at that time.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Is not the real issue the fact that the Government have twice been faced with majority recommendations—first by Burgoyne and then by Lord Cullen—and that on both occasions they have accepted the recommendations?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: That is significant. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention.

I might point out that, in the Department of Energy, I worked with staff in the inspectorate who dealt with safety. I want to make it clear that I have rarely worked with a body who, as individuals, showed greater integrity or higher objectivity. When it came to the crunch, and prosecution was under consideration, I never found any of them with any fear of pursuing prosecution if they felt that it was necessary. It would be unfair if criticism were directed at any of those individuals.

I should like to comment on the main thrust of the report. The most important point identified by the report is the importance of human motivation and human involvement in safety. If Lord Cullen has done one service beyond any other, it is to establish that fact, which many people acknowledged and to which many people paid lip service before, but which has never been enunciated so clearly or with so much authority as it was by Lord Cullen.

We can have the best equipment, the highest technology and the safest in terms of hardware and everything else, as many of our platforms had, yet the installation is only as safe as the weakest operator or the weakest individual on it. That will always remain the case. We can never legislate totally for human or individual failure.

The report recommends, and my right hon. Friend is implementing, the safety case approach of Lord Cullen. That is the right approach. Working through a safety management system should ensure that safety becomes a philosophy and a major motivation of every individual, not just from the offshore installation manager right down to the most junior operative on the platform, but also right up to the senior management of the oil company.

Given the safety case approach that Lord Cullen advocates, we must make certain that it is comprehensive and involves everyone. When I say "everyone", I mean not only those employed by the oil company but also contractors, subcontractors and their staff who work on an installation. I am glad that many offshore operators have already adopted much greater vetting of contractors. With new arrangements for longer contracts, the operator is taking much more responsibility for contractors and the conditions of work of contractors' staff, rather than being concerned just with oil company staff.

I regret that on some installations there has been too much of the culture of "them and us"—the oil company staff on the one hand and the contractors' staff on the other. Once people are offshore, no matter who their ultimate employer is, they must belong to one team, with the same responsibilities. Let us never forget that the buck stops with the operator. Therefore, it is on the operator that responsibility must be placed to make sure that every individual is involved. If contractors or subcontractors are not prepared to comply with that, I hope that operators will get rid of their services and ensure that there is co-operation.

The safety case approach must not be a once-and-for-all new idea. It must be continuing, and it must develop as experience develops in future.

I wish to make two other points of substance.

Mr. Mullin *rose*——

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I would rather not give way, because many hon. Members wish to speak, and I have spoken for long enough.

We do not want to underestimate the importance of the establishment on installations of safety committees. The possible role of unions in safety committees is a central point in the debate. There may be a role for unions, but I am not convinced that it has to be prescribed in legislation.

Coming back to the main thrust of Cullen, I do not believe that the involvement of unions would mean that everyone on a platform would be involved. There will always be on platforms individuals who are not members of unions. The current system of the election of safety committees, which thankfully has been developed since Cullen, gives the opportunity to anyone, whatever his interest, to become involved in the safety of the installation.

Victimisation is a question that we cannot ignore. Although I have heard many allegations, I have seen very little substantiation of them. There has to be a system, such as was set up following Cullen, whereby individuals can make complaints anonymously, through a telephone number or whatever, so that the authorities have the opportunity to investigate whether there is substance behind a complaint. Victimisation may be overdone, but I do not think that it can be ignored.

Transfer of responsibility for safety to the Health and Safety Executive has been raised. Here I come back to the point made by the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross). Experience post-Cullen shows that it is important that whoever is responsible for offshore safety is objective—having worked with the staff of the safety inspectorate within the Department of Energy I know that they were objective—but Cullen underlined the need for them to be seen to be objective as well. That is important for credibility. That is one thing which Cullen brought out, and I endorse his recommendation on it.

The new offshore safety division will be only as effective as the quality of its staff and the skills that they have. I say to my right hon. Friend, and through him to the Health and Safety Executive, that they must be people with technical skills equal to those of the inspectorate staff who have to deal with safety in the oil companies. They must be able to deal on equal terms with the oil companies. To use the analogy of the petroleum engineering division of the Department of Energy, its strength, recognised by oil companies around the world, is that its staff match the quality of staff in the oil companies. We must ensure that in the inspectorate there is the same matching of staff both in quality and in technical qualifications. That will mean paying salaries equivalent to those in the oil companies. There must be no economies in acquiring staff of the right quality and number.

The offshore safety division should be situated in Aberdeen because the interplay between those involved in the regulation of the industry and those who are working at its sharp end is important if those in the inspectorate are to know and understand what is happening in the industry. I am not pleading for one particular area of Britain against another; I am seeking to make the inspectorate more effective than it might otherwise be. I beg that that be given the most serious consideration possible.

I am glad to have been able to contribute to the debate. Again I emphasise that I hope that we have a continuing interest in offshore safety. Even one accident offshore is one too many. If it is humanly possible, it must be our objective to eliminate such accidents altogether.

5.51 pm

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): I am most grateful for being called to speak today. This is one of the most serious debates that there has been in the House for many a long year.

It is appropriate for me to declare my interest as a member of the Amalgamated Engineering Union and honorary secretary of the AEU parliamentary group, although I receive no funding or considerations. Nevertheless, I have an interest in the engineering industry and a feeling for the people who perished on the night of the terrible disaster.

First, I want to pay tribute to Lord Cullen. He has produced in a highly professional way two of the most detailed volumes that I have ever seen. I think that all hon. Members will agree that it was well worth waiting the 18 months that it took to prepare them.

I also want to pay tribute to the television companies. They made a valuable contribution in bringing home to the general public the danger faced by our engineers and the contribution that they make on offshore oil rigs. I am sure that many hon. Members saw the documentary that was made about the disaster, which showed the horrendous conditions that existed and the horrendous mistakes that were made on that night, from which all the consequential suffering ensued.

The Piper Alpha disaster occurred in July 1988. Only the other day I found myself comparing the 167 fatalities which resulted from that disaster, probably within one hour, with the number of British fatalities in the Gulf war. During the Gulf war, people have been glued to their television sets, watching events day by day and worrying about our casualties, but, thankfully, British fatalities, after all those weeks, were only one quarter of those that resulted from the Piper Alpha disaster.

It is recognised that Piper Alpha was the biggest offshore oil disaster that the world has ever known. It left many dead. It also left survivors, some of whom are still under medication. They will be haunted by the disaster for the rest of their days. The disaster also left widows and orphans, and no financial compensation will replace the loss of their husbands and fathers.

The report is a complete catalogue of sloppy and indifferent management, even wilful neglect bordering on sheer wickedness. People who read the report of this debate will not necessarily appreciate the contents of that document. The right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) said that everyone was doing his best and that there were some of the best conditions and the best safety possible. I contend that that was not the case. There is no doubt in my mind that the evidence shows that that is not the case, and that view is confirmed by the Cullen report.

For the sake of the record, therefore, it is important that I, as an engineer, extract one or two references from the report rather than simply say that we have the document, that nothing was wrong, that nothing could be done and that it was a pure accident. Many of us do not feel that it was a pure accident at all. It was partly due to wilful neglect.

Page after page of the report refers to the permit to work system. The system being used—or not used—regarding the issuing of permits when there was a change of shift from one group of engineers to another became the big issue.

It is important to note that most of the dead—79 out of a total of 167—died in the accommodation as a result of being overcome by smoke. The death toll could have been lessened had safety training been more effective. The report says that, as those men innocently waited in the accommodation for their instructions, their chances of survival were diminished and they perished.

Chapter 6, page 121, says that the contractor responsible for carrying out the maintenance on the valve had not received training in the permit to work system from his own company. Cullen finds that the failure of the permit to work system led directly to the accident, particularly in the light of the fact that a fatality had already resulted from a breakdown of that system in 1987.

In chapter 7, Lord Cullen states:

"The strong impression with which I was left after hearing the evidence as to the response of Claymore and Tartan was that the type of emergency with which the senior personnel of each platform was confronted was something for which they had not been prepared."

He then talked about poor Occidental management.

Chapter 11 again refers to the permit to work system and shift takeovers. On pages 194 and 195, Lord Cullen concludes that there was no adequate training procedure for the permit to work system, that much reliance was placed on ad hoc methods and/or "on the job" training and that the permit to work system was not adequately monitored by the rig's safety department. The deficiencies in the permit to work system are constantly mentioned.

Page 196 of the report states that the system of shift handovers was a major factor in the disaster, and mentions critical comments by a Mr. Clark, who was a survivor of the disaster, and criticised the operation of the permit to work system in a meeting with senior Occidental management in early 1988. No action was taken.

Page 197 of the report mentions the death of Mr. Sutherland, in 1987. He was a rigger who died after falling from a canopy above a pump while carrying out maintenance. Occidental was prosecuted under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 for failing to ensure that persons in its employ were not exposed to unnecessary risks. Occidental pleaded guilty and was fined £400. The crucial factors in that incident were shortcomings in the permit to work system. The report states:

"The complaint to which Occidental pleaded guilty also specified 'inadequate communication of information from the . . . day-shift to the night-shift'."

So, once again, the permit to work system is mentioned.

Dr. Michael Clark: I agree with the hon. Member about the permit to work regulations. As a practical engineer who has worked in plant and on shift, does he agree that if a company cannot get its permit to work handovers working satisfactorily, and if it cannot get shift handovers organised, it is right at the bottom of the safety league?

Mr. Eastham: I certainly do. I am trying to demonstrate that this was not a one-off mistake. There was case after case of sloppy management. The company was not administering or managing the rigs as they should be operated, even though the permit to work procedure was laid down to establish that a certain valve was safe, or had been disconnected, so that at the beginning of his 12-hour shift the next operator knew what was going on. I am trying to show the importance of the Cullen report and to shoot down any idea that everything was good and that

the report says that the accident was an act of God. It was not an act of God—it was management neglect, and as Members of Parliament we must do something about it.

I do not want to bore the House, and I apologise for going on, but it is important to deal with the parts of the report which examine emergencies, fatalities and the seriousness of the situation. Chapter 13 deals with training for emergencies. Page 214 mentions

"understanding on the part of all personnel as to how to react in the event of an emergency."

The significance of that is that it appeared that people who died in the rig's accommodation were waiting to be rescued by helicopter, unaware that smoke from the fire made such a rescue impossible. Cullen believes that, if more of them had tried to make their way out of the rig, more could have survived—that assumes that they knew how to escape.

Chapter 14 concerns Occidental's management of safety and is so critical of the company that it should be re-titled Occidental's "mismanagement" of safety. I am giving chapter and verse because this is important and I do not want hon. Members to think that it is all in my imagination.

Page 227 of the report states that Occidental commissioned a report on the risk of riser ruptures and the effects that they might have on rigs. Mr. Saldana prepared a report which states that ruptures represented a more serious hazard than Occidental had thought. Occidental's senior management responded by questioning Mr. Saldana's qualifications and experience. That provokes the question, why was he commissioned to write the report in the first place if the management intended to ignore it because it did not like some of his conclusions? That is a complete contradiction. Occidental nominated him to undertake the study.

On page 235, the report mentions that a large maintenance programme was being carried out on Piper Alpha at the time of the disaster and yet oil production continued at the maximum. Lord Cullen describes that as "puzzling". Some people might call it reckless, and I might even call it sheer greed—the company could not even turn the taps down during a major maintenance operation to ensure that less fuel was flowing. The company was extracting the maximum amount of fuel, even though a vital valve was being worked on when the horrendous accident happened.

On page 251, the report says that there was a shortfall in the number of safety inspectors in the North sea. Two out of five inspectors' jobs had remained unfilled for two years before the disaster. The report says that safety inspectors were, and are, inadequately trained and that persistent undermanning has affected the frequency and the depth of inspections.

Chapter 20 refers to evacuation, escape and rescue, and says that it is a statutory requirement for every rig to have a standby vessel. My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) described the type and quality of standby vessels, so I shall not bore hon. Members with the details, but it is all there, chapter and verse, in the report.

Lord Cullen considers union involvement in the offshore oil industry in chapter 21. Although he recognises that industrial relations are outside his remit, he makes a number of statements which could be used to show the benefits for safety of a well organised union structure.

The Director-General of the Health and Safety Executive said that in the onshore industry union-appointed

"safety representatives could play a valuable part in the promotion of safety and in relation to inspections".

The United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association, however resisted the appointment of similar personnel offshore on the ground that there were very few installations with recognised trade unions. That prompts a reasonable question—why were those unions not recognised?

The remains of Piper Alpha are still at the bottom of the North sea, despite protests by environmentalists, the Royal Navy and local fishermen. Leaving those remains rotting in the sea may even violate the 1958 Geneva convention.

Anyone who considers the tone of the Cullen report to be less than scathing must not have read the same document as me. It is critical from start to finish, and tonight no Minister will be able to avoid making a commitment about the Government's future conduct.

The offshore oilfields have experienced major difficulties for some time. The Amalgamated Engineering Union —my union, and a very responsible one—has used its best endeavours to be helpful and co-operative. In the months following the disaster I was contacted by the engineers' executive council, which seemed alarmed about the indifference of the employers. As secretary of the AEU parliamentary group, I wrote to the Secretary of State for Energy; he was courteous and co-operative, and I was grateful for that. We had two meetings. The Secretary of State invited three members of the executive to join us at the first meeting, and two attended the second. I took the minutes. The Secretary of State said that he had accepted all the recommendations in the report, and that good progress was being made. He also mentioned the transfer of responsibilities to the Health and Safety Executive, and told us that Mr. A. Barrell had been appointed head of that organisation.

One of the executive councillors, Mr. James Airlie, said that he recognised the difficulties relating to, for instance, resources and training. He also inquired about visits to installations, and about the location of the HSE in Aberdeen and Morecambe. The question of health and safety committees on individual sites was raised, as were the issues of victimisation and short-term contracts. As we explained to the Secretary of State, the position was ludicrous: many engineers were on two-week contracts, and any engineer who complained about matters of safety could be sure that his contract would not be renewed.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): My hon. Friend gained day-to-day experience of the trade union movement before he came to the House. Does he agree that such attitudes on the part of these firms were greatly encouraged by legislation enacted not only in the past 11 years, but by the 1970-74 Government, who seemed to regard the union movement as a group of extremists determined to bring down British industry if they could? The Government entirely ignored the daily bread-and-butter work done by the unions every week of the year, which is of such value not only to union members but to all the workers in the oilfields and elsewhere—and, indeed, to the country as a whole.

Mr. Eastham: I entirely agree. We observe the Government's anti-union attitude day in, day out. They

[Mr. Eastham]

seem to hate trade unionists, and not even to consider them British. That attitude changes only in times of emergency. When there is a war and they want engineers to work in munitions, it is all shoulders to the wheel, and trade unionists suddenly become good workers—people with whom the Government can negotiate and do business.

At the meeting, the Secretary of State made three points. First, he assured us that there would be no lack of resources. Secondly, on personnel, he said that a practical regime would be introduced, and that its organisation would be left to the HSE. Thirdly, he accepted Lord Cullen's recommendations about safety representation. Mr. Tom MacLean, a member of the executive, mentioned inspector understaffing and the quality of staff. The Secretary of State said that he had already improved pay and that he "was not hanging about", which pleased us greatly.

I mentioned the excessive hours worked by the men on the rigs, and the consequent risks to safety and efficiency. The Secretary of State said that he too considered that important. When he made his first statement about the disaster, I told him that engineers on the North sea oil rigs were working far more hours per year than those in the Norwegian fields. That still requires earnest consideration. Later, the Secretary of State wrote to me privately, saying that directives were being issued containing work guidelines.

We appreciated what seemed to be co-operation from the Secretary of State, and felt that the exercise had been useful. Since then, I have received some encouraging letters, but I hope that we shall soon get down to practicalities.

I made some other approaches, again with the help of the executive of the AEU. I received a letter that concerned me greatly. It did not make good reading. The executive referred to continuing anxieties long after the Piper Alpha disaster.

In February 1990, I received a letter from Mr. Tom MacLean, who has responsibility for the construction industry in the AEU, in which he drew attention to correspondence relating to the Montrose platform and asked me to note an enclosed copy of a fax dated 26 February 1990 from the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee. It said that there were deficiencies in Amoco's working practices which were a source of great concern and that the committee called on the right hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Morrison), who was then the Minister with responsibility for oil installations, immediately to shut down the Montrose platform until Amoco's fitness to manage had been reassessed. It also argued that new fireproof accommodation should be installed.

That was picked up by the newspapers. On 25 February 1990, there was a report in *Observer Scotland* under the headline

"Rig gas leak 'a whisper away' from second Piper".

I thought that I ought to approach the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association to see whether we could get together to talk about these serious matters. On 7 March 1990 I wrote to Dr. Hughes and said:

"we are now wondering whether it would be possible to convene a meeting at your offices to discuss further some of the issues which are seriously concerning our members. We have also exchanged correspondence with our Executive Council who obviously are most interested in the pursuit of some better arrangements. Ideally, from our point of view, I should like to suggest a deputation of 3 AEU MPs plus 3 Executive Council members with a special interest in the subject."

Although some organisations profess that they want to co-operate, the message that came back to me from UKOOA was that it would meet the three AEU Members of Parliament but it refused point blank to meet the three AEU executive council members.

Despite UKOOA's refusal, the three AEU Members of Parliament thought that it would be wise to meet UKOOA at its offices. The three hon. Members were my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) and me. No trade union officials were allowed to be present for the discussion. We were received courteously. Dr. Harold Hughes is the chairman. Mr. Christopher Ryan, a director, said that there are 36 companies in the industry, all of which are members of UKOOA. The companies are members of an association; I wonder whether the engineers on the oil rigs would have been regarded as more acceptable if they had been members of an association rather than a trade union. UKOOA might then have been prepared to meet them. An association does just the same work as a trade union. We were told that there are 160 platforms and that the total investment amounts to £166 billion. That is a lot of money. We recognise how important the industry is to the United Kingdom.

We gave notice to Dr. Hughes that the engineering group intended to raise the profile of this very serious problem. I told Dr. Hughes—it is quoted in the *Glasgow Herald* of 28 February 1990, long after the Piper Alpha incident—that certain rigs were working with faulty electrics and that a survey had revealed that 95 per cent. of the explosive-proof equipment in the Brent field had faults. The article also referred to the fact that workers were convinced that faults had shut down Cormorant Alpha and Brent Charlie and that similar electrical faults were to be found on at least three other Shell installations.

The issue rumbled on in the House of Commons for a long time after that. One of my hon. Friends tabled an early-day motion on North sea safety and trade union recognition, after which I received a letter from UKOOA. I was told that all workers offshore had the right to elect their own safety representatives and that there were safety committees on every platform. The letter also pointed out that a recent study by the Institute of Offshore Engineering, an independent body, had reported similar accident rates in both Norway and the United Kingdom. The implication was that the number of fatalities and accidents was just as great in Norway as in the United Kingdom. According to the information that we have received, that is nowhere near the truth. The letter said that £750 million was being invested to redress some of the problems. In an important paragraph, UKOOA said:

"As far as trade union recognition is concerned, all workers have equal rights offshore—including the right to join a trade union and join safety committees. Recognition is a matter between workers and their employers, the contractors. You may be interested to know that there is an obligation under every licence for the operator to provide facilities for trade union officers to go offshore for the purposes of recruitment."

That is a bit rich when we know what happens if full-time trade union officers attempt to get to the rigs, even to speak to the workers.

When I replied to Mr. Ryan's letter I referred him to an article in *The Scotsman* dated 26 October under the heading

"North sea men face worst death risk in the world."

An independent team of analysts—Smith Rea Energy—calculate that the average cost to United Kingdom-based companies in lost production and compensation amounts to £180 million a year. That was before the Piper Alpha disaster, which raised the 1988 total to £1·2 million. Surely there must be something wrong with the rigs if so much money is lost, if there are so many fatalities and injuries, if so many rigs are closed down and if so much energy is lost. I base my argument not on my assumptions or calculations but on those of so-called experts.

The House will appreciate that my correspondence with UKOOA has been going on for some time. In November 1990, I received a letter saying:

"Since Lord Cullen reported, all engaged in the offshore industry have adopted a very positive approach to the recommendations made and there is a common desire to implement the report in the interest of North Sea safety . . . Therefore UKOOA would be pleased to host a further meeting with you and your AEU colleagues."

That was a breakthrough; it was the first time that UKOOA had said that it was prepared to meet members of the executive as well as AEU-sponsored Members of Parliament. The letter concluded:

"I will telephone you upon your receipt of this letter."

UKOOA never telephoned me; I am still waiting for the call.

A letter from the AEU executive illustrates the brutality of what was happening in the oilfield. *[Laughter]*. I know that this seems a bit of a joke to those who do not work in the oilfields, who simply do not understand. Perhaps if they got themselves a boiler suit, rolled up their sleeves and did six months' work in the North sea, they would appreciate how much engineers contribute to oil companies' wealth.

The letter from the executive, dated 3 December 1990, illustrates the brutal hire-and-fire policy in operation in the North sea. One can hardly say that 3 December 1990 is a long time ago and that matters have improved. The letter refers to dismissals following the dispute about safety on oil rigs. It gives a breakdown of dismissals following the stoppages. Apparently 534 Offshore Construction Contractors employees were dismissed. There was no mutuality and there were no negotiations. It seems that the companies have returned to their old ways—the practices that we have tried so hard to leave behind us. They merely say, "There is no job for you. Too bad, you're off." To this day, there is no consideration and no understanding.

In January, I received another letter from UKOOA, in which Mr. Ryan wrote:

"My purpose in writing is to invite you and your colleagues to meet us . . . when we could brief you on UKOOA's reaction to the current recommendations and discuss other matters of mutual interest. You may recall that we were of a mind to suggest a meeting with appropriate AEU national officials".

UKOOA was "of a mind" to do that and said that it would call me. The last sentence of the letter reads:

"I will get in touch with you on your receipt of this letter."

Once again, I never received the call. Perhaps UKOOA keeps that line on its computer—"We will get in touch with you after you have received this letter." I want to make it public, therefore, that the AEU Members of Parliament and the union's executive council would very much appreciate a meeting. It is not difficult to get in touch with me. Everyone else seems to be able to get in touch with me and I can always be left a message. If I receive that call, I shall be only too pleased to meet UKOOA's representatives.

Allegations of blacklisting have sometimes been denied. Hon. Members may be aware that the Select Committee on Employment undertook an inquiry into recruitment practices. We dealt with the employment of the disabled and minority groups and decided to have a look at the Economic League and at blacklisting. I have a letter here —[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh no."] This is important. I am trying to illustrate that this is fact; it is not in my mind. The Employment Select Committee received a letter from one of the unions about blacklisting of anyone who dares to complain about safety on the oil rigs.

Those who complain get worked off. The Select Committee was sent a transcript of some of the communications that such people had received. The unions are getting a bit more skilled at recording these things and, in this case, they also recorded telephone conversations. The transcript proves that on North sea oil rigs, blacklisting continues apace.

I know that people say that blacklisting does not exist but we know that it does. Paragraph 30, on page 392 of the Cullen report, says:

"Safety representatives should be protected against victimisation by a provision similar to . . . the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978".

Even Lord Cullen, who said that he did not propose to become involved in discussions of blacklisting or the trade unions, recognises that it is going on and thinks that the workers should have some protection.

I refuse to believe that nobody is to blame for the disaster. The Cullen report certainly concluded that people were to blame. We need better management. North sea oil workers are entitled to full trade union rights. We want less secrecy regarding safety problems and adequate health and safety resources. Above all, we ask for increased co-operation, despite Conservative Members' laughing and tittering about the livelihoods and working conditions of those who work on the rigs.

There is nothing irresponsible about our desire for more co-operation. We are trade unionists and we are far more responsible than some of the hooligans on the Conservative Benches when it comes to dealing with the serious matter of the loss of hundreds of lives. None of those on the Conservative Benches will die on the oil rigs because none of them wear boiler suits and none of them have ever taken such jobs. It is the workers who do that, and that is why we want more co-operation in future. Trade unionists are entitled to work in dignity, and the whole House should be determined not to allow a repeat of Piper Alpha.

This afternoon I was passed information by a colleague who has a relative in a senior position in the oilfields from which I discovered that compensation has still not been paid to all the survivors of the disaster, which occurred in July 1988. We are now in March 1991. I was also horrified to learn that it is believed that the new replacement platform is of the same design as the original Piper Alpha platform, yet one of the main criticisms concerned the type

[Mr. Eastham]

of accommodation on the platform. If that is the case, it is a complete disgrace and the Minister should do something about it.

There is no doubt that Occidental has a dreadful record. It is interesting that, although some of the other oil companies, such as Esso, have already held one-day conferences on safety, Occidental has still to hold its first safety conference.

I could talk about many things. I could speak for about two hours on some of the deficiencies and scandals in the North sea oilfields. It is time that we put a stop to all that.

6.40 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I shall certainly follow what the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) has said, but I shall do so later because I too must begin by saying that that few disasters have had more impact on us or have been more distressing than that which occurred on 6 July 1988 in the North sea and in which, as the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said, 167 men died. The hon. Member for Blackley put that number in the context of the casualties of the Gulf war.

It may surprise the hon. Member for Blackley to know that I have worked in a boiler suit and have worked shifts. I have not done so offshore—I doubt if I ever will now because what is left of my hair is too grey—

Mr. Eastham: I am grateful to learn that and I am greatly encouraged by it because as a result of that experience the hon. Gentleman's understanding of this matter will be very different from that of his hon. Friends sitting beside him.

Dr. Clark: As I have said, I have worked in boiler suits and have worked shifts in the chemical industry onshore, but not offshore, and I should like to take up some of the time of the House to describe two accidents of which I have knowledge. I was not responsible for them, but I was involved, in the aftermath. Neither was anything like Piper Alpha—the results were a fraction of what happened on Piper Alpha—but I know something of the distress that any accident causes to the surviving work force, the managers and, above all, the relatives.

In 1965 on Teesside, there was an accident at an ICI plant when a pressure vessel was about to be cleaned out. It had been used for the polymerisation of hydrocarbons and for making polymers. As it was known that some hydrocarbon would be left in the vessel, permit-to-work chits were issued so that men could go inside it with bronze spades to clear it out. The spades were bronze because it was known that a metal spade would cause sparks and that a spark would probably cause an accident. To show that it was thought to be a safe procedure, the manager of the plant went in the vessel first. He cleared out some of the debris from the bottom of the vessel for an hour before any other man went in—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry that those Opposition Members who have accused Conservative Members of not having any industrial experience do not wish to listen to an account of the little industrial experience that we have had—it would encourage us to gain more such experience if Opposition Members would listen when we talk about it.

After the manager had tested the vessel by working in it himself for an hour, two members of the work force went in, using the proper equipment and following the proper procedures, but they disturbed a pile of highly unstable peroxides which immediately exploded. One man was blown out of the vessel dead. The other was blown out on fire, severely hurt, and was in hospital for a long time recovering from appalling injuries.

I was not the manager of the plant at the time, but I became the manager three months later and I know of the effect that that accident had—three months later—on the rest of the work force. They were dispirited and demoralised. There was also compassion for the relatives and sadness about the incident.

What happened there is a classic example of what Lord Cullen described in his report. I refer to the difference between safety through regulation and safety through having a safety case. On that plant, everything had been done right by regulation. All the permits had been signed, all the working methods had been approved, and all the regulations had been abided by, but a proper safety case had not been made for working inside that vessel. After the accident, the scientists and chemists at ICI investigated how it could have happened and found a type of chemical —a highly unstable peroxide—which had not been known about before the accident and which exploded when it was simply disturbed. The work that was carried out after finding that highly unstable peroxide showed that men should never have entered that vessel at any time.

Some people talk about being wise after the event, but I do not think that that is a correct analysis. Instead, we learn after the event. We do research and carry out investigations after the event which, if we had safety case procedures, we would carry out before the event. We should investigate all possibilities. All the scientific research and engineering possibilities should be carried out and ascertained before the event—and they would be if a safety case procedure were in existence instead of a regime of regulation which simply tells people, "You will work in a certain safe way", or in a way that is presumed to be safe. That is one of the main points of Lord Cullen's report.

Immediately after the Piper Alpha disaster, the Government set up a technical investigation. The Government, the Department of Energy and the Secretary of State at the time are to be commended for the speed at which they set up that technical investigation and for the speed at which it reported—in September the same year, just over two months after the incident. Although the inquiry reported quickly, there is no evidence to suggest that it reported in a slipshod way. In fact, the evidence shows that it reported as professionally and as thoroughly as it could in the time available. In his own painstaking report, Lord Cullen praised that technical inquiry.

Lord Cullen's report became available to us on 12 November. He concluded that an initial explosion set in train an escalating series of fires. He showed how there was a series of events, happenings or situations, each of which on its own might have allowed a certain amount of occupational leeway which would not have led to the accident. However, as was stated by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras when he went through the series of events involving negligence, neglect or forgetfulness, that combination and series of events allowed the fire to escalate and the explosion to take place. And so it is with most accidents. One event on its own can probably be

accommodated by the safety procedures, by individuals, and by experienced operators, but accidents happen when several things occur simultaneously—as with Piper Alpha.

I will give the House an example of another accident, which occurred 10 years after the one that I have already described. Although I like to think that I was not directly responsible for it, I have to take some responsibility because I was the plant manager at the time. A man started working on a mixer which was used to mix plastic materials. He did so without permission. The fuse had not been withdrawn from the electric motor. Unknown to him, the mixer blade had jammed the last time it was used and the motor was switched on with the blade in that jammed position. The man broke all regulations by placing his hand in the mixer to try to make the blade go round, and it started to go round because the motor was still switched on and the fuse had not been withdrawn. The man was not wearing gloves and when the blade went round, instead of the gloves taking the shock of the mixer, his hand took the shock and he lost fingers from his right hand.

Had any one of those five things not occurred, the accident would not have happened. If the man had applied for permission to work, he would not have got it, so he would not have had the accident. If he had been granted permission to work, the fuse would have been withdrawn from the motor. If, by chance, the blade had not jammed when the last person used it, the mixer would not have been jammed with the motor still switched on. If he had not placed his hand in the mixer, there would have been no accident. Had he been wearing thick leather gloves, the blades would have taken the gloves into the mixer and his hand would have been bruised but he would not have lost his fingers. Five separate incidents happened in that accident. If any one of them had not occurred, the man would not have lost his fingers.

Lord Cullen described many such accidents in his report. Procedures can be made to work to a degree and must be made to work so far as they are relevant. We must not work on probability, with a safety ethos to the effect that the probability of an accident is only 0·1 per cent., so if three mechanisms are operated and there is a 0·1 per cent. risk on any one of them the probability of an accident is negligible. At some time, the combination will occur —if one spins a coin enough times it may come down heads 10 times in succession. We want safety not by probability but by safety-case analysis—safety by design and by engineering. In the last resort, we want safety by regulation and procedure—but built into equipment, not worked into it by human and fallible operators.

There are three roles on any operating platform or in any factory—those of operators or employers, those of employees, and collective responsibility. The Government do not have a monopoly on the role of collective responsibility. It applies to many places of work and, in some ways, applies least of all to the Government.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) said, the operators or employers know that the buck stops with them and that we cannot legislate to prevent accidents. We can legislate to ensure that certain types of equipment are available on a platform but we cannot legislate for its reliability. We can legislate that there should be systems, such as alarms, safety systems or fire systems, on a platform, but not for their complexity. We can legislate that manuals must be written—even that they should be read—but we cannot legislate for their quality, nor for the quality of the teaching when their contents are transferred to the minds of the employees and plant operators. Furthermore, we can legislate, through the Department of Energy or the Health and Safety Executive, that checks should be carried out on all equipment, but not for the enthusiasm with which the checks are carried out. In other words, we cannot legislate for safety culture, which is so important if we are to have safe working practices, not only in the North sea but in the use of complex equipment on any plant.

In his report, Lord Cullen says that operators should sharpen their responsibilities for analysing hazards and documentation of systems—and so they should. Operators in the North sea should never forget that 36,000 people work offshore there. The Government can provide a framework for the employment of those people, but it will be a broad framework and there can be no alternative to operators sharpening their procedures, awareness and responsibilities. The Government must be responsible and diligent in pursuing the analysis of documentation and equipment, but the quality of both and the responsibility for the employees who work on the platforms must rest well and truly with the operators.

The employees, whether they are platform managers or those who prepare food in the mess room, are entitled to trade union recognition if they so wish, but trade unions should not necessarily represent employees with regard to safety.

Mr. Salmond: The hon. Gentleman says that he is prepared to support workers' rights to trade union recognition. How does he think that that could be brought into effect? How could workers' opinions on the matter be properly tested, and what legislation or moves does he suggest should be made to put that theoretical right to trade union recognition into practice?

Dr. Clark: Recognition must be twofold. First, the work force must be organised; secondly, it must seek recognition from the employer. I support everyone's right to trade union membership, but recognition is a matter between the trade union and the employer. The trade union would probably find it difficult to achieve recognition if the number of its members was well below the majority of those working on the platform. All workers have a right to trade union membership, but recognition depends on the size of the representation and will be negotiated between those who belong to the union and the employer on whose premises they work.

When I worked for ICI in County Durham and north Yorkshire, way back in the early 1960s, we had a successful system of safety committees. ICI's safety record was second to none. When the Health and Safety Executive was established some years ago, ICI's model was taken into account, as it was considered to be the best practice at that time. As a manager, I had regular meetings with the trade unions—especially the Transport and General Workers Union—and with the safety committee. There were sometimes trade union shop stewards on the safety committee. I found that their style and presentation were more appropriate to trade unions which deal with terms and conditions of employment. They enabled them, as trade union representatives, to present their case in a manner best able to achieve what they sought, and with a negotiating stance generally understood by the manager. Some shop stewards were robust and could put a case

[Dr. Clark]

forcefully. They often asked for more than they expected to receive and a compromise would be reached. However, such a negotiating method is not always a suitable tactic when seeking to achieve safety.

When one asks for safety, it should be because it is needed and it should not be negotiable. Even if, in the debate, it is found that there is a better way to overcome a safety hazard or problem, the person asking for the safety of himself and his colleagues must believe that it is needed and will not be watered down through negotiation. The type and style of negotiating that would usually be expected from a health and safety committee representative and a trade union representative may thus be quite different. Therefore, I do not regard it as essential to have safety representation through trade unions, but I believe that it is essential to have such representations through safety councils, with people who are diligent, known for their common sense, trusted by their fellow employees and respected by the management at their workplace.

The third category is collective responsibility. In my place of work I always tried to get rid of the feeling of "us" and "them" and to create a feeling of "we". There is no issue on which a feeling of "we" is more important than safety, especially on a platform in the North sea where everyone is together. People may have different coloured boilersuits, hard hats, salaries and jobs, but on the safety issue we must think in terms of "we" because everyone is in the same boat—literally, if there is a disaster such as the Piper Alpha. Collective responsibility is of paramount importance. The Government have told us that they believe that every employee has a right to be represented on a safety committee, and the committee members should be elected.

Several letters have been read out to us and discussed by the hon. Member for Blackley. I, too, received a letter from the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association and found parts of it distressing. The letter is dated 6 March and was sent not only to me, but to all hon. Members, although the copy that I have here has my name at the top, as it was sent to me.

I realise that the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association is a trade association, representing most of the companies which operate in the North sea. The letter states, as though it were something to be proud of:

"as at December some 900 elected safety representatives were involved"—

in safety committees—

"of which over two-thirds had already received formal training to help them in their responsibilities."

The Piper Alpha disaster was two and a half years ago, but only two-thirds of the 900 safety representatives are properly trained. If we accept, as I think we probably can, that more than half of them were trained before the disaster because some operators would have sent safety representatives on training courses, there have been only an extra one-sixth trained during the past two and a half years. I say to UKOOA and, more importantly, to its members, "What have you been doing for the past two and a half years? Why have not 100 per cent. of the people been trained and a further 10 per cent. held in reserve ready to go on the safety committees if anyone drops out or resigns from the company?" It is not good enough.

The letter also states:

"Chief among these"—

the Cullen recommendations—

"is the systematic use of the Safety Case and Formal Safety Assessment, the full acceptance by the Operator of his responsibility for the safety of his installation and of the workforce, and the change away from the present prescriptive regulation to goal-setting regulations."

That is fine—those are Lord Cullen's recommendations, which we all applaud—but the letter then states:

"All these had been UKOOA recommendations in evidence to Lord Cullen."

It is incredible that when Lord Cullen set up his inquiry, the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association was able to make to him—or so it claims—three recommendations which are now acknowledged as the main recommendations of the Cullen report. If it was able to do that after 167 men had died, what were UKOOA and its member companies doing before July 1988 and before 167 men died? It is not something to be proud of to be able to say, two and a half years after such an accident, "Those are the recommendations that Lord Cullen made, we made them to him and we are proud that we did so." The association should have made them five years earlier. If it had, we probably would not be having today's debate and, hopefully, the men would not have been killed.

Phrases such as "safety cases" and "formal safety assessments" sound like, and probably are, new phrases, but the ideas are not new. The North sea is a hostile environment, the technology is sophisticated and the consequences of failure are severe. But there are other industries with those characteristics—the space and nuclear industries. I know from experience that the nuclear industry has safety cases, safety assessments and designed-in safety. Although I do not have personal experience of it, I have no doubt that the space industry has the same features. Why has it taken so long for the safety case assessment to be brought to North sea platforms, when so many characteristics of work in the North sea are similar to those of the nuclear and space industries? Thank God—and I really mean that—that we have brought pressure to bear now, but what a shame that we did not bring it to bear some time before.

7.6 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The concluding comments of the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy, are pertinent to the issue not only of where we are now, but of where we are going. By way of introduction, it is important to say that the fact that the Cullen report is excellent and the Government have accepted all its recommendations can, in some ways, be a danger rather than a benefit. There is a tendency for people to think that we have looked at the safety issue, that it is all there in the book—we have agreed to it. When the debate continues, some people, for example in the media, often ask why we are asking for this and pressing for that, because surely all has been taken care of by the Cullen report. The answer is that such matters will be taken care of only when the industry gets it all together. That will not happen overnight—we must ensure that as much is done as fast as possible and the regime is brought up to a higher standard than existed before.

It is not surprising that no fewer than five Members from Grampian region are seeking to speak in the debate, of which I am the second to have spoken, when we consider the basic importance of the industry to our district. When I checked the most recently available figures, I found that, in Grampian region, 51,200 people

are employed in the oil and gas industry and a further 18,400 in related jobs—a total of 69,000, or 33 per cent. of the total work force. Therefore, the issue is in the minds of a high proportion of that region's population, because they are directly or indirectly involved in and concerned about what goes on offshore and the safety standards that operate.

I shall not make general accusations, but until the moment that Piper Alpha went up there was a general belief that the safety regime, while not perfect, was good. There were incidental accidents, but nobody believed that the Piper Alpha disaster could happen, and nobody went offshore worrying about it. However, now that it has happened, nobody can go offshore again without being aware that it has happened and that, no matter what the regime, it could conceivably happen again. Such thoughts concentrate the mind, but it is an awful way to have it concentrated.

In my intervention in the speech of the Secretary of State, I said that I wholly supported the idea of the safety case. I was aware that it was promoted in the industry before the Piper Alpha disaster—I echo the remarks of the hon. Member for Rochford. It is a pity that the procedure was not established earlier, but it is the right approach to say that operators must look at every aspect of the design and operation of their platforms and imagine all possible events to ensure that all factors have been taken into account. That does not preclude the modification of design factors and regulations.

It is still a matter of concern to me that I have not yet received a satisfactory answer to a question that I raised as a direct consequence of the disaster. The Piper Alpha platform was substantially modified from its original installation, and it appears that the modifications contributed to the scale of the disaster. It has not been satisfactorily explained who approved the modifications and why. Those questions were not asked, but I am sure that a safety case regime would have demonstrated that the modifications were risky and unsatisfactory. That led to questions about escape mechanisms from platforms.

I asked a senior executive of Occidental Petroleum (Caledonia) Ltd. why no downward escape routes, as well as escape routes via the heli-deck, were incorporated into the design and into evacuation procedures from the platform. I was amazed to hear him say that he thought there were. That shows some of the problems that existed before the disaster. I believe that the safety case approach is correct.

I want to speak briefly, and perhaps predictably, about the case for locating the offshore safety division of the Health and Safety Executive in the north-east of Scotland. I have believed for a long time—before the Piper Alpha disaster—that there was a case for separating the offshore safety role from the Department of Energy. The right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) acknowledged that point towards the end of his speech. He said that the real point was not necessarily that the Department of Energy was compromised—although it may have been, and some people say that it was even though the right hon. Gentleman, who held office in that Department, said categorically that it was not—but that it was seen to be compromised. The offshore safety role should be taken away to ensure that such confusion does not arise.

The case for putting the centre of gravity of the offshore safety division in the north-east should not be lost. The arguments that I hear suggest strongly that the centre of gravity is likely to be in London, with subsidiary operations in Bootle and Aberdeen, but I am not convinced that the case has been made properly.

In a reply to me on 21 January 1991, the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), while suggesting that he would not preclude the decision and that it was a matter for the HSE, nevertheless wrote:

> "The need to recruit scarce specialist staff and the location in London and the South East of most oil companies will require that a major part of the operation will continue to be based in London".

I wholly refute that. I do not understand why, if executives have to travel to London, they cannot be expected to travel to Aberdeen. The fact that the oil companies have a substantial part of their headquarters in London does not negate the fact that the operational headquarters—which is what we are considering—are in Aberdeen. That is where most of the people concerned with safety in the industry are based.

That idea is reinforced by the survey commissioned by the Aberdeen centre for offshore safety, of which I am sure that the Secretary of State and the Minister are aware. The centre was recently set up by a number of bodies, including Grampian regional council, the trades council, the chamber of commerce and Aberdeen city council. It is a fairly representative body, which has, I accept, a clear objective—to persuade the HSE to make Aberdeen its location. It has asked most operators in Aberdeen for their views and preferences and, bearing in mind what the Under-Secretary of State for Employment said, there seems to be a contradiction.

The survey states:

> "71 per cent. of the sample . . . confirmed that the key leadership locus for the Formal Safety Assessment Task Force structure is, or will be, in Aberdeen."

In addition, 67 per cent. of the sample reported that the previous interface in Aberdeen with the Department of Energy was inadequate because of inadequate levels of skill and the inadequate seniority of the Aberdeen staff. If we are to be told that the HSE must locate its operations in London because the Department of Energy has not transferred its key personnel to Aberdeen, then we have the cart the wrong way round in relation to the horse.

There is a supposed commitment to move civil servants and jobs out of London to the regions and provincial centres. Logic dictates that that is the way it should be done, and that it is a practical way of improving the efficiency of the operation in every sense, as well as transferring the centre of gravity from London. The Secretary of State has already said that it is a matter for the HSE, but I hope that it will read the report of the debate and take on board what has been said.

We accept the role of the skilled people in Bootle and the role of London, but I for one am wholly unconvinced that that means that the centre of gravity must be in London rather than in Aberdeen. I believe that we are entitled to press the case, as we in the north-east are doing.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Would it not enhance the operating level of those who work in the oil companies in Aberdeen if the senior level of control of the offshore installations were in Aberdeen too? Would not that contribute to a greater commitment to safety at senior levels in the oil companies?

Mr. Bruce: I wholly agree. My point is that, if the Department of Energy and the HSE inspectorate were to make a move, the oil companies would be forced to follow through. Some already have, and are complaining that that is where their centre of gravity is and that too many people have to travel south. The right hon. Gentleman is correct to say that a move would bring everything together. The efficiency of the industry would be enhanced, and it would seem to be in everyone's interest. The industry could concentrate on developing particular aspects of the safety regimes.

Another relevant issue is the relationship between oil company workers and workers in the contracting companies, which has become a major bone of contention. I was pleased to hear the Under-Secretary of State for Energy say in Aberdeen that we needed to ensure that the status of all offshore workers was indistinguishable. That was the purpose of my intervention on the Secretary of State. There is considerable worry about the way in which the relationship between the oil companies and the offshore contractors has developed and its effect on the morale of the workers, which I am sure has implications for safety as well as for efficiency.

When the previous downturn in oil prices took effect the oil companies put a real squeeze on the contractors, which had several consequences. They invited contractors to make bids for maintenance work, for example. A price may be based on man hours or it may be fixed—there are various ways in which to proceed, but the prices are very hard fought. In such circumstances, the contractors are often forced to change the working conditions of offshore workers. They often made the workers self-employed so that they would not enjoy holiday pay or sickness benefits in full or, if they did, they had to pay for them themselves.

That caused considerable resentment among many of those people. When they found that the oil companies were looking after their own and putting on the squeeze further down the line, it created a real problem. It made blacklisting, which arose in the industrial dispute last year, a particularly offensive issue. Shell ultimately realised that it was counter-productive for its corporate image. Companies told contractors, "We invite you to provide a competitive tender to do a job on our platform. You must determine the parameters of that contract, whom and how many you employ, as long as you meet our price and conditions." Then they said, "However, you cannot employ certain named individuals because we don't regard them as desirable."

Apart from the very dubious legality of such behaviour, the morality and ethics are extremely questionable. That is beside the point, in a sense. The effect on the relationship, on the climate and on the way in which different workers see themselves is negative and has contributed to a deterioration of morale and industrial relations offshore, which must be sorted out.

I want to mention an issue which may seem tangential, but which is of concern to me and relevant to offshore safety as it relates to helicopters. The House will be aware that there is a severe shortage of air traffic controllers throughout the country, which has led to some pressure on staffing levels. I accept that that has happened to try to ensure that training is carried out to bring the level up to acceptable standards. However, I represent Aberdeen airport and I am not at all happy about the cuts that have been imposed there. I have had extended correspondence with the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority on the matter. Suffice it to say that we are now agreed on the facts. We have 28 controllers out of a full complement of 32—in other words, we are four short in practical terms, without going into the details.

That shortage affects helicopter training at the airport. The air traffic controller in charge has to say to helicopter companies, "You may not be able to carry out training at certain times of the day, because we do not have enough air traffic control cover to do it." I am not suggesting that there is an immediate safety problem at Aberdeen airport. I am assured that there is not and I accept that assurance. However, if, by definition, helicopter companies are having to cut training activity, safety in the offshore environment must be affected. I know that colleagues who represent neighbouring constituencies are well aware of people's concern that the means of transport to work offshore is helicopters.

Helicopters are an inherently less safe method of travel than fixed-wing aircraft are. It is interesting that the experiment with the idea of long-haul helicopters, embarked on a few years ago, has been substantially abandoned in favour of going back to using Sumburgh and Unst for the northern field, with fixed-wing aircraft and transfers. That minimises the time that has to be spent in helicopters.

I am anxious that there should be no compromise on helicopter training at Aberdeen airport as a result of general cuts in air traffic controllers. It is unfortunate that that should happen at a time when Aberdeen is the only airport in the United Kingdom that is enjoying a growth in traffic. Yet it gets a share of the cuts, which does not seem to take account of that growth.

My most important point is to suggest that, given that the safety regime will continue to change and that the implications of the Cullen report will take some time to put in place, we need some other body to try to ensure that offshore safety is monitored, developed and advanced continually. I should like further consideration to be given to the recommendation, which I have made before, of establishing an independent offshore safety trust. I put forward that idea some months ago.

I have written to a number of interested bodies, such as the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association, the trade unions and oil companies, to suggest that the idea should be given serious consideration. The response has been by no means hostile. It has led to a certain grinding of axes—perhaps predictably. Trade union interests have tended to say, "We believe that offshore trade union recognition is the determinant of offshore safety. That is what we are campaigning for, and we do not wish to be sidetracked from that." I must make it clear that I support the campaign for trade union recognition. My idea would not get in the way of that. However, I do not accept that trade union recognition could be the sole determinant of the offshore safety regime, although I believe that it could make a contribution.

By the same token, the employers have tended to say, "We think that the offshore safety committees are the answer." Again, there is some doubt about the full role of offshore safety committees. The hon. Member for Rochford has pointed out that such committees have not yet been fully implemented.

The idea of an offshore safety trust, located in Aberdeen, which would draw representation from across the spectrum—from oil companies, from trade unions, from local authorities and from the Health and Safety

Executive—would provide a useful focus for monitoring offshore safety. Any individual or company could report concerns about safety, whether they related to design, or to operating standards and practices, with absolute anonymity and knowing that there was protection. Concerns could be investigated and people could be identified if they wished, but only at their discretion—anonymity would be guaranteed otherwise.

The avenue of the Department of Energy has not wholly worked, and the Department is not seen to be sufficiently detached. The body that I suggest could produce a quarterly report which would summarise the issues that had been raised with it. That would help to identify the areas of concern, raise standards and ensure a focus of debate. It is a constructive suggestion. The cost would be minimal in relation to the industry and it could be financed by all those who took part.

I want to anticipate any questions. The fact that we have had the Cullen report, that its recommendations have been accepted and that various measures are in hand is not enough. We need another vehicle through which safety can be channelled and to which people feel that they have absolute security to report concerns. They will know that those concerns will be investigated and that their own position will be protected. I commend that idea to the House.

In one sense, this debate is overdue. However, I accept that, from the point of view of the Secretary of State, other matters need to be reported as we go on. It has been established that regulation does not solve the problem, and that everyone involved in the industry must accept total responsibility for safety. That requires a degree of trust across the board. I have raised some of the issues that undermine that trust and that must be addressed if full trust is to be established. It is not healthy to have continuing industrial disputes, to have low morale and to have inequality between oil company representatives and contractors. All those issues need to be resolved, and they will not be resolved quickly. I have made some constructive suggestions about how we can advance safety and ensure that we have a continuing and dynamic debate so that we never experience such a catastrophe again.

7.27 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): The hon. Members for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) and for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) referred to north-east Scotland as the front line of the United Kingdom oil industry. I am sure that Ministers will not accept that as the whole picture. Clearly, north-east Scotland is the front line, but I hope that hon. Members do not mean to imply that the southern North sea sector is only the back end of the industry. As with the fishing industry, Scottish Members surely recognise that other parts of the United Kingdom are involved in similar activities. The oil industry is an example of that. The lesson of the Cullen report is vital to every part of the North sea sector.

It has been suggested that Aberdeen should be the base for the Health and Safety Executive. Although I represent an East Anglian constituency, I have no objection to it being sited in Aberdeen, provided that it is borne in mind that the field extends to take in most of East Anglia as well. It is important that I contribute to this debate to put the view of the southern North sea sector.

In my own constituency and in Great Yarmouth, the oil industry has been one of the biggest employers for many years. In addition to the point made in the Cullen report, it must be said over and over again that for many people, often in the comfort and safety of their armchairs, the North sea is just a sea—an attractive asset to an east coast seaside holiday, or a tiresome hurdle to be crossed before one can enjoy a European holiday.

From time to time, however, there is a dramatic and devastating tragedy in the North sea. Those of us who live by it and work by it, or who live on it and work on it, have learnt a healthy respect for that sea. Whether we are talking about fishing in it, defending our shores from its ravages, or extracting gas and oil from it, we must realise that the North sea is, as has been said, a very hostile environment. In that environment, safety can never be absolutely guaranteed. It is right that we bring the matter to public attention today.

A new safety culture is abroad in the population at large. It rightly pervades much public thinking. However, there has always been a certain safety culture and a strong safety incentive among those who work offshore. It has been, and must continue to be, a mutual incentive. In effect, if a working practice endangers one man, it endangers all men. That covers every aspect of the operation—from the helicopter out, to the use of the accommodation modules once the men are at sea. However, there is never an ultimate level of safety. Safety can always be improved. The lessons from Piper Alpha have been an important lever with regard to all aspects of the industry.

Shell UK has had an exploration base at Lowestoft in my constituency for 25 years. Its contribution to the local economy has been immeasurable—running into millions of pounds, directly and indirectly. Its contribution to the social, cultural and educational fabric of the area is equally immeasurable—running into hundreds of thousands of pounds over the years. I am not here as the mouthpiece of Shell UK, or any of its partners in EXPRO, but I have to say that I am very grateful to it and am impressed by its commitment to the local community and to the wellbeing of its work force, among other things. Shell UK made a submission to the Select Committee on Energy in connection with that Committee's inquiry into the management of offshore safety. The submission opened with the following words:

"The nature of the regulatory regime, as envisaged by Lord Cullen, in our view, correctly places responsibility upon the operator to competently conduct his operations, utilising appropriate procedures and equipment, together with appropriately trained people, to design, construct and operate the facility."

The key phrase is "places responsibility upon the operator"—in Cullen, as before Cullen.

The preparation of the comprehensive safety case—of which mention had been made—with regular reviews, will widen confidence in the safety regime for all men who venture offshore. To that end, EXPRO has set about implementing the recommendations with some gusto. Management has taken a direct interest in ensuring that the company, at all its levels, meets all its operator's requirements. It has highlighted a key conclusion in Cullen—that flawed procedures and practices were a greater contributor to the Piper Alpha disaster than was hardware. With total commitment of staff, and with training, it is possible to improve procedures faster than to finalise hardware modifications. The respective roles of the

[Mr. David Porter]

safety committee, the safety representatives and supervision are recognised as vital, and all contractors must have easy access to that chain.

I am not persuaded by the argument about victimisation. I have had no evidence presented to me, but I have heard the remarks of hon. Members in this debate. It has been said that people have been victimised for raising a genuine safety worry. The hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) mentioned the so-called climate of fear. As I have already said, safety is interconnected. It is not in the interests of management that any plant should cease production for any reason whatever—and that includes a disaster. I believe that EXPRO itself will have implemented all recommendations in due course, and without any regard to cost.

In this context, recognition of the links in the safety chain are essential for every person. To this end, I welcome the advent of a single regulatory body—the Health and Safety Executive. I am a great believer in the principle of one body, one buck-stop. I take every opportunity to promote one body—the National Rivers Authority—to take full responsibility for national sea defence. However, returning to the question of offshore safety, I should like to put something to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Does not relative confusion sometimes inevitably arise over safety and general regulatory functions? I refer to the fact that the Department of Energy, the HSE, the Department of Employment, the Department of Transport, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and the Department of Trade and Industry all have their fingers in the North sea pie.

A large number of jobs in Waveney depend on the standby-vessel aspect of the industry. Boston Putford Offshore Safety, which markets the safety services of shipping companies, Britannia Marine, Putford Enterprises, Warble Shipping and Breydon Marine have just won a £10 milion three-year safety contract with Shell UK. It is a welcome deal, on which they are to be congratulated, and it will secure the jobs of about 100 seamen. Under this contract, there will be three main mother ships capable of launching fast daughter craft for close in-cover work next to the platforms. The mother ships are all highly manoeuvrable converted supply boats, in line with the Cullen recommendations. Three conventional former trawlers will provide additional standby cover.

We heard about converted trawlers earlier in the debate. In recent months, a spate of mishaps and unhappy experiences involving other converted trawlers for standby work culminated in the loss, around Christmas, of one Lowestoft-based vessel in heavy seas. This all now raises the question of the validity of old fishing boats being used, and the need for purpose-built standby vessels. In view of the fact that there are shipbuilding facilities in my constituency, I certainly do not object to the argument that all boats should be purpose-built. However, old trawlers have served us well and should not be contemptuously dismissed. I understand that the use of these old boats in the North sea has resulted in the saving of about 100 lives since Piper Alpha. They were, after all, built to withstand the rigours of the North sea.

Some time ago, in response to the debate about new-build, Putford Enterprises produced a paper which argued that new vessels should be designed not only to service offshore installations but also to serve likely purposes of the Royal Navy—for instance, mine-sweeping. The paper was submitted to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, who has argued that the Royal Navy has identified sufficient vessels for all assumed purposes. That is the kind of short-term answer that I would expect, but I hope that it will not be the last word. The long-term needs of any ocean-going activity must surely be considered with reference to multi-purpose vessels.

It is reasonable to say that the findings of the report have been widely welcomed. We are dealing with a widespread industry, encompassing many skills, and as virtually all the southern North sea sector is serviced from Waveney and Great Yarmouth, it affects every corner of life there. There is a heliport at Ellough, near Beccles, and there are the supplying and equipping back-up industries in Lowestoft and Yarmouth. I have already meationed the standby vessels. There are engineers and electrical and speciafist oil and gas workers. SLP Limited has the only major offshore module fabricators south of Teesside. The Lowestoft college has one of the best offshore survival training courses in Europe. Myriad large and small firms depend wholly or partly on the offshore industry. Safety is the binding thread which links all those separate parts.

We can never say that there will not be another major North sea incident like Piper Alpha. We can never say that a couple of young men from my constituency will not be tragically killed when an unexpected wave pushes a davit to crush them while it is being raised to the mother ship. However, we can take all reasonable and realistic steps. By accepting the Cullen recommendations, the Government have shown that they are prepared to give a lead. That, of course, will have to be reflected throughout the industry, and not just within Shell. The Government are to be congratulated.

Like the hon. Member for Gordon, I hope that the Government will not rest on their laurels but will move forward as fast as possible to ensure that safety remains the top priority. Technology apart, safety culture apart, human training and error apart, there is environmental evidence that the North sea is getting rougher. Technology, safety, training and human factors must take account of that. Although neither the weather, the wind nor the sea itself destroyed Piper Alpha, they must never be underestimated.

7.36 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): This is an extremely important debate. I hope that the House will forgive me if I start on a note of disappointment. I pay tribute to hon. Members who have spoken already. They have displayed great sincerity and a deep interest in this subject, but I have to express personal dissatisfaction that there are so few hon. Members in the House. The subject is far more important than is suggested by the attendance. I confess that I was one of the hon. Members who lobbied hard for a two-day debate. I am grateful to the Government for tabling a motion that enables us to continue to midnight. I understand that there is much pressure on the time of hon. Members on both sides of the House. Perhaps everyone thought that so many hon. Members wanted to speak that there was little prospect of being called.

The imprint of Piper Alpha is for ever seared on our minds. We are reminded of it in all sorts of ways—some of them totally unconnected with the North sea, although clearly connected with the oil industry. I hope that hon. Members will not think me parochial when I tell the House that the first thing that the television pictures of the burning oil wells in Kuwait brought to my mind was Piper Alpha. That is a reason for great sadness for those who, like me, are distraught at what happened in the Gulf. None of us wanted to see such events, although we knew that they were necessary. The image of the burning oil wells brought to mind the image of Piper Alpha on fire.

I join those who have already paid tribute to Lord Cullen, his staff and all who gave evidence to the committee. It has already been said that it was an extremely comprehensive report. It was well argued and well laid out. Although I do not necessarily agree with all its conclusions, I recognise that the report was extremely valuable in concentrating our minds.

Several questions arise out of the Piper Alpha tragedy. Could the accident have been foreseen? Could it have been avoided? Can a future tragedy be prevented? What lessons can be learnt for general offshore safety in the aftermath of Piper Alpha? If we are realistic, we must accept that we can all be wise after the event. There has never been an accident or incident where people have not drawn conclusions afterwards which they might not have drawn beforehand. In all honesty, the ferocity of the explosion and the extent of the damage were beyond all imagination. Everyone was shocked by it. However, the answer to my second question is yes, Piper Alpha could have been avoided. It could certainly have been avoided if sub-sea isolation valves had been fitted from the beginning.

It is true that emergency shutdown valves have been relocated in a safer place on almost all platforms. Some sub-sea isolation valves have been fitted, but very few. One of the most important steps that must be taken is to fit every platform, both old and new, with sub-sea isolation valves. I accept that it is an enormously expensive programme, but it is vital. A tragedy of such proportions must never happen again if anything can be done to prevent it.

The four questions which I asked at the beginning of my speech run into one another. They are all interlinked. Certainly, we believe and fervently hope that a similar tragedy can be avoided in future, but one inescapable conclusion cannot be overridden or forgotten; it is proved by both the technical report and Lord Cullen's major report. It is that the tragedy occurred as a result of the failure of safety procedures in the first instance. That was the cause of the whole episode. The echoes and multiplications of the explosions occurred as a result of that failure.

Anyone in engineering should know that failures in safety procedures often occur at shift changeover periods. We all understand that. It is a considerable number of years since I worked in industry but I recall, because it has stuck in my mind so vividly, an incident that occurred when I was an engineering apprentice in a rubber factory in South Africa. One of the jobs that we had to do from time to time was to replace the guards which prevented rubber from being squeezed into the bearings. It was normally a 10-minute job done as part of routine maintenance but occasionally there was a failure and the job had to be done immediately.

I remember one Friday evening at 10 minutes to five —I was 17 or 18—when another apprentice and I were told, "The number two bearing guards have gone. You had better go and put them back." We were washing our hands. I do not want to spell out in detail the thoughts which passed through a 17-year-old's mind late on a Friday afternoon. The last thing on our minds was work. We went down to replace the guards. The safety procedures were clear. We would throw the switch off, open the fuse box, pull out the fuses, put them in our overall pockets, shut the box and hang on the machine a notice saying, "Do not start this machine" and go to work on the machinery.

The two of us were sitting working away between the big rolling mills. As was inevitable, the holes had not been bored exactly right. Instead of simply slipping in, the bolts were awkward. When one has other things on one's mind at the age of 17, the job becomes more difficult. Every engineer knows how difficult it is to finish the job when one becomes irritated.

We could not smoke in the building because of the volatile fluids used for mixing the rubber. I said to my mate, as people have probably heard me say more recently, "I am going for a smoke." We nipped out to a safe place and had a cup of tea and a smoke. The shift changed at 6 pm and when we came back the mill was running. We had not pulled the fuses out. It was a chance that we went for a cigarette. Cigarettes are not always lethal. If we had not gone for a cigarette, I would not be here and my mate would not be alive either.

That simple episode shows how easy it is for strict safety procedures, which we all know and understand, to be forgotten and for fatal damage to result, especially at shift changeover times. If the shift had not changed the mill would not have been started. The operators on the previous shift knew that we were working there because they had reported the breakdown. Shift changeovers are extremely difficult.

We should not delude ourselves that if it had not been for the sequence of events, unparalleled in the offshore industry, the failures in safety procedures, while still serious, might have been comparatively less significant. At one time people might have said that Piper Alpha was a freak accident which could never happen again. They might have thought that they did not worry too much because there was only a chance in 100 million, or whatever, of it happening again. We are also concerned about general safety procedures. Every life lost is one too many and every preventable injury gives rise to serious anxiety among all of us.

All operations on production platforms must be meticulously examined. Those examinations must be carried out, as I know that they are. By operations, I mean not just equipment but labour. The safety assessment or risk analysis survey—call it what we will—must be carried out on the basis of envisaging the worst consequence. Every function must be subject to a failsafe examination. For example, the systems must be examined. If equipment A fails, is equipment B adequate and satisfactory to limit the damage? If item B is also put out as a result of the damage, is equipment C capable of stopping the damage from spreading? Every single function, however simple or complex, must be worked through.

I know that to some extent such functions are being examined. Oddly enough, although we have been

[Mr. Robert Hughes]

extremely critical of oil companies, especially in the wake of Piper Alpha and the evidence from offshore, and of the way in which safety functions have been examined, we must remember that some things have been done properly and well. It appeared that they were done properly and adequately before Piper Alpha.

I went to one platform. We were told and shown that the fire control systems which operated the deluge system were situated in a different module from where the deluge system was located, so if a fire took place and it was recognised that there might be an explosion, the control system for the deluge could be operated from another module and would not be affected immediately. The control was separate from the equipment, so it should have been possible to operate the equipment. The irony is that in some cases such matters have been examined carefully. Nevertheless, the most pessimistic approach has to be brought into play in the necessary reassessment.

It is often argued that there is little difference now between the oil companies, the Government and the Opposition about the need to ensure that safety is paramount.

The oil companies got as big a shock as anyone as a result of the incident. All the oil company people to whom I have spoken since Piper Alpha have said, in effect, "We thought our systems were safe and that we had done everything we possibly could." When they examined the systems on Piper Alpha and other platforms, they said, "In the light of Piper Alpha, we have suddenly realised how far we have to go." That was an honest admission and those who made it should be given credit for being honest. Clearly, Piper Alpha has had an enormous impact on people's perception.

We must make sure that the overall safety assessments and provisions and the way in which they operate and are monitored, supervised and controlled are satisfactory. For some years, great dissatisfaction has been expressed in question and answer sessions across the Floor of the House about the Department of Energy having both the production responsibility and the safety remit. Concern has often been expressed lest conflicts of interest should arise between the needs of production and the need for safety. That theme—the possible conflict of interest of operators in terms of production and safety—has existed throughout, the fear being that production needs will override safety needs.

I do not believe that anyone in industry says, "We don't care if this is dangerous. You must do it because production needs come first." Nobody in industry has ever said that to me, but in many ways the position is more sinister. The attitude among those concerned builds up to their believing, "We must get this production out and we can't afford to shut down." I fear that such a sentiment can impinge on the thoughts of all involved in production. I repeat that we must be sure that there is no conflict of interest between production and safety.

Lord Cullen recommended—I concede at once that the Government have accepted the recommendation—that the Health and Safety Executive should now assume direct responsibility for offshore safety. It is sometimes forgotten that the Department of Energy undertook the safety remit as an agency acting for the HSE in the first instance. In any event, it is now universally accepted that the transfer should take place, and the Secretary of State said that he would make it happen.

I am pleased to say that there is unanimity on that, and the matter was put to Lord Cullen by the trade unions and by the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association. That having been agreed, we are now only awaiting the starting date. On that, the Minister made out the best case he could. He said that he could not say precisely when the new arrangement would start but that it would be fairly soon.

A number of questions remain unanswered. We are familiar with the shortage of inspectors. During the remit of the Department of Energy, there were problems in that respect. The shortage must not be allowed to persist. It is often said that a real shortage of expertise will exist, and the question, "From where will the experts come?" is frequently asked. My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said that money was not the only problem. That may be so, but it is a key to the answer.

While I would like to see the job done entirely by the Health and Safety Executive, and an increase in the number of expert personnel so that eventually we have a sufficient body of expertise, it may be necessary for expertise to be bought in in the first instance, perhaps on a consultancy basis. If experts are available in, say, the United States or Norway, we should bring them in to help. If they cannot be employed directly by the HSE, we should hire experts and pay the price, for no excuse must be allowed to delay the essential work that has to be done.

The Secretary of State, previously and in his remarks today, said that the demands of safety are so imperative that a shortage of money should not inhibit safety supervision, provision and operation. The right hon. Gentleman now needs to be forthright about that. I understood him to say that broad agreement had been reached. I cannot accept that statement in its entirety. I am not satisfied with the reaching of broad agreements on an issue such as this. I want to be told clearly and without equivocation the budget that the Health and Safety Executive requested of the Treasury and the amount that the Treasury agreed to provide for the HSE. There may have been broad agreement, but in terms of civil servants talking to each other and Treasury Ministers talking to departmental Ministers, reaching broad agreement could mean that the Treasury has screwed down the amount of money that will be made available, and such a situation would be wholly wrong.

The Minister should be open with us on this issue, although I accept that it might be difficult for him to do that. Promises are no substitute in this instance for hard cash. We must be sure that the amount of money sought by the HSE has been, and will be, made available. Indeed, we must also be sure that as the HSE carries out the work in the months and years ahead, more money will be made available if it is needed. There must be no equivocation about that.

As some of my hon. Friends have said, we should be told where the new headquarters will be. Hon. Members will not be surprised to hear me say that logic suggests that they should be in Aberdeen. I understood the Minister to say that there would be a substantial presence in Aberdeen, but he could not say whether the headquarters would be established there. Any hon. Member might make a cheap debating point and say that I am expressing the

parochialism of the Scots, in particular those in north-east Scotland. That is not the case. I am simply expressing the logic of the situation.

It is sometimes argued—

Mr. Ernie Ross: It will be.

Mr. Hughes: I think that my hon. Friend has anticipated me wrongly on this occasion. I do not think he intends to argue the point that I am about to make.

It is sometimes argued that modern technology has shortened the lines of communication to the extent that it is not necessary to have people nearby to do the job. There is some validity in that. Indeed, some hon. Members may regret the way in which modern technology has brought us into much closer contact with our constituents. They can get in touch with us too readily, some might say. As irony is never reflected in print, I hasten to add that that comment was made in jest—just in case anybody reads the *Official Report* of my comments.

There is no substitute for having the personnel and expertise we require close to hand so that there can be adequate communication with them. I say that because we need a stronger hands-on approach to safety in place of the hands-off approach of the past. We need people on the ground. The availability of headquarters staff would provide a permanent stimulus to safety. That is probably the best practical way to foster safety in the future.

Some may not accept my view that a more definite hands-on approach is necessary. Indeed, some may say that we have not had a hands-off approach in the past. I believe that we have. The oil companies have argued—I believe that they still argue—that the problem of safety in the North sea arises in part because of the detailed regulation. Perhaps they are not arguing that the problems arise because of detailed regulations. However, they certainly are arguing, as they argued before Lord Cullen, that the detailed regulations instil a negative philosophy and a negative psychology towards safety.

I need not read into the record all the references to that in the Cullen report, but it is referred to in paragraphs 21.40 and 21.42. In the latter paragraph, Lord Cullen, following up the oil companies' idea that regulations lead to less safety rather than more, recalled the evidence of Mr. McKee:

"Regulations need to be less prescriptive and detailed, more objective and broader based. Over time as you layer more and more prescriptive types of regulations onto the overall regime it probably takes away from the overall objective of total safety."

I do not accept that. Nor do I accept the oil companies' implication that operators decide that, provided they have satisfied the regulations as a minimum, they need not do any more.

The oil companies identified that danger. They said that if companies simply followed the regulations, they might stop thinking about safety beyond what is written on paper. There may be a case for strongly attacking the oil companies for that, but I would restrain myself from doing so. I believe that that is an interesting admission about the psychology which may have developed.

I want to consider a counter-proposition from UKOOA—that the operators should accept responsibility for total safety with a minimum of detailed regulation. I have always accepted, and will always accept, that employers have a legal and moral duty to ensure the safe operation of their industries for the benefit of their employees, the company and, in the case of onshore installations, the safety of those who reside in the vicinity of dangerous operations.

The responsibility is and always has been that of the companies involved. On the other hand, we should not conclude from that that the detailed regulations should be diluted. I hope that the Secretary of State or the Minister will assure us that detailed regulations will remain in force and that, as and when necessary, new regulations will be laid.

Regulations on safety and necessary procedures must be set out clearly. There can be no serious dispute about that. There must also be unanimity that safety depends on those who must implement the system. I accept what several hon. Members have said—that there is a joint responsibility. Managers, operators, owners and workers have a combined responsibility. None of us can escape that responsibility.

Safety is a state of mind. We are all familiar with the syndrome in which there is a heightened interest in safety or security after a major incident, but that is followed by sad and serious lapses as the incident fades from memory. There is a cycle in which people suddenly become interested in safety after an accident, but that interest wanes as the memory fades.

I do not intend to be derogatory about those who work in industry when I say that they cannot maintain the fever pitch of interest in safety that follows a major incident. It is a natural function of human resilience that the capacity to overcome danger allows us to set those dangers aside; otherwise, we would become too scared to do anything. My thesis is that we should encourage all organisations and harness all our energies towards safety.

The involvement of the trade union movement is of paramount importance. It is essential to improving general safety. The Government have maliciously cultivated an image of the trade union movement as short-sighted and concerned solely with immediate issues, such as wages and protecting its own power base. That is a wholly malevolent image which is ill deserved and a perversion of the truth.

Of course trade unions are interested in wages and conditions. They must have an interest in improving the standard of living of our members. When I say "our members", I should declare an interest as a member of the Amalgamated Engineering Union. I declare that interest not defensively, but as a matter of pride.

Trade unionists have always had a legitimate and abiding interest in safety at work. They have always run safety courses for shop stewards and other members, many of which are at local and national levels and sometimes even at international level. There has been a lamentable lack of understanding, perhaps even hostility, between the oil companies and the trade union movement. I cannot understand why that has happened.

Many of the oil companies that function in the North sea have onshore installations or onshore projects in which they coexist quite happily with trade union membership, where trade union membership is the norm, where there is trade union recognition and where there is much union-management co-operation. No one has been able to explain to me why a different view should be taken with regard to activity in the North sea. That is completely beyond my comprehension.

However, I believe that attitudes may be changing. I am grateful to UKOOA for meeting my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), my hon. Friend the

[Mr. Hughes]

Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) and me and for the further invitation to meet us again with representatives of the AEU executive council. I hope that that meeting takes place soon and that, no matter what harsh words have been spoken here today, the co-operation and dialogue that has started over the past few months will not be set aside.

I hope that our discussions will continue and that they will be fruitful and co-operative. I hope that those discussions will lead to proper trade union recognition. No one is saying that everyone must be a trade union member. We seek proper rights to be trade union members and proper recruitment rights and co-operation by the oil companies to allow recruitment in the North sea.

I do not blame people who have been offshore for a fortnight if they make a dive to get home as soon as they get off the helicopter and do not wait to speak to the trade union representative who wants to recruit them. It is ridiculous to claim that the opportunities to recruit offshore workers are the same as those to recruit onshore workers.

I hope that we will no longer hear stories about particular platforms on which the number of trade union members is growing, and where, if one or two of those members begin to show some militancy, they find that they are not required for two or three months or are split up on to different platforms where there are very few, if any, trade union members. I hope that the oil companies will allow opportunities for recruitment. It is in their interests as much as it is the interest of the offshore workers.

I am optimistic that there is a change of understanding and a belief that the trade unions have a place and must be recognised. However, having said that, I remain convinced that the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 should be extended offshore.

In paragraphs 21.84 and 21.85, Lord Cullen accepts the value and validity of trade union membership and representation providing a backup and a bolster for those who might be afraid of dismissal or afraid that they might not be taken seriously. He accepted the validity of the argument but qualified it by saying that most of the evidence came from the trade union movement; but it could not come from anywhere else. I regret that he did not recommend that the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 should apply to offshore installations and that he did not deal with the issue of industrial relations. I ask the Government to put that piece of the safety jigsaw in place. It fits with the general thesis that safety is everyone's responsibility and with the legal requirement, which should be as clear as possible, to make safety an issue about which workers are not afraid to speak out.

The awful impact of Piper Alpha will be with us for ever. We are constantly reminded of it, as we were recently by the burning of Kuwaiti oil wells. Piper Alpha should not have happened and must never happen again. No opportunity should be left unexplored in the drive to achieve the highest safety standards. If the lessons of Piper Alpha are learnt and applied, life offshore will be safer for those who earn their living there.

8.10 pm

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): I recall contributing to the debate on the Burgoyne report on 6 November 1980. I have quickly read the five or six-minute speech that I made. I hope to speak tonight for eight or 10 times as long.

The trade union to which I belong was heavily involved in the early 1980s in the offshore and onshore oil industry. It made recommendations which almost second-guessed the tragedy that was about to happen. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who was concerned about transport matters, and I wanted to establish a charter for offshore workers in the North sea. Many of my constituents were employed on offshore installations.

The Burgoyne committee was established by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) when he was Secretary of State for Energy. If the Conservative party had not won the 1979 election, many more of Burgoyne's recommendations would have been implemented. For instance, more attention might have been paid to recommendation 564.

Although I have much admiration for the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) and for others who worked for the Department of Energy at that time, they must carry the can because they were responsible. They failed to understand the need to separate responsibility for the running and the financing of North sea oil and the way in which that running and earning was administered on behalf of the people who did the running and earning and who so tragically paid with their lives on Piper Alpha.

To give an example, paragraph 5.64 of the Burgoyne report says:

> "One of the 'grey' areas referred to above is the overlap in responsibility between the PED and the Certifying Authorities, in respect of the pipeline riser and other pipeline equipment on the installation. Although forming an essential part of the pipeline system, it clearly has a bearing on the integrity of the installation."

Nothing could be more relevant to the debate than that paragraph. The failure to ensure safety allowed that grey area to turn into the Piper Alpha disaster. Conservative Members cannot hide from their responsibility. Those grey areas were highlighted in the Burgoyne report, but nothing was done to ensure safety inspections.

In the debate in 1980, I expressed my concern about a Department paying public funds for another arm of Government to carry out work on its behalf without checks being made to ensure that those public funds were being well spent, and that safety inspections were being carried out. I have told the Health and Safety Executive and the Health and Safety Commission numerous times when they have appeared before the Select Committee on Employment that they will have to carry the responsibility for the breakdown of safety, because they paid money for the petroleum engineering division to carry out work on its behalf which, as Piper Alpha showed, was not done as it should have been.

At long last, 11 years after the debate in 1980, the Government have accepted that responsibility for safety should pass to the Health and Safety Executive and the Health and Safety Commission, which will perhaps prevent tragedies in future. That does not help those people who lost their lives on Piper Alpha.

In the early 1980s, my union, Manufacturing, Science and Finance, was two separate unions—the ASTMS and

TASS. One of the assistant general secretaries of the ASTMS, Roger Lyons, was involved in producing a minority report because he disagreed with the decision to contract out responsibility for safety to two arms of Government. If his comments had been noted, we might not be holding this debate.

Cullen's recommendations have significant implications for the resourcing and staffing of the Health and Safety Executive. Because of its expertise, some of its staff will have to transfer to the new offshore division. We are concerned to ensure that the remainder of its staff do not suffer as a result of that transfer and that the new division is not financed from its current budget. The Secretary of State sought to assure the House that the HSE and offshore workers would be all right, but Lord Cullen identified Mr. Rimington, the director-general of the HSC, as the person who would be held responsible. However, as a civil servant he will be unable to say to the Treasury, "We need more money".

I am not confident that the Secretary of State for Employment will have that ability. Therefore, I am concerned about the financing of the new division. It will take more than the honeyed words of the Secretary of State for Energy, who will be giving up responsibility on 1 April, to reassure me about the proper resourcing of the new division.

We are also concerned that the new division may seek to draw staff from other parts of the Health and Safety Executive. For example, the CIMAH inspectors, who deal with the control of major accident hazards, are the most likely people to be drawn into the new division. That would immediately affect the necessary work that that part of the HSE is carrying out.

Can the Minister tell us how the discussions are going? What numbers of staff are we talking about? If the Minister thinks that I am exaggerating, he need only ask his hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens), who was a member of the Select Committee. We regularly heard from Dr. Cullen, when he was chairman of the HSE, and Mr. Rimington that they were finding it difficult to attract health and safety inspectors in the numbers and with the experience that they required. I notice that the hon. Member for Nuneaton is slumping slightly. Obviously he does not intend to intervene to disagree with me. He knows the position, and he can tell the Minister about it. He might even get the Select Committee minutes, which would show what was said.

The Health and Safety Executive has increasing difficulty in attracting properly trained staff to carry out its functions. It will be in the full glare of publicity with its new responsibility. I am not suggesting that it should not place major emphasis on getting the new division up and running, but that cannot be at the expense of any other part of the HSE. We want to know what the Government are doing about investigating that problem. We should like assurances tonight.

If we are to attract staff of the proper calibre, the remuneration must be right, as the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside pointed out. Remuneration of offshore inspectors has been given as the principal reason for the inability of the Department of Energy to maintain a full complement of inspectors. The remuneration should be high enough to ensure that high-calibre, qualified candidates are attracted to the work.

The right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside identified the need for the inspectors to be of sufficiently high calibre to raise issues, where appropriate, with the highest management of multinational oil companies. If they cannot do that, we will have no confidence in their ability to carry out their functions. Cullen's emphasis on safety management requires an inspectorate which is confident about its role, determined to seek a real operating culture and unperturbed by the industry and the Department, which are often united in formidable opposition to safety requirements which are likely to inhibit the work of contractors.

I hope that the Minister will assure us that the salaries being offered will attract the highest calibre of staff. As my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) said, if that means seeking assistance on a temporary basis, I do not think that there would be opposition to that. That should not stop the Minister telling us that a training programme is already under way to ensure that highly qualified staff will be available quickly.

Recommendation No. 1 is that operators should submit a safety case for each installation. That means that the new division must have considerable expertise in safety management and risk assessment. The Cullen inquiry showed only too clearly that that expertise was not present in the Department of Energy. The new division must be able quickly to build up expertise in that essential area. How will the new division attract suitable candidates? Can we have an assurance that the existing expertise of the HSE will not be diluted and left unable to deal adequately with major hazards onshore?

On the size of the inspectorate, we do not believe that its effectiveness should be measured by the frequency of visits to platforms and rigs. Each installation should have a full inspection at least every year, with further inspections being dependent on the results of that inspection and on the number of accidents, complaints and near misses reported to the inspectors. Those requirements should be the only determining factors for the size of the inspectorate.

The inspectors in the Department of Energy did not show evidence of a strong approach to enforcement—for example, in the issuing of prohibition notices and the institution of legal proceedings. Indeed, we believe that the culture within the Department of Energy did not encourage the use of the full range of legal powers available to inspectors under section 20 of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974, on the powers of the inspectorate. We want a guarantee that the Minister will insist that they use all their powers. Not only should the Minister say so, but the culture within the Department should change. Cullen identified the fact that the culture did not exist in the Department.

Inspectors may require further legal training to enable them to make full use of those powers. The use of legal powers has significant resource implications. The change in the approach to enforcement of health and safety requirements offshore must be recognised by increased resources for the new division. We want to hear whether the Government have taken that into account when they have been discussing resources with the Treasury.

With regard to the role of the certifying authority, Cullen did not make a specific recommendation. The current system needs reform. The new offshore division of the Health and Safety Executive should have a specific role in licensing the certifying authorities. The present relationship between the offshore operator and the

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

certifying authorities is too close. Such an additional role for the HSE would also have resource implications which the Minister may deal with later. The Norwegian system, where certification is carried out by the regulatory body, is very resource-intensive.

With regard to consultation with employees' representatives and the disclosure of information, we will expect the new offshore division to carry out full consultation at national, regional and installation level. Extensive and valuable consultation takes place at present with the Health and Safety Executive. That should be extended to the new division.

At installation level, we will expect inspectors to carry out their duty to disclose information to employees in accordance with section 28(8) of the 1974 Act, whether or not there are trade union representatives on the installation. We also expect employees or their representatives to receive, as a matter of course, copies of any enforcement notices issued and written details as set out in section 28(8) of the Act.

We are concerned at the lack of adequate disclosure of information to employees and their representatives offshore. In view of the remote location of offshore installations, we believe that contact with workers is extremely important. Consultation and disclosure have resource implications, but their inclusion in the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act shows the importance that Lord Robens believed that they should be given.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend and close colleague the Member for Aberdeen, North is not present at this moment; however, I see that my hon. Friend and close colleague the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) is here. I do not subscribe to the belief that the health and safety offshore division should be transferred to Aberdeen. I do not deny that I speak as the chair of the MSF parliamentary group, whose membership extends throughout industry.

We are concerned about the Health and Safety Executive and the Health and Safety Commission. They have their own culture within that organisation. I have served my time in a shipyard and part of the culture of becoming a tradesman was working with other tradesmen. We do not believe that it is in the best interests of the new division to be simply moved to Aberdeen. We have identified London and Bootle as places where it might work best. That is where the majority of the Health and Safety Executive is. Clearly, the division needs a big expansion on the ground in Aberdeen to show the Government's determination, but we do not believe that it is not in the division's best interests for it to be moved to Aberdeen. If that were to happen, there would be the possibility—I put it no higher than that—that we might make the mistake that we made with the Burgoyne report. It might be too much like an extension of the Department of Energy. The new division is most likely to find its roots if it is clearly within the HSE, within that culture, in the same offices, with inspectors who deal with other hazardous areas. However, we do accept that there needs to be an increased presence in Aberdeen. I hope that I have not lost two friends.

I come now to the response of management in the oil companies to Cullen's recommendations on the management of oil safety. Cullen's recommendations affecting offshore operators can be divided into three broad categories. First, there are the recommendations upon which immediate action can be taken without waiting for regulations or interim guidelines from the enforcing authority. Secondly, there are recommendations for regulations to be made, but which operators can act upon when provided with interim guidelines by the enforcement authority. Thirdly, there are recommendations which require regulations to be made but to which operators should be considering and planning their responses.

The Secretary of State has said that he is not willing at this point to tell us how everything will work. We want to spell out some of the areas to which we want the Minister to respond today or to which we want responses when the Secretary of States gives us his considered opinion. I therefore come to some of the key recommendations of the Cullen report and the action that we believe operators and the Department of Energy should have taken.

We believe that the Department of Energy should, immediately after the publication of the Cullen report, have made clear in writing to all operators the recommendations upon which it expected immediate action to be taken. Most of those recommendations require action to be taken, in the words of the Cullen report, forthwith—without the need for regulation or interim guidelines from the Department. The Department of Energy should have drawn up interim guidelines on some recommendations and required operators to take action to implement the advice. Has that occurred, and if not, why not?

The Department of Energy should have given operators a clear timetable for the above steps to be taken and, in the event of such steps not being taken, enforcement notices and, in particular, improvement notices should have been issued under sections 2 and 3 of the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974. To date, we have not heard of any such notices being issued and we are concerned that the timetable for Cullen's recommendations to be complied with may be lax.

We are also anxious that inspectors should use their full powers under section 20 of the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act to ensure that the immediate improvements recommended by Cullen are implemented. A clear programme and timetable for the legislation recommended by Cullen could and should have been drawn up and published so that the consultative process could be put fully into action. I hope that when the Minister replies he will tell us his views on that.

Recommendation 54 concerns the fire risk analysis. Companies should have been instructed by the Department of Energy to undertake fire risk analysis and given a date by which that should have been completed. Companies not complying with the date should have been issued with an improvement or prohibition notice. Has that happened, and if not, why not?

Recommendation 76 concerns the evacuation, escape and rescue analysis. Companies should have been instructed to complete the analysis forthwith. The Department of Energy should have agreed the timetable for completion, taking into account Cullen's recommendation that it should be completed quickly, and at least by November 1991. Are they on schedule, and if not, why not? The Minister will understand that that applies to operators with a large number of installations. We need to know just how far that timetable has got and how effective the Minister and the Department of Energy have been.

Enforcement notices should have been issued where companies have not responded positively and with sufficient urgency.

Recommendation 60 concerns smoke and gas ingress assessment. Companies should have carried out forthwith an assessment of the risk of ingress of smoke or gas into accommodation and fitted smoke and gas detectors and implemented ventilation shut-down procedures as in recommendation 57. Has that happened?

Recommendation 69 concerns an emergency systems review. Companies should have carried out a review forthwith of the ability of emergency systems to withstand severe accident conditions. Has that happened, how often and where? If not, why not, and what has happened since then?

Recommendation 44 concerns sub-sea isolation valves. Although Cullen allows a safety case to demonstrate whether sub-sea isolation valves are required to be fitted, there are some cases where the need for them to be fitted is in no doubt. Those include the main export lines from distant installations which will hold large inventories of gas or oil and where a large proportion would be liberated if there were a rupture. Examples include Forties Charlie to Cruden Bay, Claymore to Flotta, Cleeton to Dimlington, and the Brent export gas pipeline to St. Fergus. Others can readily be identified. Have all those sub-sea isolation valves now been fitted? If not, has the Department of Energy issued enforcement notices? We need to know.

Recommendation 85 concerns personal survival and escape equipment. Has everyone on board an installation now been issued with the equipment detailed in the recommendation—in particular, a personal survival suit, a smoke hood, a torch, a life-jacket, and fireproof gloves? Does the Minister know? We need to know today whether the recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 34 concerns permit to work systems. Has the industry drawn up harmonised systems as recommended by Cullen? Is the Department of Energy satisfied with the revised system? We need to know today.

On recommendation 27—safety committees and safety representatives—what steps have companies taken to support and encourage the involvement of offshore work forces in safety, as laid down in recommendation 27? I see the Minister relaxing, but there is plenty more to come. What evidence can companies provide to demonstrate their efforts? What are companies' objectives? Does the Minister know? I look forward to hearing exactly what they are in some detail, and to what extent they have been achieved.

Those are some of the comments which it is important to put on record and which, I hope, will prompt some answers from the Minister during the debate.

Industrial relations, health and safety and the offshore environment clearly affect all hon. Members and the people they represent. They affect people's working lives and, in the case of Piper Alpha, they cost people their lives. We therefore need to know what the Government have to say about those issues. The state of industrial relations has a proven impact on health and safety onshore and its impact can be crucial offshore, as Piper Alpha demonstrated. Pursuit of high levels of health and safety offshore is in part due to the appalling experiences of recent years, but more so than onshore the isolation of platforms and their residential status frequently reminds workers of the potential hazards.

Can the Minister give answers to the following questions? Health and safety committee representatives onshore operate under regulations promulgated under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974. While the Act applies offshore, regulations under the Act apply only if they say so—there is no such provision under onshore regulations. Until 1989, there were no statutory provisions for health and safety representatives or committees. A number of operators instituted committees on which their own employees were represented, whom they nominated. There was no training for representatives and they had no rights.

There were two exceptions. First, in relation to Phillips Petroleum, my union—the MSF—won bargaining rights for the Hewett field off the Norfolk coast in 1978. The company agreed to set up a safety committee with union-nominated representatives as though it were onshore. Representatives all received time off with pay to attend union-organised safety courses. The system worked well, although contractors were not represented.

Secondly, MSF won representational rights with Occidental Petroleum for the Piper Alpha installation. As a result, a consultative committee was established to deal with all matters, including health and safety. The committee broke up when the company failed to provide representatives with a copy of the report on the 1984 explosion. That may well be one of the reasons why we are having this debate today.

As regards safety committees, where do the difficulties lie at the moment? The problem has largely been the relationship between contractor and operator, usually represented on the installation by the offshore installation manager, whose word—as everyone knows—is law. In a few cases, the employee may have had a right established by agreement to raise safety issues, but only with his employer and not with the operator. The contractor-employer then had to raise the issue remotely with the operator and put relationships at risk, which could threaten future contracts and commercial relationships. As a result, onshore arrangements have never been successfully carried offshore. One cannot wonder at that —if there is a possibility of the contractors losing future contracts, there is no way they will push too hard against the wishes of the company concerned.

We need to know what the Government are doing to change that. We need to know how that pressure can be taken off. Clearly, one way is for companies to accept that they are the employer, or to insist that the contractors employ best practices while they are on the platform. If that were part of the contract, we might find that a different relationship existed offshore.

The priority when dealing with health and safety problems has to be the health and safety representative. While committees have a role, they cannot deal with issues which require immediate action. Therefore, representatives must be provided with facilities to do the job. First and foremost is the freedom to perform their role without hindrance or fear. Any representative has to guard against such pressures, but one who works for a contractor has two potential problems. The first is the ending of a contract. The client—the operator—will usually veto all those contractors putting up for any new job and can, without the employee knowing, veto anyone of whom the operator disapproves. Clearly, if the operators have that power there will be pressure upon any individual representative. Those of us who have been trade union

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

representatives before coming here and have spent our lives representing others know that if one puts oneself forward to represent a group of workers one always has that fear—wondering what the management's reaction will be. In an industry where bad practice exists or which is badly regulated—an industry with old-fashioned equipment where change has to take place—pressure on individuals might take the form of a fear that their careers in the company might quickly end when they stop being representatives. They might think that their careers would end if they took on such responsibilities.

As my hon. Friends demonstrated earlier, we know that an unknown number of persons—there is no record—are now permanently unemployable offshore because they were prepared to take up responsibilities, whether as health and safety representatives or simply trying to represent workers at a trade union level.

Black lists need to be abolished, for the benefit of the industry. If they do not go, the industry cannot function properly. The climate on installations will never improve while the company, through the contractor, can take action against a person rightly raising concerns on behalf of other workers. The Government need to play their part in that.

As we move to the next stage of operations in the North sea, and to the end of those operations, whenever that will be—no one wants it to reach that stage quickly—there will be more and more pressure on companies to ensure that there is little or no opposition to what they want to do. We have to ensure that those problems are tackled.

The second area of concern for a safety representative is the power of the offshore installation manager. I did not meet such a creature on the one visit that I made to an offshore facility. No one seemed to have horns or a tail, or walk about with a big stick, so I am not sure what oil installation managers actually look like. Nevertheless, the stories that I have heard suggest that they can be quite alarming, and their powers are certainly alarming if not exercised properly.

One of the benefits of a debate of this kind is the opportunity that it gives us to cite our wider experience and knowledge. The Select Committee on Employment, for instance, has been considering recruitment practices in industry generally. All the evidence suggests that the way in which an organisation operates depends entirely on the extent to which its chief executive is involved. There can be no improvement unless oil installation managers—who are bound to have responsibilities of one kind or another, and who are directly responsible for recruitment in some instances—are shown that the way in which they operated before the Piper Alpha disaster is no longer acceptable. Their performance must be monitored, and the Government have a role to play in that regard.

Training is essential for health and safety representatives. Even when they are elected, the facilities for their training are largely controlled by their employers. Training is predominantly technical, and involves little instruction in presentational skills. The TUC and individual unions organise onshore courses, and have successfully trained many thousands of representatives over the past 15 years, but offshore representatives are denied such courses. All courses must be approved not by the employer but by the operator, and attendance on an unapproved course could result in the representative's not being paid. If the Minister doubts that, he should note that Shell issued a directive to that effect to its contractors in 1990. In many cases, not only will representatives be unpaid, but they will not be required to return when their contracts have expired.

Whether Conservative Members like it or not, no offshore environment will change without proper union recognition. The companies and operators concerned must accept that. I remember making many representations to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield about offshore union representation when he was at the Department of Energy; it is a shame that we were not able to achieve our aims before he left the Department.

We are very unhappy about the Government's failure to involve themselves in the issue. The operators have argued that they cannot implement the onshore regulations because there is so little union recognition offshore, implying that that is due to the low level of union membership. However, when it has been possible to test the level of membership by means of checks or ballots, widespread support has been shown to exist. On seven Shell installations, ballots of the work force demonstrated levels of support as high as 85 per cent. As a result of those ballots, Shell agreed to representational rights on conditions and pay, but not on health and safety.

MSF has a long-standing agreement with Phillips Petroleum for the Hewett field, which has almost 100 per cent. union membership—that includes the oil installation managers. Phillips recently agreed to union recognition, in response to the demand of 83 per cent. of its employees on the Maureen platform. According to the management, Occidental's recognition agreement expired when the platform was destroyed, which seems rather tragic.

Conservative Members may feel some concern about our demands for trade union recognition. We have made it clear that we will allow ACAS to ensure that ballots are run properly, and that the questions on the ballot paper are acceptable to everyone. We may even allow ACAS to determine what constitutes significant union membership. I believe that 40 per cent. membership would allow us to claim that a ballot should take place. What is the Minister's view?

We have held seven ballots and won them all, with majorities as high as 80 per cent., but other companies are not prepared even to discuss the holding of such ballots. Following recognition claims made more than four years ago on the Viking Loggs and Hutton TLP fields, Conoco has made it clear that it does not want any third party intervening. We asked the Minister's predecessor—the right hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Morrison)—many times to intervene on our behalf, but the Government—who are supposedly so keen to ensure that ballots are held, and that people are allowed to exercise their individual rights—have done nothing to help. At one stage a clear majority of Mobil workers on the Beryl field wanted trade union membership, but the company refused. We asked the Government to help us, but met with no success.

We are also concerned about contract employees. If they are not given the training and representation that they need, they may suffer. I am glad to see that the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside has returned, as I had intended to make this point during his speech. We want a skilled work force in the North sea, and we believe that that will be possible only if that work force is trained and experienced. Continuity of employment is the best way to

achieve that. At present, more and more companies are trying to move towards a single contractor, without considering the implications of the change that that involves.

When employees are employed by a new contractor, they lose their right to redundancy pay and representation regarding pay and conditions. That does not lead to improved skills and the continuity of employment on North sea installations that is required. For example, Shell told Press that it would like it to become the main contractor in the Lemen and Indefatigable fields. One of the contractors at present is McAlpine, which provides good training for its crane drivers and mechanics. Shell has suggested to Press that if it gets the contract it might subcontract some of the work to McAlpine and keep the work force on the platform. If the negotiations do not go well, however, and Press becomes the sole contractor, all the skill and expertise of the work force will be lost—as well as their trade union rights and their right to redundancy pay. Some of these people have served McAlpine for eight years.

Does the Minister believe, as we do, that companies such as Shell should employ their work force directly and ensure that they are given training? They ought, at least, to be made responsible for ensuring that the contractors provide training.

We are happy for the services of ACAS to be used to determine whether there should be trade union recognition on any particular platform. We have never been afraid to use the ballot box so that offshore workers can demonstrate that they want trade union recognition. Furthermore, we have never been afraid to argue that industrial relations are good on platforms where there is trade union recognition. We do not want a repetition of what happened last summer. I met the Minister's predecessor, together with some of my trade union colleagues, and warned him that he faced a summer of problems if he did not do something about trade union recognition. As he was about to visit various offshore platforms, he agreed to look into whether there was any aggro or dissatisfaction. After he had visited those platforms he said that nobody had asked him about trade union recognition. There was an immediate denial of his statement by individuals who, despite the fact that action could have been taken against them, were prepared to identify themselves and say that they had asked the Minister for trade union recognition. The Minister seemed to want to act like the three wise monkeys—to hear nothing, to see nothing and to say nothing—but the issue will not go away and we shall continue to raise it. Moreover, trade union recognition is in the Government's interests as well as in the interests of the economy and industry.

The operators have arranged a cartel among themselves. They provide a package of similar terms and conditions for their own employees, but do not allow contractors to enter into single bargaining agreements. There are only two exceptions. The first relates to the offshore construction contractors. For some years there was a trade union agreement covering the hook-up period. It ran from the contract being placed to the start of production. Even though the same workers were employed to do exactly the same work after production started, they would go on to a set of non-negotiated and worse terms.

The hook-up period was crucial to the operators' cash flow. After that, any industrial action was unlikely to affect production. The second concerned caterers. An agreement exists covering catering workers—in the northern sector only and even then not on drilling rigs. A combination of industrial action and high labour turnover produced that agreement. For either agreement to work, the operators must agree to accept bids for work only from conforming contractors.

Early in 1990, the principle of an agreement covering all contract workers on the United Kingdom continental shelf was put to a number of bodies, including the Offshore Construction Contractors. Only half an hour before a joint meeting to discuss the proposition, the OCC was telephoned by a representative of UKOOA and told that UKOOA could not agree to go along with it, thus making any agreement worthless. A summer of industrial action followed, and that will be repeated unless such problems are tackled.

A negotiated agreement would provide a number of measures which would have an immediate impact on health and safety. Among them is reduced labour turnover, which would retain skills and experience in the industry, the absence of which leads directly to an unsafe workplace. Improved morale would increase co-operation and concentration, particularly among contractor staff. It would remove the need for the 1989 regulations and enable the 1977 regulations to be used to provide union safety representatives. Such representatives, rather than the employers, would have the right to choose trainers and would receive the backing of their union, thus reducing victimisation and providing the resources and independent advice needed properly to perform the safety role.

Those are small measures, but we believe that if the Government supported them and argued with us that the companies should accept them, we could improve both the environment and the chances of the returns from the North sea continuing to help the economy.

When the recommendations in the Cullen report are finally implemented, all installations will be required to possess a safety case, provided by the operator and vetted by the Health and Safety Executive. It seems likely that the safety committee will have access to it only after it has been agreed. It looks as though, even for existing installations, the safety committee or individual representatives will have no say. For new installations, there will be no safety committee whose representatives can be consulted. In Norway, safety committees are consulted on such issues. For new platforms, the unions themselves are consulted about the initial design philosophy.

As I have said, MSF held recognition for Occidental employees on Piper Alpha. When the replacement platform was being designed, MSF asked to discuss the design philosophy—in particular, its view concerning a separate accommodation unit, bridge-linked. We were told that it was nothing to do with us. The recognition agreement died with our members on Piper Alpha. That is something with which the company and the Government will have to live. I am not saying that the Government were directly responsible for Piper Alpha, but had it not been for their failure to understand that they needed to play a role in convincing the contractors that they—the contractors—should involve those whom they employed on a facility through their recognised union representatives, the Piper Alpha disaster might just not have occurred. The fact that, in this case, we can show that the

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

accident might not have happened had we been involved is of greater concern and is even more hurtful to the families of the victims, who will read our debate tomorrow.

With such a high proportion of offshore employees being contractors whose employers will not be known until well after the installation is completed, it is vital that union representatives should be involved at the earliest possible stage. The inter-union offshore oil committee represents unions with direct involvement in the oil and gas construction and production industries, and could be a suitable body for involvement in such consultation processes.

The recommendation by Lord Cullen concerning the appointment of offshore safety representatives has been dealt with by my hon. Friends, and I shall not refer to it again.

The haphazard approach to industrial relations led to industrial action being taken during the past few summers. That action did not seek directly to improve safety, but the participants believed that the continental shelf agreement would bring about a safer environment. If we are not to see a repetition of such action, union recognition should be granted where support for it can be demonstrated. We are not asking for something for which we cannot show that there is support, but where such union support can be demonstrated, recognition should be granted. There will then be a willingness and enthusiasm on the part of the work force to be more actively involved in what should be a joint role to improve safety in the workplace. Once recognition is granted, there will be every reason why the 1977 regulations should apply. The safety representatives need the support of those regulations and recognition for the trade unions if they are to perform their vital functions and to assist with the necessary and dramatic improvements in safety.

As I said earlier, I did not intend to be brief because I have been thinking back to my short contribution on 6 November 1980 when we discussed the Burgoyne report. We all stand accused of not working harder and of not pressing the Government harder on that occasion. Those of us who were part of the trade union side which produced the minority report, and the Opposition Members who agreed with that minority report and said that changes should be made, will never know whether we could have achieved what the minority report recommended if we had been able to demonstrate the case and to articulate it more clearly in the Chamber at that time. What we do know, however, is that Piper Alpha occurred.

Although the Government have said that they will accept Lord Cullen's recommendations, we must ensure that they examine them closely. As the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside said, with the support of one of his hon. Friends, although the Government accepted quite a lot of the Burgoyne report, but not the minority aspect, Piper Alpha occurred. There have also been other accidents, but not quite so bad as Piper Alpha, such as helicopters going into the North sea and incidents on other platforms. This time we in this place had better ensure that we do not allow our enthusiasm for Lord Cullen's report and its worthwhile recommendations to blind us to the fact that we need to ensure that those recommendations are sufficient. My hon. Friends and I will continue to make the points that I have made today on behalf of my trade union and those whom we represent. Unless we do so, we believe that, although Lord Cullen's report will always be a good report, the implementation of its recommendations will not really do the job that we are convinced that Lord Cullen intended.

9.12 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): It is to the credit of the House that we are debating this issue almost three years after the Piper Alpha tragedy. That shows the extent to which the House recognises the importance of the issues that it raised and the lessons that we need to learn from what happened on 6 July 1988. I first raised this matter in the House on 19 December in one of the debates on the Consolidated Fund Bill. There has been more interest in this matter tonight than there was then, but I had expected that more hon. Members would wish to participate.

As has been said, all hon. Members have constituents who work in the North sea. They are spread right across the United Kingdom, and travel out to Aberdeen and other parts. As my hon. Friend the Minister is aware, both my father-in-law and my brother-in-law have worked at various times in the North sea. My father-in-law worked for 25 years for the Kuwait oil company. I am sure that he would want me to place on record the fact that he is sickened by the devastation of all the oil wells in Kuwait.

Lessons can be learnt from the Piper Alpha incident, and we must keep certain aspects in perspective when deciding what should happen now. We should recognise that offshore installations present unique safety problems. A production platform is a community. Within a small area of just 100 ft each way there are drilling operations, a refinery and all the facilities of a hotel. On land, those operations would cover tens of acres. Oil platforms are not only compact; they must be self-sufficient in an emergency. There is no question of waiting for the fire brigade or other emergency services to arrive. Means of survival while staying on the platforms are crucial and critical, as are means of escape and evacuation.

The House must recognise that oil and gas platforms are extremely complex pieces of technology, sited in a uniquely hostile environment. When I look out to the North sea from my constituency on the north Yorkshire coast, particularly in some of the grey sombre weather that we have had this winter, I am amazed that oil and gas installations can be maintained at all when one considers the weather with which some of those chaps must contend.

Many tragic incidents involving loss of life have occurred over the years—I dare say too many—of which the Piper Alpha disaster was perhaps the worst. It is important to stress that when the Cullen report was published on 12 November last year, the Government immediately accepted all of its recommendations. As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will no doubt confirm tonight, there is no question of picking and choosing between Lord Cullen's recommendations.

Many of us feel that the Piper Alpha tragedy, in which 167 men lost their lives, was the worst in the history of oil exploration and extraction, not only in the North sea but in the world. As I said in our brief debate in December, such a disaster must never happen again. Too many tragedies have occurred in the North sea. I refer to the incident on the Shell Brent Alpha platform, which was

evacuated after a gas explosion, the serious fire on the Ocean Odyssey, several helicopter crashes and the Safe Gothia incident.

Since oil and gas exploration began in the 1960s, some 500 lives have been lost in the North sea. That is a daunting and tragic total. As I am sure many other hon. Members have said, the whole House pays tribute to the bravery of the men who help our economy and put up with such dreadful conditions. Moreover, we again extend our sympathy to the families and loved ones of all who have died in the North sea over the years.

I have always felt that the tragedy of the Piper Alpha disaster, like so many disasters, is that if more had been done beforehand, the accident might have been avoided. That is part of the benefit of hindsight. However, if Lord Cullen's recommendations had been in place beforehand, the disaster might have been avoided. That is true of so many other disasters—one thinks of the two dreadful accidents that occurred in football grounds at Bradford and Sheffield, of the Clapham train crash, the King's Cross fire and of the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster. Had greater attention been given to safety details, loss of life could have been prevented. Conservative Members part company with one or two Opposition Members about what conclusion should be drawn from that. I do not believe that one should simply blame the Government. As I said, we have the benefit of hindsight.

Today we heard an extraordinary explosion from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), who seemed to say that, because the Government did not implement the minority Burgoyne recommendations, the Ministers in office in 1980 were responsible for the disaster. I hope that when I reread the *Hansard* report I will find that I have got that wrong, but I listened to the hon. Gentleman and that is my impression of what he said.

When I intervened during the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) I said that, on balance, the Government accepted the majority recommendation of the Burgoyne report. I do not see how the Government could be expected to accept both the major recommendation and the minority recommendation. There seems to be a contradiction.

I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), who clearly studies these matters in considerable detail. In 1980, the Government did what they could and accepted the majority recommendation. I do not see how they could have been expected to do more. As the hon. Gentleman said, the minority recommendation clearly contained a valid argument. The hon. Member made that point forcefully in his speech, and hon. Members who took part in the debate 10 or 11 years ago were right to make that argument. We warned that there was a problem, but we differ from them over whether the Government should be blamed for accepting the majority, rather than the minority, view.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Having spoken for so long earlier, I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I ask him to reflect on this point. We thought that it was wrong that the Government should ask the same Department that had responsibility to maximise the financial potential of the North sea to regulate and inspect itself. There was clearly a possible conflict, and we argued then that it existed. We accept that our view could have been right or wrong, but in the light of that experience we do not want the Government to make the same mistake again.

Mr. Greenway: I said that the hon. Gentleman had made his point well, and now he has made it twice. The majority Burgoyne recommendation was that, on balance, it was better to leave safety in the North sea to the Department of Energy, which is what the Government did. We cannot blame the Government for accepting that majority recommendation. The view of the hon. Member for Dundee, West is that, with hindsight, that was perhaps the wrong recommendation and the minority one was correct. That is something on which the House, people in Scotland and those whose loved ones were killed on Piper Alpha will want to reflect. No blame attaches to the Government for accepting the majority Burgoyne recommendation to leave safety as a matter for the Department of Energy.

Now, 10 years later, Lord Cullen has recommended that there is a case for transferring responsibility to the Health and Safety Executive.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Colin Moynihan): On balance.

Mr. Greenway: Yes, on balance, but there have been changes in the past 10 years. The Health and Safety Executive has developed its expertise beyond that which it had 10 years ago. In addition, in his report, Lord Cullen found no evidence that the Department of Energy put production matters before safety matters. That seems to be the burden of the argument of the hon. Member for Dundee, West.

I hope that the House will agree that the Government were right to send the report about whether Occidental should be prosecuted to the Lord Advocate. Lord Cullen has concluded that there were significant flaws in the way safety was managed by Occidental. I know that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State today to comment further on whether Occidental would be prosecuted. I do not believe that we can press the matter. We must leave it with the Lord Advocate, although many of us believe privately that perhaps there is a case for prosecution.

We have looked back—what must be done in the future? The House will want assurances that North sea operations will be safer than they have been and that safety will be paramount. We all recognise the inherent dangers of working in the North sea, but we must not take unnecessary risks with other men's lives. If the Piper Alpha disaster suggests that we may have done so in the past, we certainly must not ever do so again.

The House has rightly given a warm welcome to Lord Cullen's most impressive and penetrating report. He has provided the most comprehensive analysis possible of conditions necessary for the safe management of offshore installations. I am sure that the report also contains lessons for the safe management of other industrial activities. It rightly concludes that safety in such a demanding environment as the North sea cannot be secured by fixed rules or off-the-peg solutions, but that it needs a flexible approach and the ability to evaluate what is the best compromise between often conflicting safety objectives.

The solutions that are implemented must take account of the varying circumstances of individual installations.

[Mr. Greenway]

That is why Lord Cullen was right to say that every installation must be assessed. He outlined some of the ingredients that would help to ensure that a safety management programme was as comprehensive as it should be—the organisational structure, management, personnel standards, training for operations and emergencies, safety assessment, design procedures, procedures for operations and maintenance modifications.

The involvement of the entire work force is especially important and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made that point strongly. The entire work force—operators and contractors—must be involved in accident and incident reporting, investigation and follow-up, the monitoring and auditing of the operation of the system and in the systematic reappraisal of the system in the light of the experience of the operator and of the industry. The important objectives, which Lord Cullen rightly identified, place the responsibility where it belongs—with the owners and the operators of the installations.

The oil industry is one of our most dynamic industries and has shown great inventiveness and resourcefulness, not least in maintaining the economic viability of North sea production when world prices fell sharply in the mid-1980s. The Government also deserve credit for keeping an open mind on taxation and for making adjustments when necessary. Genuine adaptability and ingenuity have been shown by the Government and by the oil industry as a whole.

It is tempting to say that there should be definite rules and a clearly prescribed approach to safety in the future, but such an assertion would be unwise. In real life—in the practical world—reasonable safety objectives often conflict with each other and Lord Cullen has recognised that. The better standards that we want depend on our achieving the best trade-off between those conflicts and not having a prescriptive, rule book approach.

There must be proper controls and monitoring of safety standards in the North sea. As I have said, they must be more flexible than they have been in the past. We can still learn a lesson from the findings of the Robens committee, which began its work 20 years ago. It highlighted the disadvantages of over-detailed legislation.

It is accepted by hon. Members of all parties that companies must involve all their workers. The hon. Member for Dundee, West made a strong argument about union recognition on North sea installations. I believe that that is a separate issue from safety. Whether members of staff, employees, production workers or sub-contractors, and whether members of unions or not, all on installations must be properly involved in safety. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will have something to say about the right of representation of every worker on a safety committee. That is the Government's argument about safety and it is somewhat different from saying that people must be members of a trade union to have their safety interests represented.

Every worker must also perceive his own proper contribution to safety, and must have the knowledge and training to play his part. That must mean better communication. When we ask ourselves why the Piper Alpha disaster happened, the one conclusion that we reach is the one that Lord Cullen put his finger on. He said:

"From the evidence I conclude that this"—

the failure of the system—

"was due to a failure in the transmission of information under the permit to work system and at shift handover."

We must learn the lesson from that. Even at the most mundane level of operations, communication between staff, with each member of staff understanding the other's role and the importance of every procedure that other members of staff carry out, cannot be given too high a priority. Safety must not be sold merely as a philosophy or as some vague concept by exhortation to the worker. Dialogue with the worker and involvement in everything that he does is essential to a safe working environment.

The Cullen report is especially to be welcomed because if faces up to those difficulties and tackles them squarely. It proposes a framework that is flexible and avoids detailed prescriptions. There must be real dialogue and not a rigid imposition of predetermined rules. It is no good having a manual of principles, endorsed by management, standing on the shelves or in the workplace gathering dust. The principles must be put into, and kept in, effect.

The Piper Alpha disaster was an offshore incident. I recognise that part of the difficulty has been whether offshore installations are as safe as those onshore. Right now in my constituency, the reverse question is being asked. People ask, "Are onshore operations as safe as they should be?" As the Minister knows, a consortium headed by Kelt UK Ltd has sought planning consent to build a gas-fired electricity generating station on the road between Malton and Scarborough, which would harness various pockets of gas, mostly sour gas, which are to be found throughout the Vale of Pickering. The sour gas, which is the majority of the resource, has 1,250 parts per million hydrogen sulphide which, as my hon. Friend knows, is an extremely dangerous substance. The proposal is that the gas would be piped over several miles and that it would be used to fire two gas turbines to generate electricity for the national grid.

I am not exaggerating when I say that, because of what happened on Piper Alpha as much as because of anything else, local people are petrified by the risks that may be associated with the process. Time and time again, one hears a question consisting of three short words—"Is it safe?" My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and his colleagues say that, according to the Health and Safety Executive, it is safe. My constituents are demanding much more definite assurances.

My hon. Friend was closely involved in the passage of the Electricity Act 1989. That Act provides for these matters to be considered at a public inquiry before a decision is taken. Having considered all these issues over a period of several months, I believe that a public inquiry is essential before any planning permission is granted in respect of the West Knapton site. Ministers in the Department of Energy deserve some credit for the introduction of this new procedure, but it is there to be used, and it would be in the public interest for all the issues relating to this application to be fully considered and fully challenged at a public inquiry.

The delay that such an inquiry would involve is inconsequential when set against the risks associated with such an operation, including the risks to the economic interests of the area. Agriculture and tourism are dependent on a pollution-free environment. It has been suggested by some critics of the proposal that the technology that would be used is relatively untried, as sour

gas contains such high quantities of hydrogen sulphide. The prospect is not one that my constituents view with much relish.

Then opening this debate, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that, for every serious accident, there were many minor accidents from which important lessons could be learnt. On land, there must not be any accidents involving facilities surrounded by farms, homes and villages. I accept that the scale of what is proposed at West Knapton is considerably smaller than platforms in the North sea, but I am sure the Minister agrees that nothing should be left to chance and that any risk is unacceptable. The whole safety issue must be dealt with exhaustively at a public inquiry. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to confirm tonight that, should a public inquiry cast any doubt on the safety of this operation, he will not hesitate to refuse consent.

Many chapters of the Cullen report deal with emergencies and with the action that should be taken when emergencies occur: with this application, one question does not seem to have been properly tackled; what emergency arrangements do we need to have in place in north Yorkshire to deal with a potential disaster involving gas pipelines? Moreover, how much will it cost and who will pay?

In reply to the debate that I initiated on 19 December 1990, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State outlined a number of crucial matters relating to pipeline safety. He said that

"apparatus . . . for the testing, inspecting or maintaining of the pipeline shall not be introduced or recovered from the pipeline, unless such introduction or recovery is essential to maintain the safe operation of the pipeline."—[*Official Report*, 19 December 1990; Vol. 183, c. 395.]

The operation is referred to as pigging, but pigging creates problems. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, there is a potential safety hazard in the opening and closing of pipelines and pressure valves. Pigging is a cause of great concern among my constituents in the Vale of Pickering, not least because of the hydrogen sulphide content of the gas. I do not think that any of my constituents are satisfied that the problem of pigging has been considered properly. I think that my hon. Friend agrees that a public inquiry would be a good means of dealing with the problem. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister for being so robust and forceful about the Vale of Pickering project, but he will understand that safety is paramount. My constituents expect nothing to be left to chance.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) made a telling point in his interesting speech when he said, about Piper Alpha, that we thought that we had done everything that we should. That is what worries my constituents about the West Knapton project.

The oil and gas industry is important to our economy. It has made a major contribution in the past decade and I am sure that it will continue to do so in the next decade and into the next century, but it is a dangerous industry. We must maintain proper standards in a dynamic system capable of growing and being flexible. The Cullen report provides the basis for ensuring safety. We must be under no illusions about what it will cost. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has painstakingly said at every opportunity that cost will not be a problem.

The House has had an opportunity tonight to consider matters which are crucial to the people who work out in the North sea. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister recognises that the work that they do demands that safety is not left to chance and that we must never again have a repeat of the Piper Alpha disaster.

9.41 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I join in the general praise for Lord Cullen's report. The document becomes all the more impressive each and every time that it is read. I also join the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) in saying how disappointing it is to see such a low attendance for tonight's debate. It should be put on the record that the hon. Members for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) and for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) were anxious to contribute to the debate; perhaps if slightly more consideration had been shown by one hon. Member in particular earlier in the debate, they would have had that opportunity.

I intend to make a brief speech, because, along with other members of the Energy Select Committee, I shall have the opportunity to pursue these matters in the inquiry into offshore safety management which we shall begin a week on Wednesday. I look forward to closely questioning Ministers, the Health and Safety Executive, the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee, the trade unions and other interested bodies about progress or otherwise in implementing the Cullen recommendations, and some important issues which go beyond the Cullen inquiry.

Like many hon. Members who have spoken tonight, I have constituents who died in the Piper Alpha disaster. Also like other hon. Members, I decided that the best, indeed the only, thing that I could do in memory of those constituents was to seek to ensure that such a disaster would never happen again, that the Piper Alpha inquiry would be used as a springboard to take matters forward and make the environment in the North sea safer. I decided that the fact of the disaster should indeed make a difference, which is the only proper and fitting memorial to those who died.

I wish to raise three matters which must be taken forward. First, there is a general and unanimous welcome for the Cullen recommendation, which will be implemented, that the safety inspectorate should be independent of the Department of Energy. I agree that the perception of independence is as important as the reality. It is important that oil workers have confidence in the inspectorate. We should not blind ourselves to the fact that the previous arrangements came in for trenchant criticism in the Cullen report.

I intend to argue along with other Members from the north-east of Scotland that the geography and location of the nerve centre and headquarters of the safety inspectorate are important. However, I want Ministers to understand that it is not just an argument about geography. It is also an argument about the psychology of the industry and the degree of commitment that the safety inspectorate has to being part and parcel of the sharp end of the oil industry in Aberdeen and the north-east of Scotland, as opposed to being headquartered where the oil companies' headquarters and executives are, by and large —in London.

I hope that the Government paid attention to the remarks of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) about a survey conducted by the Aberdeen centre for offshore safety which showed that 70 per cent. of the

[Mr. Alex Salmond]

companies operating in the North sea believed that their personnel primarily concerned with safety matters were located in the north-east of Scotland. I see little argument for tolerating a safety inspectorate which continues to be cocooned in London, away from the sharp end of the industry.

Many people in the north-east of Scotland have suspicions about the attitude of the Department of Energy to these issues because successively, in discussing the location of the petroleum engineering division or the offshore licensing division, good arguments about locating them in the north-east of Scotland and Aberdeen have been turned aside for what seems no more than civil service prejudice to be close to the political decision-makers in London.

It would be a lost opportunity if such prejudice were to affect the decision on the location of the headquarters of the safety inspectorate and if solid arguments for putting that inspectorate where it belongs—in the north-east of Scotland, along with the front end of the industry and the oil workers—were overruled because people wanted to hang on to their London base.

Of vital importance is the question of human relationships in the North sea. There is a general admission that, regardless of the safety regime and the recommendations, in terms of the safety equipment in the North sea, unless there are satisfactory human and industrial relations in the area, we shall never have an environment as safe as it could be.

Many people had hoped that the Cullen report would herald a new era, a fresh initiative and a new dawn for industrial relations in the North sea. Indeed, when Shell in December agreed to relinquish the formal blacklisting of trade unionists involved in the industrial action of last year, we hoped that the companies had realised that this was a time to start to create that new atmosphere in the North sea.

It is with sadness, and some anger, that I report, from the offshore information centre, the belief that, while the formal blacklisting has ended, it continues informally through contractors in the North sea. The centre is documenting 73 cases which it believes show that there is a continuing blacklist, with continuing discrimination and victimisation of oil workers who took part in the industrial action of last year.

The Secretary of State said that the Government took a grim view of victimisation in the North sea. Will the Government promise that, when those 73 cases have been documented by the information centre, each case will be investigated to see if victimisation can be substantiated and that, if it is, the Government will back up their fine words with action to ensure that the practice is rooted out? There can never be a satisfactory safety environment in the North sea until human relationships between workers and companies are improved to a position of greater trust than exists now.

The question of trade union recognition has been raised by several hon. Members. I was surprised to hear the Secretary of State argue that somehow the Cullen report had been a setback for the cause of trade union recognition. On the contrary, I should have thought that, given the strictures and limitations on the remit of the report, what Lord Cullen said, particularly about trade union representation on safety committees, went a long way to show that he believed that the most satisfactory thing would be for trade unions to have representatives on safety committees. Paragraph 21.84 states:

"I am prepared to accept that the appointment of offshore safety representatives by trade unions could be of some benefit in making the work of safety representatives and safety committees effective, mainly through the credibility and resistance to pressures which trade union backing would provide."

In that statement, Lord Cullen showed a keen appreciation of the central difficulty in terms of safety reporting in the North sea. Many offshore workers believe that to be concerned with safety is a blight on one's career and job prospects.

I want to refer to correspondence that I received this afternoon. By way of caution, I must state that I have not had an opportunity to investigate the case fully. However, it is worth referring to as an example of the fears expressed by offshore workers at the moment.

I have received a copy of a certificate of election in the name of Mr. G. Moore of Moodiesburn in Glasgow. On 17 February, Mr. Moore was elected as a safety representative on one of Aker Lasalle's platforms in Morecambe bay. I also have a copy of a document dated 21 February which notifies Mr. Moore of the termination of his contract of employment. I do not know whether those two events are totally connected. There may be other reasons for that sequence of events. However, I am absolutely sure that Mr. Moore and many other offshore workers believe that to be active in safety matters in the North sea when employed by some companies—and I stress "some companies"—is a passport to being left ashore when the present trip ends.

Until that atmosphere of fear and trepidation in the North sea is properly overcome, we will not have the safety environment for which hon. Members on both sides of the House have called this evening.

It is very easy for hon. Members to use fine words and say that we must make safety a priority in the North sea. This is a very comfortable and secure environment in which to say that. I suspect that the perception is completely different for someone working offshore on a platform. Those workers still believe that being involved with safety matters is not conducive to keeping one's job or securing career prospects. I suspect that we are talking about only a few companies, but until that atmosphere is confronted and overcome, there will not be a genuinely safe environment.

I accept that there is a multitude of contractors and indeed unions operating in the North sea. It is not easy to find a quick way forward in terms of trade union recognition. However, I am convinced that, if the Government could guarantee a secret ballot of offshore workers now, the overwhelming majority of them would want to be represented collectively rather than individually before their employers.

How do we secure that collective representation? It is not good enough for the oil operators to say that that is not their concern but that of the oil contractors, and then for the oil contractors to say that they would have conceded trade union recognition, but they believed that that would penalise them with regard to the oil operators. It is then not good enough for the Government to say that it is a matter for the companies involved and not for Government policy. There should be a genuine attempt to secure for offshore workers the same rights that are

expected and demanded by onshore workers. Why should offshore workers, who work in an insecure and unsafe environment, be denied the rights that we would guarantee onshore workers, who work in most cases in a safer environment?

There have been 25 years of continuous oil development in the North sea. We have taken a long time to learn some of the lessons that are so clearly spelled out in the Cullen report. The self-congratulatory nature of the Government's comments since Cullen reported shows that there is every danger that once again complacency is setting in. The empty Benches tonight show that that is true; hon. Members should know better. It would be a betrayal of those who died on Piper Alpha and of those who still work in the dangerous environment offshore if tonight's low attendance were to show a lack of concern among hon. Members about the safety of offshore installations.

9.55 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): In my brief speech, I shall not rehearse the technical arguments that have been advanced so eloquently by hon. Members but will remind the House of exactly what happened on the night of 6 July 1988 and why we as elected representatives must quickly take firm action.

The television pictures of what was Piper Alpha are indelibly imprinted on our minds. We remember the deaths that occurred and the harrowing faces of the relatives of those who died and of those whose bodies have never been recovered. Hon. Members who attended the memorial service in Aberdeen had the harrowing experience of meeting mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, wives, grandchildren, nieces and nephews who could not comprehend what had happened.

Hon. Members who lost constituents in the Piper Alpha disaster are aware of the survivors—young men who bear the physical and psychological scars and who wonder why they escaped while their friends died in tragic circumstances. I pay tribute to the social work of the voluntary and statutory organisations in the north-east of Scotland and elsewhere in the United Kingdom, who have done so much to help those people, and to the nursing and medical staff who attended the victims as they were brought to the shore. Those memories should never be forgotten.

Hon. Members must act to ensure that such a disaster never happens again. It is often said, "We hope that it will never happen again", but I hope that there will be genuine commitment to implement all the Cullen recommendations speedily and effectively.

Offshore workers in the oil and gas industry are angry because the industry generates millions of pounds for the Exchequer, yet they are asked to work in the most difficult circumstances without guarantees of health and safety. One need not be a first class honours economics graduate from the university of Harvard to understand that oil and gas mean a great deal of money, yet those workers are being asked to work in difficult circumstances.

Mothers and wives have asked me, "Is it safe for my husband or son to work offshore?" Piper Alpha has destroyed the confidence of many families in the industry. Therefore, I ask the Minister to emphasise to those people that the safety aspects will be given priority. When the oil industry started in the North sea there was a desperate rush to have access to the wealth of the industry. The speed with which we went ahead to extract the oil was measured against the prospect of ensuring a pace of development which would allow safety as well as environmental aspects to be taken into account. Surely it is not contradictory to balance the wealth of the industry against the safety of the workers and the future of the environment.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the motion in the name of the Prime Minister for the Adjournment of the House may be proceeded with, though opposed, until Twelve o'clock.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Mrs. Ewing: The issue of union recognition on rigs and platforms has also been raised. Those who have fought hard and long for union recognition have not done so because of a selfish attitude but because they genuinely want to enter into a dialogue with the oil companies about how the best working conditions can be achieved, as well as considering other aspects such as wage levels, hours and so on.

Many workers in my constituency believe that since they took industrial action they have been blacklisted. That is difficult to prove. When one writes to a company about an individual case, the company claims that it is not blacklisting the individual, because he has been subcontracted through another organisation. Trying to establish what has happened is like punching at cotton wool.

Union recognition on rigs and platforms would go much of the way towards resolving the problem. So long as there is a feeling that blacklisting operates, people will not have confidence in the system. I have written to various companies about constituents; I believe that there is blacklisting, and that many people have been struck off lists, although no one will admit it.

Reference has been made to the establishment of a centre for safety. I cannot agree with the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) that it should not be established in Aberdeen. Aberdeen is the oil capital of Europe. Given that it was the centre from which most of the men who worked on Piper Alpha flew to their fate, one of the most fitting memorials that we could establish to those men and to their families would be to set up in Aberdeen a centre for excellence, which would attract the best people from all over the country to work close to the oil industry. That is an important aspect of the debate. It would do a great deal to restore confidence in the oil and gas industries if the Government were to announce that that centre will be established in the oil capital of Europe.

10.3 pm

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): We have had a useful debate on an extremely important subject. There have been speeches of extreme value from both sides of the House. I do not want to criticise the size of the turnout. The main point is that all hon. Members who have spoken have shown a deep interest in and a deep knowledge of the subject. I prefer quality to quantity. It is important to make that point.

The subject is important because of the huge amount of revenue which the country has earned and is still earning

[Mr. Frank Doran]

from the North sea and because of the dramatic consequences of the events of 7 July 1988 on the lives of many people.

There are more than 35,000 workers in the oil industry in the North sea and they all feel the impact of that disaster. The relatives of the victims will never forget what happened on that night. They will bear the scars of it to the end of their days, as will the survivors, most of whom will never be able to go back to work, certainly offshore. I feel tremendous sympathy and empathy for the relatives and survivors in view of what they have to bear and will continue to have to bear. I have regular contact with many of them.

The issue has dragged on for a long time. I blame no one for that, but since the disaster in 1988 the relatives and survivors have had to cope with the strain of intense publicity of all events offshore. A rash of incidents seemed to follow the Piper Alpha disaster, the most serious of which were the death of Timothy Williams on the Ocean Odyssey and the Brent Spar helicopter disaster. There were a number of other deaths on various platforms offshore. All have meant a constant awareness of the way in which a relative has been lost or the way in which survivors have lost their livelihoods and many of their friends and colleagues. They have also had to cope with the glare of publicity that was focused on Lord Cullen as he went about his work so ably in Aberdeen during his inquiry.

The issue of prosecutions, which was referred to by the Secretary of State in the debate on the report when it was published in November, is still outstanding. The papers were referred to the Lord Advocate at that time and we were informally led to understand that a decision on whether prosecutions would be proceeded with would be made some time in January. The latest date is April. I urge the authorities to speed up and to ensure that there are no delays. It is important that all these public matters are dealt with because of the trauma that they cause relatives and survivors, quite apart from all the other reasons.

Many tributes have been paid to Lord Cullen for his report. I have paid such tributes publicly and they have been echoed today. They are well deserved. However, when we rush to congratulate Lord Cullen and wallow —as one hon. Member suggested—in the new-found attitude to safety in the North sea, we should not lose sight of the real importance of safety. It is easy to become complacent and there is already a sense of that creeping into the industry.

I want to spend most of my time tonight considering some of the things that have happened since the Piper Alpha tragedy and trying to look ahead. It is important to recognise the status of the industry. Opposition Members frequently refer to the amount that the Government have earned in oil revenues from the North sea—more than £80 billion since they took office in 1979. I shall not make the usual comment about where that money has gone, but it is clearly a significant amount. There is a huge amount of employment associated with the oil and gas industry. The most recent survey, referred to earlier by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) and published by Grampian regional council, which suggests itself to be the most thorough recent survey, shows that more than 100,000 people in Scotland are employed in the industry, more than one in 20 jobs in Scotland. That is a significant proportion.

Lord Cullen recognised the importance of the industry. It is important to take such points on board because when we talk about the problems of the industry, we are not talking about an industry which is isolated from the rest of the country, as it effectively has been legally by the way in which the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 has been operated, certainly by this Government. All the oil companies which have operations offshore have operations onshore and they cope with the onshore legislation effectively and adequately. That is a point which I shall emphasise later.

The hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) referred to the Burgoyne report. That is part of the history of the matter and has been mentioned frequently tonight. Certainly it was referred to at length by Lord Cullen. The hon. Member for Ryedale seems to have some difficulty understanding why we criticised the Government. It is correct to say that the Government accepted the recommendations made in the Burgoyne report. I have read statements made in the House by the Minister of the day, now Lord Gray of Conting, when he introduced the report in 1980. It is clear that the Government accepted the report but that they did very little about it.

On the day of the Piper Alpha disaster, numerous agencies were involved in offshore safety. The Department of Energy's petroleum engineering division was responsible for health and safety, the Department of Transport was responsible for fire fighting, safety, standby vessels and deluge equipment on the platforms, the certifying authority was responsible for the integrity of the platform, and the pipelines inspectorate was responsible for the integrity of pipelines.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) referred to paragraph 5.64 of the Burgoyne report —in which Burgoyne drew attention to the grey area at the interface between the pipelines inspectorate and the certifying authorities. He referred to that, because ignoring that advice, and the note from the Burgoyne committee, led to inefficiency, which led directly to the Piper Alpha disaster. The gas risers blew on that platform and that is the reason for the scale of death and destruction.

We are perfectly entitled to point to Government inadequacy. It is fine for the Government to say that they accept this or accept that, but they did not do what they said they would do, and the Burgoyne report was not implemented as fully as it should have been. For those reasons, my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friends the Members for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and for Dundee, West, were perfectly entitled to point to the Government's guilt, and I do not demur from that.

Many serious problems still exist in the North sea. It is important to continue to draw attention to them. We shall do that. Standby vessels were mentioned in an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). I did a survey of standby vessels last year and asked certain questions of the Department of Transport. At that time there were 154 registered standby vessels in the British sector of the North sea, only seven of which were less than five years old. Nearly half of the fleet —54 vessels, or 48 per cent.—were more than 25 years old and 28 vessels were more than 30 years old. The oldest standby vessels which are still in operation, I understand, are the Euan, which was constructed in 1936 and is

operated by Garcia Limited; the Grampian Osprey, which was licensed in 1937 and is operated by George Craig and Son; the Tamito, built in 1945 and operated by Tamis Limited; the Silver Pit, which has now changed name and owner and was referred to at length in Lord Cullen's report, registered in 1947; the River Grampian Rose, built in 1949 and operated by George Craig and Son; the Grampian Hawk, built in 1950 and operated by George Craig and Son; and the Deveritel, which was built in 1953. Those boats still operate in the North sea as standby vessels.

We have heard of efforts by the Department of Transport to review regulations and guidance notes which apply to those boats. It is my understanding that a draft document was published in May 1987. It was revised in March 1988 and, obviously, everything went on ice after the Piper Alpha disaster. In August 1989, a further draft was published and there was yet another in September 1990. When I pressed the Department, asking what had happened about standby vessels, I was told that it was considering the Cullen report. Here we are two years after the Piper Alpha disaster, at least four years since the Department of Transport saw fit to review the regulations, and nothing has been done.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: The hon. Gentleman will recall that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) read out the criteria that Lord Cullen recommended as the basis upon which standby vessels should perform. Will he acknowledge, and will the Minister take this on board when he replies, that it is impossible for the boats that he has described to meet those criteria, and that the Government must say why they continue to operate?

Mr. Doran: Although it is not his direct departmental responsibility, I hope that the Minister will reply to valid questions like that, which are relevant to safety in the North sea. As long as the Government continue to dither —whichever Department is involved—we shall continue to doubt their sincerity.

We have heard a good deal about health and safety representatives. The Opposition have argued for a long time that the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 should be extended, to cover the North sea. The Government, or at least the Minister's predecessor, used to come out with the standard response that the Act had already been extended in 1977. Of course we knew that. What we wanted was the extension of all onshore regulations to those working offshore, and we saw no reason why that should not be possible. Of course special circumstances exist on offshore platforms, just as they exist inside chemical works and refineries, but I for one have never been able to understand why companies such as British Petroleum are able to operate separate regimes onshore and offshore.

Eventually, the Government decided to produce regulations in 1989. We criticised those regulations at the time, and we continue to do so. They are a much watered-down version of the onshore regulations, and they do nothing to deal with offshore problems. Lord Cullen rightly recommended a review of the regulations, and I wish that that could happen sooner—there is another year to go before the review is undertaken.

One of our main objections to the regulations lies in the exclusion of the statutory trade union representative. The Government accuse us of being interested only in jobs for the boys—in protecting our union colleagues. That is very far from the truth. I strongly believe that every individual should be entitled to belong to a trade union, and to be represented by that union. We have the example of the onshore regulations, which allow the union statutory involvement and require the HSE to take a tripartite approach to safety. That has led to a considerable improvement in safety measures.

We have argued that there are two strong reasons for the unions to be involved. First, they are independent of the employers, and have the resources to set up training courses. They also have the technical expertise to advise workers and to provide advice on technical matters. That independence is crucial. The second major benefit is the support and assistance that unions can provide to prevent the intimidation of elected representatives. That operates very effectively onshore, and there is no reason why it should not operate just as effectively offshore.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), who is not in the Chamber now, mentioned a letter that he received from the offshore information centre in Aberdeen. I received a copy of the same letter. It concerned Mr. Gordon Moore, who was employed by Aker Lasalle. On investigation, I managed to find out that Mr. Moore was a time-served tradesman—he considers himself to be a craftsman—with 12 years' offshore employment and a considerable track record. He decided that he wanted to be elected as a health and safety representative for the platform where he worked, in Morecambe bay. Having sought election, he was duly elected and appointed, and the necessary certificate was signed and issued by the installation manager.

On 22 February, Mr. Moore was sent a letter by his employers, which was signed by Mr. A. B. J. Kammer, human resources manager. The letter said:

> "Further to discussions with the writer and our Mr. Allan Cunningham, we regret that we are unable to retain your services on the Morecambe Bay Contract due to unsatisfactory references being obtained from your previous employers."

Mr. Moore has tried to find out what those unsatisfactory references were. His employer refuses to tell Mr. Moore about them. He has therefore come to the inevitable conclusion that he has been victimised because he decided to try to become a safety representative on an offshore platform. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Mr. Moore is justified in feeling that he has been victimised.

Three workers on the Brent Bravo platform decided to stand as safety representatives. Mr. Jake Boyle, Mr. Graham Macdonald and Mr. Dave Glen sought election and were elected. Within 10 days of their election they were made redundant, despite the fact that there were numerous vacancies. Indeed, there was an upmanning on that platform.

In a statement, Mr. Boyle said that he started his employment on Brent Bravo on 3 October 1990, that there were hardly any safety representatives on the platform at that time and that, on his second trip—on 5 November —he took out nomination forms and was duly nominated. He returned for his next trip in December. He noticed that there were still notices for safety representatives, but he had received no intimation of what had happened to his nomination. When he inquired, he was told that his form had been lost. He left the platform after being renominated. When he returned on 27 December there was

[Mr. Doran]

still no nomination on the board, so he approached the installation manager who told him, "I've lost your form." After he complained very strongly about that, the form was mysteriously found and he was told that if there were no other nominations he would become a safety representative on 23 January.

On 19 January he received a letter from his employers, who were contracted to Shell, saying that he had been downmanned, despite the fact that upmanning had occurred on the platform in his trade. There was no particular reason for him to be sacked. Therefore, he has reached the conclusion, as have Mr. Macdonald and Mr. Glen, that they were sacked because they sought to represent the work force.

In recommendation 30, Lord Cullen recommended that protection similar to that contained in the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 against unfair dismissal for membership of a trade union be extended to employee representatives. Both the Secretary of State and the Minister say that they accept in full Lord Cullen's recommendations. I hope that the Minister will say that that recommendation will be enshrined in legislation. I hope that he will also say when it will be enshrined in legislation and what he intends to do about people such as Mr. Boyle, Mr. Macdonald, Mr. Glen and Mr. Moore.

Mr. Boyle took matters into his own hands. He decided to write to the Department of Energy, he was so concerned about the situation in which he found himself. He received a reply to his letter on 5 February 1991 signed by Mr. R. D. Jenkins, who described himself as a senior inspector in the petroleum engineering division. The letter says:

"I have spoken to the management of the Brent Field on this subject, and I am informed that it is considered that you were down-manned for operational reasons—i.e. Vauldale"—

who were the employers—

"had considered that your employment was of a short term nature and you were replaced by someone who had different conditions of contract."

There has been no investigation by the Department of Energy. No protection has been offered to Mr. Boyle. I appreciate that the Department is to give up its responsibility for safety fairly soon, but I assume that Mr. Jenkins, together with the other inspectors, will be transferred to the Health and Safety Executive. Such behaviour should not be tolerated. These cases must be investigated.

The Department of Energy accepted the version of events provided to them by the employers without carrying out any further inquiries or investigations. That is unsatisfactory and is not conducive to safety. If Mr. Boyle's case is as accurate as I think it is after my discussions with him and those who represent him, it is no wonder that Opposition Members and offshore workers have no confidence that their interests will be protected by the Department of Energy. They want major changes to be made when responsibility for safety is transferred to the Health and Safety Executive. We certainly intend to pursue those issues.

I said that I intended to discuss the operation of the Department of Energy. The Minister will be well aware that I have had—and have deliberately sought—a high profile on offshore safety issues. That was a personal decision, consistent with the interests of my constituency, where there are a large number of offshore workers and where many of the major companies are located.

Over the years, as I have presented cases such as those of Mr. Boyle, Mr. Moore and the other gentlemen I mentioned to successive Secretaries of State for Energy, I have had no confidence whatever that they have been properly investigated by the Department. Secrecy has been endemic in the Department's approach to its tasks. It has been impossible to escape the impression that there is connivance—almost collusion—with the oil industry.

I do not make that charge lightly. I know that officials at the Department of Energy are anxious to do their job properly. I know that they find it difficult because they are thoroughly under-resourced and have been for many years and have received no political support. Nevertheless, the responses that I have received from various individuals who have occupied offices in the Department have not filled me with confidence. Their approach has been offhand and they have left me with no confidence that any attempt was being made to take complaints seriously.

With one exception, I have never presented a case to the Department without thoroughly investigating it myself. Every time I have presented a case, I have done so because I have been satisfied that there has been some cause for the complaint. I can recall no case on which I have received a satisfactory response from the Department.

Mr. Vaughan Mitchell, a welder employed offshore, was sacked because he refused to do a job which he strongly believed was likely to lead to serious problems on the platform. We investigated the case thoroughly, took statements and presented all the evidence to the Department. The response, after an "inquiry", was that the Department was satisfied that no injustice had occurred. Mr. Mitchell, through his trade union, is now pursuing the matter legally. He attempted to get support from the Department—to find out the results of its investigation at least—but the Department has consistently refused to release the papers.

There is also the recent case of the Ocean Alliance. Just over a year ago, I wrote to the then Minister, drawing to his attention a catalogue of problems associated with the conversion of the Ocean Alliance drilling rig, which had been secured on contract by BP and which was lying at Invergordon undergoing a major refit to make it suitable for deep-level drilling in the North sea—a process that required the installation of a lot of high-pressure equipment. The allegations were checked again. I spoke to the individuals involved. A full submission was made to the Department, and I also contacted BP as the eventual operator of the installation. I received the same reply from both sides—"There is no problem; there is nothing wrong."

My views and the responses that I received were then fed back to the health and safety committee, which raised merry hell with the employers. A new catalogue of complaints was received and submitted to me. I passed the information on to the Department of Energy and to BP. This time, some honesty had to creep in. We received apologies from BP, and even BP's house magazine had to carry the tale that there were things that were badly wrong with the drilling rig. I raise that case because when I first referred the matter to the Department of Energy there was virtually no response and, so far as I could see, no serious investigation.

Another case which the Department was forced to take seriously was that of the Amoco, Montrose and Arbroath platforms. The Department took that case seriously only because a Department of Transport inspector had managed to visit the Arbroath platform and had discovered a collection of problems which were detailed in a long memorandum that found its way into my hands. Eventually, the Department took action. It could not refute the evidence because it was specific, but that is one of the few cases on which we have managed to stir the Department of Energy into some action.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West referred to the report into the incident on Piper Alpha in 1984. It is important to consider that report in the context of what I am saying now because it was held in secret by the Department of Energy, which refused to release the papers. We have found it difficult to understand why. The existence of that report was certainly known prior to the 1988 disaster. I am intrigued to know why it has not been brought into the public domain, given the disaster on Piper Alpha, because it may have had some relevance to the explosion in July 1988. A lot of pressure was applied. I spoke privately to the Secretary of State about releasing the report, but he refused to do so.

However, on the day that Mr. Petrie's interim report was released in September 1988, the Department sneaked the 1984 report into the public domain. I already had some idea about what was in the report because I had spoken to some of Occidental's executives, who had given me the shocking news that there had not been a Department of Energy investigation into the 1984 Piper Alpha explosion. I was staggered by that news, but I was bound by confidence not to do anything about it because it was a private discussion.

When the report was published in September 1988, I saw why the Department had not been keen to release it. Under the heading "Legal Conclusions", it had concluded that there was a catalogue of four possible or probable breaches of the various regulations that would have justified a criminal prosecution. However, the Department's own inspector, Mr. Bainbridge, who is still a departmental inspector based in Aberdeen, concluded in paragraph 5.2:

"had we decided to institute proceedings it would have been proper to conduct our own research rather than to rely entirely on the research findings of Occidental. I therefore propose no further actions other than a letter to Occidental."

I repeat that after a major explosion on that platform which, as we know, was destroyed in July 1988, the company had carried out its own investigation. I gather that it employed outside consultants to carry out that investigation and to prepare two reports for the Department. When the Department's inspector had reviewed the matter, it was concluded that there were several possible or probable breaches of the regulations, but those papers were not passed to the Procurator Fiscal for prosecution or brought into the public domain so that lessons could be learnt. Why? Because the Department of Energy had not held its own inquiry. We can envisage the embarrassment that that would have caused.

I concluded not long ago that there was no longer any point in taking up these matters with the Department of Energy. It is easy to get a cheap press headline bringing a "shock, horror" story to public attention, but when one batters one's head against a brick wall with virtually no sign of the brick wall yielding, no matter what pressure is applied, one eventually decides that it is a waste of time to continue to raise such matters with the Secretary of State for Energy because the Department seems to have no interest in dealing properly with them or in acting as a public inspector of safety in the North sea. It seems to be assumed that any complaint is unjustified if the oil companies say that it is unjustified.

I have taken a different approach. I have decided to contact the oil industry direct. Whenever a problem occurs on a platform or a drilling rig, I make every effort to persuade the oil company that those allegations are well founded and that it should take action against its contractors, employees or whoever is working for it.

I can give a recent example of the way in which that method operates. I recently had occasion to complain to an oil company about the operation of a drilling rig, the SEDCO 706. Unfortunately, there was a death on that rig after I had made complaints to the oil company involved, although it was unconnected with my complaints.

About a fortnight ago I telephoned a senior manager in the company and listed the complaints to him. He replied within about 15 minutes and told me that the company was sending a team of medical experts and environmental specialists to check out the complaints and that he would report back to me as soon as possible. He did so, and told me that many of the complaints were founded and the company was dealing with them. That was a refreshing approach, and not one that I have ever had from the Department of Energy. I hope that it is a sign of what will happen to the oil industry, particularly when it comes under the supervision of the Health and Safety Executive.

The most recent information that I have about the SEDCO 706 is that Total, the oil company involved, has decided to bring the drilling rig back into Invergordon so that proper remedial work can be carried out. That is a refreshing approach that contrasts starkly with that generally taken by the Department of Energy. I am pretty confident that if I had gone to the Department, no attempt would have been made to make a serious investigation. All credit should go to Total for the way that it operated.

For the future, we want a completely new approach from the Health and Safety Executive. We want openness, the dispensing with the secrecy that has surrounded safety, and public scrutiny and control of safety in the North sea. I hope that we will get that. After my discussions with Dr. Cullen, the chairman of the commission, and Mr. Rimington, I have no doubt that they share my hope that we will be able to open up the industry. If an industry operates in a vacuum without proper scrutiny, terrible things can happen, as we saw on Piper Alpha. The approach taken by the Department of Energy has been totally discredited, not only by my experiences, but by Lord Cullen's report.

The oil industry has raised concerns with me about the transition to the Health and Safety Executive. I am extremely disappointed that, this close to what we all expected to be the transfer date, the Secretary of State was unable to make any positive statement about the arrangements. I understand that negotiations must take place and must be concluded. I was pleased that he said that finance was not a problem and that there would be proper resourcing, but I thought that we would have had some more positive information from him about a start-up date and what detailed arrangements are to be made.

At no time has the Department sought to give any programme for the implementation of the Cullen

[Mr. Doran]

recommendations. It would not be beyond it to produce a detailed programme of how it sees the legislation being introduced and dealt with, and how Lord Cullen's 106 recommendations are to be implemented.

The oil industry is entitled to a little certainty about the future and an idea of what to expect and in what time scale it has to operate. Huge investments and many jobs in the north-east of Scotland depend on the industry. We want that industry to thrive; we do not want it to be worried. We want investment programmes and to have some idea of how the safety regime is to develop over the next few years. It is clear that that is the time scale involved. Will the Minister give us some idea of the time scale that he envisages for implementation of the recommendations? We need a little more than the vague suggestions that have been made.

As the Minister and his predecessors have frequently made clear at Question Time and on other occasions, the North sea has a bright future. Many marginal fields are being developed and many proposals are being presented to the Department for approval. I had a discussion earlier this week with a senior executive from one of the major oil companies. He was deeply concerned that the system that operated well for his company—and, I am sure, for other companies—seemed to be in some difficulties because of the transition.

Before the submission of an annexe B application, it was normal to have preliminary discussions with the Department, and among the issues discussed would be safety and the implications of the design. At that stage, it was normal for the Department to give an informal view of the design and how it saw its safety implications. The Department would then say whether the design would be acceptable.

At present, the Department seems not to feel able to give informal directions. I have a major worry—which was not expressed by the individual with whom I spoke this week—that the Department's approach may inhibit investment in some of the marginal fields, on which many jobs depend. If the Mininser cannot say anything about that today, I should appreciate his looking into the matter and seeing whether there is any justification for that suggestion.

Several hon. Members have talked about the location of the offshore safety division. I will briefly put my Front Bench hat aside because I have a personal interest in that I represent Aberdeen, South. I want merely to say that I do not accept the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West, who spoke from a particular perspective. It is important to stress that if the HSE is successfully to implement the safety regime that we want in the North sea, it must be visible. The place where it must be visible is the centre of the oil industry, which is the city of Aberdeen.

Clearly there will be facilities elsewhere. I have had discussions on the matter with representatives of the commission and of the executive. They have made it clear that they intend to have a substantial presence in Aberdeen. We are looking for more than that. We want to see a high profile there, and I want the headquarters to be based in Aberdeen, which would make a significant improvement to the attitude to safety. We know that if the headquarters are based in Aberdeen—and certainly if the Labour party's dispersal programme is implemented and we are able to transfer the petroleum engineering division jobs to Aberdeen—there will be a follow through of oil industry jobs as headquarters are moved to the centre of the industry. In this day of instant communications, there is no good reason why the headquarters cannot be in Aberdeen. If I can come to this place at the beginning of every week and go back at the end of every week, I am sure that the oil industry, Government officials and HSE officials can manage.

We must look ahead. Various issues need to be dealt with. I and other hon. Members have mentioned the problems of the contract labour system in the North sea. I do not want to go into too much detail on that because enough has been said already, but we must recognise that the root of the safety problems that still exist in the North sea is employment practice. I understand fully why oil companies use contract labour and why they do not want to have a permanent staff, whom they would have to recruit and lay off, when they can buy in the expertise. It makes for good management in their terms. However, it has a serious impact on safety, especially when we are dealing with such a hostile environment and such a stressful occupation.

We must also recognise that many employers in the North sea are good employers, and many are based in my constituency. There are also many bad employers. I have come across two examples recently of appalling practices. They concern two catering companies—Trinity Catering and Caterae. Both are small-scale catering companies which have managed to win contracts in the drilling industry. There are many problems with those companies, but I want to mention one practice that they have in common.

The offshore survival certificate is mandatory. Most employers in the North sea ensure that their staff have such a certificate. The companies pay for it because they recognise that it is mandatory and they want everyone to have the best training. The Robert Gordon institute in my constituency provides what many regard as the best training in that respect—certainly it is the best in this country. The two companies in question, to cut their labour costs, have decided that employees will pay for the certificate. The companies take on the men, put them through the course, pay for it, and then deduct the cost from the men's wages.

I and the trade unions have tried to get some response from the companies about their practices. They refuse to give the men itemised statements, so the men cannot claim tax rebates. They are totally disillusioned with their employers. Of course, they have the option of giving up their jobs, but this is the first employment that many of them have had for some time. They are being totally exploited. I suspect that, so far as the Inland Revenue is concerned, something is happening. I realise that that is a serious accusation, but I have no inhibitions about making it. The way in which these companies operate—including their failure to provide itemised statements and to respond to any reasonable requests for information—strikes me as questionable. An investigation is needed. When he is considering offshore safety, the Minister must ask what contribution companies that exploit their work force in this way make to safety in the North sea.

There are similar companies operating in other parts of the North sea. I have other examples that I do not intend to mention tonight. Such companies have men on every

platform, and they cause problems on every platform. The problems have nothing to do with the attitude of the men, but it is difficult to keep the morale of a work force high when it is being exploited.

The contract system will have to be examined carefully. I know that certain companies have already started on that process. I have already paid tribute to Shell and BP—the two largest operators in the North sea—both of which have instituted programmes of long-term contracts. They are also providing training for the staffs of their contractors, with a view to improving skills to meet company requirements. That is certainly the way ahead.

I have no doubt that, as long as such companies make an effort and can show how the benefits of long-term contracts work their way down to the ordinary offshore worker, there will be significant improvements in the offshore safety system. It is an attitude that needs to be adopted by other companies. I know that firms such as Chevron and Conoco have a fairly enlightened approach to safety. Their approach is rooted in continuity of employment, and they make serious efforts.

The problems of stress offshore must be considered. I have made inquiries about the research being done in this area. Sadly, I can find no record of any Government-sponsored or oil company-sponsored research. Mrs. Joy Sutherland of the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology has done some work, and a social worker in my area recently sent me a document detailing stress effects, but it is an area that needs to be studied. I should like the Minister to say something about what efforts the Department will make, and what efforts it will encourage the HSE to make, to find out more about the problems of stress offshore. The working conditions in the North sea are unique, as are the stress factors. I am thinking in particular of offshore workers who have had to cope with the serious problems of accidents and deaths on their platforms.

There are several other isssues on which I should like the Minister to comment. On 14 July 1988, I wrote to the then Secretary of State on the subject of sub-sea valves. I received a very encouraging response from Mr. Petrie and one of the then Ministers concerning the Department's attitude. Since then, the attitude has been watered down. I understand that Mr. Petrie still insists that the Government intend at some stage to introduce regulations on sub-sea valves. However, we have heard very little. We have seen regulations providing for the relocation of the emergency shut-down valves. That is not the safest method in all cases. It is accepted that sub-sea valves provide the safest method. I should like to know exactly what is happening in that regard.

Funding of the Health and Safety Executive has been mentioned. The Secretary of State said that finance would not be a problem, but it is important that we should know how the Minister views the future of the HSE, and what improvements he thinks it will make in the existing system.

I have a severe case of the wobblies about safety cases. I accept the philosophy and Lord Cullen's reasoning behind them but it is not the only answer or the only solution. I want to hear the Minister's views on what other steps are necessary to ensure that safety cases do not become a simple panacea and that people do not become complacent because safety cases are in order.

We are well aware that serious problems with implementing Lord Cullen's recommendations are caused by the shortage of skills in safety matters on not only the public but the private side. I know that the industry is trying to get up speed quickly, but the resources are limited. It will be important to ensure that the safety case is properly scrutinised and that there are experts on the public as well as the private side.

We have raised the issue of trade unions and health and safety committees. All the statements which have been made by the Secretary of State and the Minister were about the operation of the present system, which is under their control. What are the views of the Health and Safety Executive? Do Ministers expect that, as part of the legislative process that we shall experience, there will be a full extension of the onshore provisions?

As I said earlier, this is an important debate. Important things have been said by hon. Members on both sides of the House. It is important that we do not become complacent. A genuine sense of frustration and anger lingers in the north-east of Scotland and among oil workers. It is felt that the position of employees is not taken seriously. There have been industrial disputes in the past two years. There may be another one this year. That would have a serious impact on the oil industry. We all want to avoid that. The best way to do that is for the Government to use their power and authority to ensure that the grievances of North sea workers are dealt with.

Lord Cullen's report presents one way forward. It is one that we are all prepared to support, but it demands not merely words but action from the Government.

Piper Alpha (Cullen Report)

10.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I agreed with the comments of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), who is not in his place—he sent his apologies that he had to leave the Chamber—about the attendance this evening. I hope that he agrees that, with remarkably few exceptions, what we have heard in the Chamber has been much more than merely useful—it has been salutary. Many speeches from hon. Members on both sides of the House brought into sharp focus the human dimension of offshore safety, and I am glad that they did so. It was right, because all our debates on the subject and almost every action that has been taken on offshore safety since 6 July 1988 stand in the shadow of the terrible event of Piper Alpha. The human dimension of Piper Alpha always comes first to our minds and remains with us when the precise course of events or the technical implications are no longer to the fore.

The human dimension is no more than shorthand for the personal needs, fears and concerns of the 30,000 and more men and women who earn their living in the face of these hazards, and the needs, fears and concerns of their families and friends. It is right to focus on the human dimension because, at the end of the day, securing safety depends on the responsibility and watchfulness of individuals at every step of the process and every level of the organisation in question.

I was grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) for paying tribute to the Rev. Andrew Wylie. All those who know Andrew Wylie will be aware of the enormous contribution that he has made. It is no mere chance that when, with the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Energy, I visit several platforms offshore in a few weeks the first stop that we shall make will be to see Andrew Wylie. It was right to pay tribute to his knowledge, courage and humanity. When he retires, which will be all too soon, I hope that he will not be lost to offshore workers.

It has been clear from the outset that radical and far-reaching changes in the system of regulation of offshore safety must and will result from the implementation of the recommendations of Lord Cullen's report. Lord Cullen was given a wide-ranging remit and was able to probe matters to whatever depth he thought appropriate to identify the initial cause of the disaster, to understand how it escalated and to consider how similar incidents could be prevented. I firmly believe that the Government were right fully to accept Lord Cullen's conclusions. I confirm that in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway). We fully accept all the conclusions, together with the recommendations that Lord Cullen made for the future.

There are five key goals in offshore safety, and they have been voiced in the debate. They are to improve the management of safety on offshore installations; to improve their design and equipment; to improve planning and provision for emergencies and for evacuation, escape and rescue; to strengthen the involvement of the work force in safety; and to strengthen the regulation of safety.

The Government have acted with consistency and dispatch in responding to the report. The Department's director of safety wrote to operators on the day the report was published requesting them to undertake action forthwith, without waiting for legislation, on a number of Lord Cullen's key recommendations, dealing with fire risk analysis, smoke and gas hazards, emergency systems and evacuation, escape and rescue.

Further action was highlighted by Mr. Petrie in the same letter on work related to the implementation of improved safety measures covering standby vessels, drills, exercises and precautionary musters and evacuations, personnel survival and escape equipment, pipeline emergency procedures, hydrocarbon inventory rises in pipelines, control of the process, permits to work, safety committees and safety representatives. I list those for the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), who asked what action had been taken on many of the issues. In fact, action was taken, and rightly so, within 24 hours on those key issues.

A great deal of work has been done since then. Inevitably, detailed work is involved to effect the transfer of responsibility to the Health and Safety Executive, but that work is already well advanced, thanks to the tremendous amount of work undertaken by officials in all the relevant Government Departments. The Department of Energy's safety directorate has been upgraded to an independent division within the Department in a way which will facilitate the transfer to the HSE.

Much has been said in the debate about the important role of engineers, and I am particularly pleased that such a distinguished engineer as Tony Barrell has joined the Department from the HSE to be the first head of the new division.

I utterly reject the comments of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) about lack of political support from Ministers for the staff who work so assiduously and competently in the Department of Energy. Anyone who studies the *Official Report* will have witnessed time and again our commitment as Ministers to the outstanding civil servants who serve us and the country so well. I shall explain shortly how strongly I reject the allegations made by some hon. Members against the inspectorate.

As a result of the work that we are doing, we now hope to effect the transfer in April of this year. When the transfer has taken place, formal responsibility for offshore safety will pass from the Secretary of State for Energy to the Secretary of State for Employment, in whose domain the Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive fall. My right hon. Friend made it clear earlier, and I repeat, that the new division will have the resources that it needs to continue to enforce the existing regulatory regime for the time being and to develop and implement the new regime.

The hon. Member for Dundee, West should accept that from the point of view of the HSE, Lord Cullen, Mr. Rimington and all the staff of the HSE, there is no way that the HSE would be prepared to take on the important functions of offshore safety that it is being asked to accept if the division were not adequately resourced. Those concerned have been parties to all the detailed discussions at official and ministerial level which have been taking place day after day to meet the earliest possible date for transfer. That is why my right hon. Friend said that at this stage broad agreement had been reached—not final

decisions, because we must carry with us every party to the discussions in order to effect the transfer. As soon as those final decisions are made, the transfer will be effected.

Had we made them by today, we would effect the transfer as soon as possible, for we have no desire to hold up the important process of the HSE taking over responsibility and implementing Lord Cullen's recommendations. We have put a great deal of time and effort into that, and to meet our April target would be a considerable achievement that should be recognised as such by hon. Memberss in all parts of the House. I promise hon. Member who have raised that issue that we could not have acted faster—*[Interruption.]* I have obviously had a dramatic effect beyond hon. Members present in the Chamber, but it appears that all is now under control.

Mr. Ernie Ross: It is clear that the Government team do not want to answer the question or are not sure how to answer it. I will try again as the Secretary of State failed to answer me earlier.

Mr. Rimington was identified by Lord Cullen as the responsible person. On 12 December, when talking about resources and finance, Mr. Rimington said to the Select Committee on Employment:

"please forgive me if I seem a bit vehement, I am not intending to be rude in any way—of the need to secure enough money to discharge the offshore responsibility, which as a matter of fact Lord Cullen has laid explicitly on me."

That is unfair. I cannot see how Mr. Rimington can possibly be held accountable. That responsibility must rest with the Secretary of State for Energy or with the Department of Employment. Mr. Rimington believes that he is responsible and that is not fair. He cannot possibly be responsible. That was the point that I made earlier.

Mr. Moynihan: In fairness to the hon. Gentleman, his interpretation of that exchange must be broader than that. He would be the first to realise, as all hon. Members realise, that the HSE is taking over responsibility for offshore safety. We have been debating that all evening. The HSE's resources are not directed to one individual to decide how he wants to spend that money. They are directed to the HSE. It will have to put a case together and have the support of its sponsoring Department. In turn, we will have to be satisfied before we hand over the safety divisions that we are handing them over to a body that is well resourced—adequately resourced at the present time—which had clear responsibilities and a clear programme to implement in respect of the Cullen report. If I have helped to clarify the position for the hon. Member for Dundee, West, I shall have achieved an objective. It is not the Government's intention to place all responsibility for offshore safety in the hands of one individual. It is our intention to hand it over to the HSE as soon as we can, and I hope that we can achieve the April target.

Mr. Ernie Ross: I hope that the Minister will consider my other points. The whole issue makes no sense because at the moment the HSE has difficulty recruiting staff. The total package that we are considering is for the whole department. Cullen has identified specific expenditure required for the new division. That is where there will be conflict.

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman is talking rubbish. The report does not mention specific expenditure. It is the duty of Ministers to read the report and, having accepted the recommendations and conclusions, to work out an appropriate budget to implement those recommendations. We are doing precisely that as swiftly as we can.

As hon. Members have made clear, the key task for the new division in implementing the recommendations of the report will be the introduction of requirements for the new safety cases. That is the cornerstone of the new system. It is not the Government's view that the safety case, in its own right, is what Cullen suggests. We believe that the safety case is critically important, but the need to bring forward regulations as soon as possible is also critically important in the implementation of the recommendations of the report.

The report contains many other recommendations that do not fall directly within the safety case legislation. They will have to be implemented and some of them will require Government regulations. They will be brought before the House as soon as the HSE has had the opportunity to assess in detail the timetable and its implementation.

The safety cases should show that operators have met defined objectives on the adequacy of the company's safety management system, on the identification and control of risks to personnel from hazards arising from the hydrocarbon inventory on the installation and from other potential major hazards and on provision in a major emergency of a temporary safe refuge for all personnel on an installation and a means for their safe and full evacuation, escape and rescue if needed.

Specific matters to be demonstrated in the safety case include the minimisation of hazards from hydrocarbons, the minimisation of the exposure of personnel to accidental events, the endurance of the temporary safe refuge, and analysis of fire risks and of the effectiveness of the arrangements for evacuation, escape and rescue.

In the meantime, all the existing legal requirements remain in force, and it is important that they are maintained. They will continue to be effectively enforced by the staff of the offshore safety division.

Lord Cullen welcomed the introduction of emergency shut-down valves, which led to regulations being introduced and a tough implementation regime, which was welcomed by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South. The fitting of those valves is rigorously monitored. Lord Cullen suggested that it would be inappropriate to introduce sub-sea isolation systems across the board. He felt it important to consider them and their valves within the safety case for each platform, because of the wide differences between platforms. Therefore, an analysis of each platform under the safety case will determine whether it is necessary to implement a sub-sea isolation system. For some platforms they will not be required on safety grounds.

It has been made explicit on a number of occasions—it should have been made explicit on every occasion—that annex B approval conveys no formal or informal safety approval or clearance. The approval has been discussed, not least with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, my officials and myself. We regard it as a priority that where operators make proposals which are in the design stage and have safety implications, it should be a priority of the inspectorate to be as helpful as it can in providing information so that there is no delay in design techniques or a specific design. It will not be possible to ensure that in every case, because certain issues are being rigorously debated, but where possible we have asked the relevant

[Mr. Moynihan]

inspectors to be as helpful as they can, given the concerns that the hon. Member for Dundee, West rightly drew to the attention of the House.

Few operators have operations offshore and onshore, partly because of the petroleum revenue tax implications. A growing number of small companies are operating onshore and I shall happily provide the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South with the details of that. It would be inaccurate to say that the two overlap to the extent that he suggested.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment has accepted that the Government should implement recommendation 29. It will naturally be a matter of time before a final decision is made. My hon. Friend has not taken over responsibility for these matters yet, but the Department of Employment accepts that recommendation. We shall let the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South know as soon as a decision is made.

Lord Cullen considered the possibility of immediately implementing the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations, but explicitly rejected it. It is a critical point. He concluded that what was required was a new offshore regime that would differ from any onshore regulatory system. He went much further; he argued that in many areas, drawing broad parameters for all platforms would have been unwise and that a safety case needed to be designed for each platform. Clearly some prescriptive regulations would apply to all, but the thrust of his argument was that a safety case should be drawn up and each platform taken individually. To replicate the CMAH regulations offshore was explicitly rejected by Lord Cullen, as hon. Members know.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) rightly spoke of the sensitivity of the work forces of contractors and operators and the need for developments to bring the two together, for example, in accommodation and recreational facilities, rather than having a two-tier approach, one for the operator's staff and the other for the contractor's work force. I agree that it is important that that is achieved, for better industrial relations and for a better environment on all platforms. I hope that operators will respond to the points that the hon. Gentleman has raised on that issue and which I endorse.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned an offshore safety trust. I have not looked at that in detail, but I shall be happy to consider any suggestions from hon. Members about improvements to safety, though I would not want to deflect attention from the work of all who are involved in the implementation of the Cullen report. That must be a top priority. If there were a mechanism for enhanced safety which did not deflect from that work, we should consider it.

The location of the new offshore safety division led to three conflicting views. My hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) was reasonable not to demand that Lowestoft should be the site, given its proximity to so much gas activity in the southern North sea. I emphasise, as my right hon. Friend did earlier, that the location is a matter for the HSE and the HSC. The chairman of the HSC has said that he sees a need for a substantial increase in staff numbers in Aberdeen. That has been welcomed by hon. Members. I cannot pre-empt decisions to be taken by the HSE or go to the extent that some hon. Members would like on location. Undoubtedly there would be real difficulties in a comprehensive relocation of existing staff; some of the difficulties have been touched on in the debate, not least by Labour Members.

Mr. Salmond: The Minister will have to spell out what the difficulties are. What he should have heard from all parts of the House was the great virtue in having the nerve centre of the new operation located at the nerve centre and front end of the oil industry. Although the Minister cannot pre-empt the decision, he could give the House the assurance that the arguments have been well heard and understood, that the final decision will not be based on prejudice or on the previous practice of locating the headquarters of such bodies in London, and that he will take account of the arguments presented by hon. Members who represent the bulk of the oil and gas industry.

Mr. Moynihan: There is no doubt that the arguments that the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members have put forward in the debate will be taken into account by the HSE. I will make sure that those arguments are noted. The issue has been widely debated inside the House and outside.

There are real conflicting problems, not least the amount of work that members of the division do in London, given that many of the operators have their headquarters based down here and that they would be travelling down from Aberdeen on a large budget to do their work. If it was proven that if inspectors and the whole division moved to Aberdeen, all the operators would follow, that is the sort of argument that the HSE would consider in the future.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce *rose*——

Mr. Moynihan: Some hon. Members have made lengthy speeches and, with permission, I should like—*[Interruption.]* I will give way once more.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I did not make the point in my speech, but the argument that somehow the centre of gravity is in London is disputed by the industry itself, which complains that its staff have to travel to London. The industry wants the centre to be based in Aberdeen. It is not satisfactory for Ministers to say, "We are sorry, the centre of gravity is in London," when the industry itself denies that.

Mr. Moynihan: I am not saying that the centre of gravity would necessarily remain in London for years to come, but when we looked at the costings we found that 80 per cent. of the work is currently done in and around London. That may well change. I simply say—I hope that it is a reasonable response—that if there are difficulties and arguments they will be listened to carefully by the HSC in due course.

A number of hon. Members have referred to the Burgoyne report. In 1980 the Government acted in line with its majority recommendations. It would have been impossible to act in line with the majority recommendations and with the minority recommendations as well because they disagreed, but we took on board the point made by the minority group that the role of the HSE should be enlarged.

Ten years later, the HSE has developed considerable expertise, which was no doubt one of the issues relevant to Lord Cullen's consideration of the changes that had taken

place on which he reached the conclusion that, on balance, it was the time to move. Burgoyne decided to the contrary. We agreed with both, and a great deal has changed in the past 10 years—not least our responding to the concern put forward by some members of the minority group who argued that that should be taken on board, as it was. It has been a real factor in the Government's consideration of the acceptance of Lord Cullen's recommendations and the move across to the HSE.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale referred to the current application for power stations. The planning application is with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend will not expect me to anticipate the outcome of his considerations. However, my right hon. Friend's decision will be based on all the relevant factors and the issues that my hon. Friend has raised this evening are exactly the [illegible] of issues that the HSE will consider, because it is currently being consulted. My right hon. Friend will not make his decision until it is satisfied. I understand that my right hon. Friend has written to the district council and if it chooses to object to the application, a public inquiry will be mandatory.

The hon. Member for Dundee, West made an important point with which I wholeheartedly disagree. Lord Cullen found no evidence to suggest that the Department had put production considerations above safety or was not independent. I assure the hon. Gentleman that no such conflict has ever affected our determination to give top priority to safety. Lord Cullen's recommendations for a transfer to the HSE is made on organisational grounds, not to secure independence.

The hon. Gentleman's argument was therefore redundant and inaccurate. It would not have persuaded the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) when he was Secretary of State for Energy, and it certainly does not persuade us. If there were even a grain of truth in it, the hon. Gentleman would surely accept that Lord Cullen would never have suggested, as he did, that the inspectorate, which currently does excellent work in the safety division, should be the same men and women who will go across to form the safety division within HSC. He would never even have considered that if the safety inspectorate were jeopardised in terms of putting safety first. For that reason, I wholeheartedly reject what the hon. Gentleman says. It is an appalling slight on the outstanding work that the inspectors have undertaken for many years.

It was argued today that the operators were opposed to applying the 1977 onshore regulations offshore. In fact, that proposal was considered and rejected by Lord Cullen. It could not be right in the industry, in which union recognition is of limited extent, for the nomination of safety representatives to be entirely in the hands of the trade unions. There is no bar to members of trade unions becoming safety representatives if they are elected by the work force.

When the safety committees are reviewed this summer, as it will be two years on from their introduction, one of the key factors to be considered will be the arguments put forward by hon. Members today, including those put forward by the hon. Member for Dundee, West on behalf of his union. One consideration will be whether the safety committee structure has been effective in representing each and every member of the work force on each and every platform. Every platform has a safety committee and its representatives reflect each constituent part of those platforms. What is important is that their concerns are aired in the safety committee and responded to by the operator or, if response does not come forth, that they have an opportunity to contact the Department of Energy and the inspectors onshore. The proof of the effectiveness of that system is that they often do, and every time they do, those complaints and concerns are taken up. It does not matter whether a person is unionised or not—what matters is that that person's concerns are aired on the safety committee and there is a response to them.

Opposition Members and all who have equated trade unionism with enhanced safety—an equation which I wholeheartedly reject—will have the opportunity to put their case to the HSE when the regulations are reviewed this summer. We are committed to undertake that review this summer and it will take place. No doubt, during the review the very same arguments that have been aired today will be aired again. It was interesting that Lord Cullen accepted that this was no time to change union representation on the safety committees and that it was right to wait until this summer to assess the effectiveness or otherwise of the committees.

In conclusion, I shall turn to the last few substantive issues——

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Could the Minister give his observation on recommendation 21.84, in which the Lord Cullen recommends that there would be a benefit from the recognition of trade unions? Surely he must agree that the atmosphere in which people operate is critical to building confidence in the regulation. By recognising unions, an atmosphere of confidence would be established, which would surely help everyone.

Mr. Moynihan: In the Cullen report there are three paragraphs which concentrate my attention virtually every day. One is 21.84, which has been quoted extensively today and which cites evidence and states that it admittedly came almost entirely from trade union witnesses— *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may scoff at Lord Cullen's words—I am simply quoting from the report. He was prepared to accept that the appointment of offshore safety representatives by trade unions could be of some benefit in the making the work of such representatives and committees effective. He goes on to say, however, that the position offshore is affected by a number of issues, which he quotes extensively in 21.85. Having weighed the evidence, he concludes:

> "I consider that it would be inappropriate for me to recommend any change in the method by which safety representatives are chosen."

Time and again today we have heard the first two paragraphs quoted, but never the conclusion, in which Lord Cullen rightly weighs up the evidence and draws his view. Time and again we hear just one set of evidence which is reported in here. The report also states that there are a series of other important issues:

> "trade union membership is still relatively limited in relation to the total offshore workforce; trade unions have been 'recognised' only to a limited extent; and the employment of offshore workers is fragmented between a number of different employers",

and a whole range of other factors. Nevertheless, Lord Cullen reaches that important conclusion. He then says that we have an opportunity to review the matter when we consider the effectiveness of the safety committees, and we

[Mr. Moynihan]

shall be able to do that—we give that commitment today—when a full review is undertaken two years after implementation of the committees.

I hope that that satisfies the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) about the process that we are pursuing, as it is entirely the process that Lord Cullen put before the House in the report, and that we have accepted.

Mr. Dobson: Does the Minister intend to reply—as far as is possible in the time available—to the questions that I asked about the Cam Spirit, alias the Silver Pit?

Mr. Moynihan: I am always keen to assist the hon. Gentleman, so I shall do that now.

The hon. Gentleman is right—the court found the Silver Pit to be deficient in a number of respects. It is the responsibility of an owner to maintain his ship to acceptable standards and, in the light of the court's report, the Department of Transport took action with regard to ad hoc inspections undertaken by marine surveyors. It was made absolutely clear at the time that the vessel acting as standby for Piper Alpha that night had been praised by the court for its role in the rescue, although it found that the boat's general state of repair had been poor. It placed no responsibility for those deficiencies on the master.

The hon. Gentleman said that the Silver Pit was operating in the North sea, and that that was a disgrace——

Mr. Dobson: Will the Minister give way again?

Mr. Moynihan: No, I am going to answer the hon. Gentleman's question about the Cam Spirit.

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not say that: I posed a question—in the interrogative mode, as I believe it was called when I was at school. Is it true? It has been reported to me and we have pursued it. We have tried to find out the facts from the owners, but the owners have been unwilling to give us the facts. I asked the Secretary of State for the facts—I did not assert that what I asked about was the case.

Mr. Moynihan: I apologise. There was, however, a clear implication to that effect, which was heard by my hon. Friends and, I am sure, by Opposition Members.

The Cam Spirit has been out of service for a major refit. It cannot and will not go back into service until it has been examined by Department of Transport surveyors.

Mr. Dobson: Since being in service—and, with its crew and master, performing an admirable task on the day of the disaster—has the vessel been in operation in the North sea?

Mr. Moynihan: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. I tried to obtain the details of the answer to the question that he has asked—in the interrogative mode. I obtained the answer, but I will find out more details.

Whatever those details are, however, I must tell the hon. Gentleman that it is incumbent on the Department of Transport to finalise the revision of the standby vessels code. We accept that. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made clear, the important issue is that future regulative requirements in respect of standby vessels will be matters for the HSC and HSE as part of the overall programme of implementing the Cullen report. I am advised that, to meet the standards in the new code, vessels will have to satisfy the technical requirements set out in recommendation 89. The hon. Gentleman read out the requirements at length, and I am sure that he will welcome that initiative.

In an extensive speech, the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) referred to permits to work. The Department's technical investigation identified possible failings in the generation of Occidental's permit-to-work system as an element in the disaster. The system had also broken down in the case of an earlier accident—the Sutherland fatality, in 1987—for which Occidental was prosecuted and fined following an investigation by my inspectors. There have been detailed regulations governing permit-to-work systems since 1976. The Department issued a statement of intent in August 1989, proposing that they be updated. The proposals, which were presented to the inquiry, have been generally welcomed. Lord Cullen recommended greater harmonisation of the key features of permit-to-work systems, but not standardisation. He realised that each system needed to recognise individual circumstances.

Mr. Salmond: I know that the Minister would not want to end his speech without picking up the point about the 73 cases of suspected blacklisting documented by the offshore information centre. I believe that he vastly underrates the importance of the fear of victimisation and informal blacklisting in the North sea. Will he give a guarantee that, if such cases are documented by the centre, some of the firm action referred to by the Secretary of State will be taken against the companies responsible?

Mr. Moynihan: All hon. Members take allegations of victimisation and blacklisting very seriously indeed. It is incumbent on all Ministers to take up cases brought to their attention by any hon. Member. There are other means of recourse outside the House—not least the employment legislation and industrial tribunals. If there are specific examples of extant blacklists, I urge the hon. Gentleman, and all other hon. Members who referred to them in the debate, to draw them to our attention. We cannot act in a vacuum.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) argued that the Shell list was a list of people whom Shell refused to re-employ because they had disobeyed the offshore installations manager. I reject the description of offshore installations managers given by the hon. Member for Dundee, West. It is critical for safety reasons that offshore installations managers be obeyed. After a while, Shell decided to rescind the ban on the employment of those individuals. No evidence was brought to our attention of a blacklist distributed to other companies by whichever operator—*[Interruption.]* If there is evidence, it should be drawn to our attention. We should certainly act on it.

The whole House heard the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South say that he does not wish to bring these cases to the attention of Ministers. He prefers to go directly to the operators. I made the offer to him again today, as I have on previous occasions, that as a Member of Parliament he should bring details concerning his constituents to my attention. We shall certainly pursue those cases, as we have in the past, and as we shall continue to do in the future. The hon. Gentleman is right about going to the operators to discuss employment matters

directly with the employers and their employees, and he is also right that there is recourse to industrial tribunals. Those two avenues should equally be pursued on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Doran: I made my comments on the basis of my experience with Department of Energy Ministers, and I do not intend to withdraw them. The Minister has no understanding whatever of how the Shell blacklist operated. Every contractor who wanted to employ someone on a Shell platform had to check with Shell, whose computer system recorded against the name of every registered individual a mark which indicated that that individual was unacceptable. Shell admitted that publicly. When we raised the matter in the House, the Minister and his colleagues ignored it.

Mr. Moynihan: I have said to the hon. Gentleman on many occasions that that dispute was between Shell and its employees. The premise of the dispute was disobeying the instructions of an offshore installations manager. That had important safety implications which have now been resolved. We examined that case in detail and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy answered questions on it, as I did. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to draw further cases to our attention, we shall certainly look at them.

In conclusion, I hope that the House will accept one issue above all others. Our commitment to implement the Cullen recommendations is complete. Our determination to implement them as soon as possible is full. We shall continue to approach this issue with vigour. We hope to achieve the early deadline of April. We are doing everything that we can to do so. I hope that every hon. Member recognises that safety must be, and will remain, the prime consideration. It will underpin all the work that Department of Energy Ministers do.

Mr. Sydney Chapman (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

PETITION

Fishing (Tie-up Scheme)

11.33 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I rise to present a petition on behalf of Fraserburgh harbour traders—fortuitously in the presence of the Minister with responsibility for fisheries. This is one of a number of petitions that have been collected around the coast of Scotland. It represents the seething anger in the fishing communities about the imposition of the eight-day tie-up scheme.

The Fraserburgh harbour traders express their concern about the penalties and the severe economic dislocation that will be caused by the Government's unwillingness to allow short trips back from one port to another to be exempt from the scheme.

The petition reads:

'Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House take immediate steps to amend the legislation to allow vessels to return from their landing port to their home port without incurring any additional tie-up time over and above the eight-day period commencing with the date nominated by the vessel at the landing port. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.'

It is signed by John Wallace, the chairman of the Fraserburgh harbour commissioners, by George Masson, a partner in John S. Pirie and Co., and by 63 other traders representing all the trades in Fraserburgh harbour.

To lie upon the Table.

Horticulture

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

11.35 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): As the House will know, I have always taken a keen interest in horticultural matters—particularly in my capacity as chairman of the Conservative Back-Bench horticulture committee and as parliamentary consultant to the Horticultural Trades Association, which appears under my name in the Register of Members' Interests. I am most grateful, therefore, to have the opportunity of an Adjournment debate to raise with the Minister a number of important challenges that the production sector of British horticulture faces today.

The total farmgate value of horticultural production in this country is estimated to be £1,600 million, and the retail value of that produce is at least twice that amount. Outdoor vegetables account for around £600 million, flowers and plants for around £400 million and fruit for £240 million. I often feel that, overall, horticulture is undervalued in Britain and that is particularly true of its production capacity. As I hope to show, other nations are perhaps less indifferent to horticulture than we are.

It is a measure of the importance of the industry that it employs about 60,000 people—half as many as are employed in the entire agricultural industry in Britain today. It is worth recalling how horticultural production was often limited to a certain season and a modest number of products, whereas now the seasons have been extended —as in the case of autumn-fruiting raspberries—and exotic crops such as sweet peppers or bean sprouts are on offer from domestic suppliers. The British grower must seize those challenges, plugging the trade gaps in certain product lines.

I believe that British growers have shown real enterprise and initiative in ensuring that Britain has one of the most competitive and technically advanced horticulture sectors in the world. From my knowledge of the industry, I do not believe for a moment that the people who work in horticulture expect special favours from Government or the erection of obstacles to competition. British growers know full well that foreign producers may benefit from lower wage costs and a more favourable climate. They accept the fact that improvements in transport have intensified competition.

Certainly those factors cause our producers problems, but, thanks to the technical sophistication of our industry and the quality of the produce it provides, I have confidence in its ability to compete and to excel. However, to employ a rather overused phrase, British producers should face the competition on a level playing field. It is crucial that our industry is not disadvantaged, especially by unnecessary red tape and obstacles to innovation at home.

I hope that the Minister will be able to consider a number of issues, all of which will have an impact on prospects for British horticulture. The use of peat in horticulture is the first of these. Peat is a vital element in ornamental horticulture, as a growing medium. As any gardener will tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, peat is unique in that it has a number of key characteristics: it is disease-free, has an ideal mixture of air and water, holds water exceptionally well and can be easily adjusted in formulation for different plants and locales. There is not a single other material combining all these qualities that is available in sufficient quantity. Quite simply, given our current state of knowledge, peat is irreplaceable as a growing medium for young plants. As the Horticulture Development Council peat report points out, however, peat is less essential as a mulch or soil conditioner.

In the past couple of years, there has been increasing concern about the risk of damage caused by peat extraction to wildlife habitats and scientific areas. Fortunately, new technology has found some alternatives to peat for soil conditioning and surface layering. As yet, however, no commercial substitute has been found. Research is currently under way to find new substitutes, but we still have a long way to go before we can find something that is both cost-effective and non-polluting.

I wholeheartedly applaud the growing consciousness of environmental issues, but I think that it is wrong that horticulturists should bear the brunt of having to find peat substitutes in response to wider political concerns about the environment.

What is needed is more money to fund research. Until then, British horticulture has no choice—regardless of its own environmental concerns—but to continue to rely on peat. I hope that the Minister may be able to give the industry some reassurance on the important issue of research and development in peat substitution.

Another subject of concern to the industry is how it will be affected by the European single market. One of the great achievements of British horticulture is that this country currently has one of the most stringent plant health regimes in the European Community. We have been able to maintain this through tough regulation and import inspection and control. With the single European market will come harmonisation of plant health standards. Many in the industry find that very worrying. The European Community proposes to maintain health standards through two key mechanisms: the establishment of special plant health status and the introduction of plant passports. Each plant or batch of plants will have to have its own safety inspection record, and this record will constitute a plant passport which will allow the plant to move freely within the Community.

All this seems thoroughly sensible in theory. However, the proposal at present is for such a system to apply to movement not only between member states, but within member states. A passport, plus inspections, may thus be required for shipments of plants between Athens and Acton or between Lincoln and London. This could lead to serious administrative problems and heavy costs, with little demonstrable improvement in plant health status.

With each plant requiring its own passport, the scope for red tape, bureaucracy and burdens on business is limitless. It is also worrying that the EC may adopt standards below our current national standards, which could seriously jeopardise the health of the plants in Britain. I am concerned that some other Community countries will not be willing or able to maintain the levels of plant health to which we in this country are accustomed, and that standards will slip, especially as controls will rest with the exporting country, with no customs checks at point of entry. Does the Minister agree that it is imperative that the Community recognises the importance of maintaining high standards designed to achieve the very best, not just the average, standard of plant health?

Possibly the most serious threat to horticulture in the longer term is the progressive loss, and lack of

replacement, of plant protection products. With the loss of advisory services' routine screening of pesticides, the greater registration costs, which act as a disincentive for manufacturers to invest in developing plant protection products for horticultural crops, and the progressive reduction in Government support for near market research into novel pesticide applications, there is a serious and imminent danger that horticulture will lose the ability to control important pests and diseases. Much has been done by the industry in funding essential work to support "off-label" uses of pesticides, and by industry and Government in developing alternatives to chemical control methods.

However, the industry must rely on the help of pesticides for the foreseeable future, but it cannot fund the enormous costs involved in developing and registering pesticides. Unless serious reconsideration is given to the level of support given by the Government to enable the development of such control methods, the industry may collapse through the lack of such essential techniques. Surely it is for the public good for the United Kingdom to have a viable horticultural industry?

The third issue I wish to raise tonight is that of garden festivals. Horticulture has given wholehearted support to the concept of garden festivals. Needless to say, they provide a forum for marketing the products of the industry, but they have also proved a catalyst for urban regeneration in some of our most rundown inner-city areas and they offer horticulture an opportunity to apply its expertise to making the urban environment more pleasant for the people who live and work in cities.

The Government's imagination was instrumental in getting the idea of garden festivals off the ground. I hope that, having seen the beneficial effects, the Government will continue their support. Government financial aid for garden festivals expires in 1991. If there are to be further festivals, as I hope there will be, a Government decision is needed immediately on whether they will continue to support national festivals. It takes several years to put together a first-class garden festival. It would be a tragedy if we wasted time. I very much hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will feel able to look favourably on supporting and funding a continued programme of British garden festivals, so that those important public events will be able to endure.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister has heard a great deal from the industry about the fourth issue that I wish to raise tonight, but I hope that he will bear with me while I go through the arguments, as the issue is crucial to horticulture. Like all business men, growers are being affected by the slowdown in the economy. They are also being hit by rising costs, but none is rising quite as fast as natural gas. Gas is very important for greenhouse growers, because it burns efficiently and does not emit pollutants, as the CO_2 is used to enhance plant growth.

It is a major cost for hundreds of growers and, quite frankly, its price has risen at an alarming rate. It now costs 50 per cent. more to heat a glasshouse in Britain than to heat one in Holland. Some growers have seen their natural gas bills rise 25 per cent. during the past year. When British Gas was privatised, it was hoped that increased competition would result, pushing prices down. Sadly, that has not happened. British greenhouse growers are suffering from extremely disadvantageous gas prices, which are in turn affecting their ability to compete, and biting into profits.

Caught between high gas bills and high interest rates, growers could be forgiven for feeling that they are truly between a rock and a hard place. Can anything be done to ease the burden of high gas prices which so many of our producers now face? How does the Minister intend to tackle the problem of soaring costs for British growers?

Finally, I turn to the issue of soft fruit imports from eastern Europe. During the past few years, Britain has imported a great deal of semi-processed soft fruit from Poland and Yugoslavia. Those two countries have the advantage both of low labour costs and favourable rates of exchange to export. Moreover, until recently, a system was in place that guaranteed minimum soft fruit price levels for goods imported into the United Kingdom. However, that system broke down last year, resulting in a severe fall in prices.

To the critics of a price support system, I would argue that the mechanism aids not only British fruit growers, but eastern European ones. The eastern European countries could earn more for their soft fruit exports with the agreed minimum price. The price support system was extended on a temporary basis for three months from 1 January 1991, but that is clearly not long enough to provide any sort of security for our growers or, indeed, the eastern European countries that compete with them. Does the Ministry intend to extend the price support system into a viable long-term mechanism that can provide security to everyone?

British growers can compete well in an international environment if they are only given the means by which to do so. I emphasise that this is not an industry on the look-out for handouts or preferential treatment, but it needs a fair deal from a sympathetic Government. During the past 11 years, the Government have transformed prospects for the business in this country. They have shown that they understand the problems and challenges that horticulture faces—notably through the help they have lent with replacement heated green houses.

I hope that British horticulture can continue to count on the understanding and help of a Government and a Ministry that have proved themselves good friends to it during those years. We must address those problems and give the British grower a chance to prepare for the future.

11.48 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) has raised five issues and I will do my best to respond to them. She discussed the use of peat, soft fruit from eastern Europe, plant health, gas prices and garden centres.

I know that the question of peat preoccupies the industry. Professional horticulture accounts for about half our usage in the United Kingdom; the other half is split between the retail market and the landscaping contracting sector. Professional use has declined. Tomatoes, for example, are now grown on rockwool, perlite or NFT. Even with 100,000 hectares in England and Wales, and 800,000 hectares in Scotland, peat constitutes a limited resource, especially as some of the area is not exploitable.

The Department of the Environment has made a firm Government commitment to examine the question of peat, including working licences and the availability of substitutes. Neither we nor the industry can be complacent. I appreciate that any restrictions on the

[Mr. David Curry]

current uses of peat would present problems, although it should be possible to develop effective and acceptable alternatives, especially in the ornamental sector.

Our strategy for horticultural research and development identifies work on alternatives to peat as a high priority area. We are already committed to substantial spending on strategic work. We are liaising closely with the Horticulture Development Council, Horticulture Research International and others in developing further programmes. It is in the industry's interests to take a constructive role in encouraging the use of acceptable alternatives. The Peat Producers Association and the Horticultural Trades Association have a role to play in this respect.

The Department of the Environment recently issued a leaflet called "Wake Up", which was launched just a few days ago and which advised gardeners to avoid using peat where substitutes were available, as my hon. Friend said, as mulches and soil conditioners, for example. There is a Horticulture Development Council seminar on peat scheduled for 26 March, which is a welcome initiative enabling the industry to explain its current position on peat use and to consider the next steps.

The gas pricing policy is a matter for British Gas. However, I recognise that the price of Dutch gas is a long-standing issue. The United Kingdom cited the Netherlands case before the European Council and it obtained a ruling which still stands. We must get better value for money from the use of gas. My right hon. Friend the Minister has pointed out at the "British Growers Look Ahead" exhibition that energy efficiency is vital for business and for the environment.

The Government are surprised by the low uptake of grants of up to 40 per cent. under the farm and countryside grant scheme for the installation of more energy-efficient glasshouses and equipment. We should like growers to come forward for the grants while they are still available. There are already things that can be done to help growers to get better energy use in their greenhouses. Where we have clear evidence of continuing problems of unfair competition, we shall take that evidence to the European Commission and ask that action be taken. I recognise that garden festivals have proved popular with the industry. Nobody could ignore their effects on urban regeneration. As my hon. Friend has said, no decision has yet been taken on the future of the garden festival programme after Ebbw Vale, which is scheduled for 1992.

We have had a report on the festivals in Liverpool, in Stoke-on-Trent and in Glasgow, which was published just before Christmas. It is true that it showed that there was a fast reclamation of derelict and polluted sites, that there was economic benefit from the jobs and that there was an improved image for cities. That was, of course, at some cost—we reckon about £20 million at today's prices over and above the cost of reclamation. We will review the programme of garden festivals in the light of the balance of benefits and costs. The views of the industry will weigh heavily with us during that review.

I recognise that the most important issue raised by my hon. Friend may have been plant health and the single market. I subscribe entirely to her belief that the single market must not lead to a lowering of our plant health standards or status, or to excessive financial and administrative burdens on the industry or the Government. Controls on plant material entering the United Kingdom centre on plant health certificates, which are issued by authorities in the country of origin. Certificates are checked at the point of entry by customs officers and, where necessary, by our plant health inspectors.

After 1992, the system will continue for trade with non-Community countries, but a new system of control will be needed for intra-Community trade.

The proposals are still being thrashed out in Brussels, but we can see the outline of what is likely to emerge. It is clear that there will be significant changes in the way both we and the industry work. There will be more frequent visits by plant health inspectors to growers of planting material, leading to the issue of the so-called plant passports.

As my hon. Friend said, the passports will apply for trade within member states, as well as between member states. After 1992, in principle, there will be no distinction between internal trade and trade between member states —apart from the so-called isolated zones. Plant passports will be needed for material travelling between Lincoln and London or, indeed, between Broxbourne and Basildon. This is intended to ensure that all material circulating within the Community meets certain standards.

We are conscious of the need to minimise red tape. It is inevitable that the introduction of Communitywide changes will result in certain changes in the regulatory framework, but it is not our intention to impose on ourselves a burden that is not necessary, and least of all do we intend to impose on the industry a burden that is not necessary. A great deal of our negotiation is directed at making sure that we have the lightest regime that can be effective. If one demands that there should be a level playing field—that the law should be enforced equally everywhere—a certain number of inspectors and a certain regulatory framework are necessary. We have to be able to manage and police the system.

We supported the establishment of the European plant health inspectorate, which is the kernel of the Communitywide supervising system that will oversee the enforcement of the new rules. A great deal of negotiation has still to be done in this sector, but we are particularly conscious of the need to preserve the special status that the industry in the United Kingdom enjoys, because of our high health standards. Of course, that is a consideration which extends beyond the plant and horticultural sphere; it affects the agricultural and fisheries sectors also. We wish, in all those cases, to preserve the status that we have built up over the years.

The final issue raised by my hon. Friend—the import of east European soft fruit—has caused some difficulties. I have been very closely involved in the negotiations. I can confirm that we have sought an extension of the safeguard action—the minimum import prices—beyond the end of this month to cover the new season. We do not have the ability to impose that ourselves. It is not a unilateral decision; it has to be agreed by the Commission. However, at the Agriculture Council meeting at the beginning of this week, my right hon. Friend raised the matter before the full membership. I, too, raised it at a number of meetings last year.

That has been followed up with a letter to the Commissioner within the last few days. Our officials have been given instructions to pursue the matter with all

vigour. We recognise its importance to the industry in my hon. Friend's constituency, in other parts of England and, of course, in the lowlands of Scotland, whose important horticultural industry has felt a serious draught from these imports.

We have not moved from our long-standing position that effective voluntary arrangements with Poland and Yugoslavia are best, and that reasonable price levels serve both us and them. It is perfectly true that undercutting prices and failing to maintain discipline does the United Kingdom's industry no good. It is equally true that unfair competition does not do very much for the revenue of those exporting. The exporters do not get the sort of returns that would benefit them in the long term. We do not deny, and I think that my hon. Friend does not deny, that there is a place in our markets for Polish and Yugoslav products. For example, they are used in jam production.

We think that it is very much in our interests to have a rapid reintroduction of the informal pricing arrangements, with improvements—for example, differentiated prices and better monitoring, which the Commission promised more than a year ago but has not been able to deliver. We shall continue to press this important issue. The east Europeans, if they have any sense, will recognise that, if they do not deliver the sensible disciplines that we seek in this sector, our outlook will be influenced when it comes to seeking further liberalisation in other sectors.

My hon. Friend said that she was very optimistic about the future of the industry. In general terms, I share her optimism. Where the industry is forward-looking and competitive, it will have our full support. But, as my hon. Friend said, it faces challenges. Nineteen ninety-two will ease the trade between member states and in 1996 we shall see the end of the Spanish transition. Both events will result in greater competition. Several years ago people assumed that Spanish entry would somehow bring an Armageddon-like attack on the industry, but that has not materialised. Our competition is still predominantly from the northern European states, which have climatic conditions similar to ours.

Successive Ministers have reminded growers about the importance of marketing. It is important to keep hammering home that message. I am sure that my hon. Friend does so in her constituency, which is so important in horticultural terms. Quality assurance, presentation, continuity of supply and competitive prices are the important elements for the industry.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said on 21 February that Food from Britain would address itself to the import substitution problem. Clearly, horticulture has a considerable potential to help in that matter. He also issued a challenge to the industry at the "British Growers Look Ahead" conference in January to come up with ideas to improve competitiveness, and we look forward to seeing those ideas put into practice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne has raised some important issues for the horticultural industry. It is by no means considered the Cinderella of the United Kingdom industry by the Ministry, despite the fact that it does not have the heavy regimes of other agricultural sectors which command so much time, sweat and tears. The horticultural industry is important. It has a significant future. It recognises that its future lies significantly in its own hands. Where we can assist, we shall do so. With such a joint enterprise, there is no reason why it cannot increase in strength.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute past Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Friday 8 March 1991

The House met at 9.30 am

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Leasehold Reform

9.36 am

Mr. Dudley Fishburn (Kensington): I beg to move,

That this House believes that the law of leasehold as a method of providing residential tenure in flats or houses is in need of widespread reform.

I am delighted to have the chance to kick off a full-scale debate on leasehold reform, a subject in which I have taken an interest since entering the House. I am somewhat fearful, because this morning I shall probably speak for longer in one speech than I have in all debates put together over the two and a half years that I have been in the House. I am somewhat fearful also, because I recognise that English property law is about as complicated as it could be. There are good reasons for that. The development of English property law over the past centuries has been inextricably linked with the development of our political institutions and the evolution of our democracy.

I am pleased that the debate is taking place and to know that there are hon. Members representing a wide range of interests who realise that leasehold law as a means of residential tenure needs to be reformed throughout the country. Well over 1 million people live in leasehold accommodation. The Department of the Environment says that 1·5 million live in flats. If someone lives in a flat, almost by definition he lives under a leasehold arrangement. Although most of the leases are in and around London, many are in Wales, the north of England, on the south coast and in our grand Victorian cities. The Building Societies Association puts the number of people living under leasehold arrangements as high as 3 million.

It is good that so many hon. Members, doubtless stunned by the ever-increasing number of complaints about the leasehold system, wish to contribute to the debate. One, alas, is here in spirit only. My distinguished predecessor, Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, made leasehold reform one of his many lively campaigns. Although a far better parliamentarian than I shall ever be, he never had the good fortune, as I have, to have his name pulled out as No. 1 in the ballot for private Members' motions. If you see a shadowy figure trying to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that it will be Brandon's ghost come hot foot from heaven.

I have the good fortune to be the Parliamentary Private Secretary of my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury), the Minister for Trade, who in his early days had a keen interest—which he still maintains—in leasehold reform.

The law of leasehold, as it applies to residential housing in England and Wales, is essentially a Victorian 19th-century innovation. However, unlike most Victorian innovations, it has had little following elsewhere in the world. No other European country—with the single exception, on a small scale, of Denmark—has found it necessary to employ such a system to provide flats or houses for its home-owning citizens. I make that my first point so that we can be quite clear that there is nothing essential about leasehold law to the existence of a thriving housing market.

If we choose to be lumbered with a leasehold law, that is fine, but it is purely a burden of our own choosing. Do the citizens of Paris, Frankfurt, Madrid or Amsterdam miss out on some vital right? Are their housing policies less adequate than ours because they do not have leasehold law? Not a bit of it. Indeed, each and every one of those countries that inherited leasehold law from their common law past—America, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand—have found the working of the principle of leasehold cumbersome, unsatisfactory and inefficient. What did they do? They reformed the law and abandoned the principle.

In Sydney, Boston, Vancouver and Hobart, flats and houses used to change hands on leasehold; now, each has introduced a system under which individual flats can be owned on freehold. So, too, has that best run of little countries, Singapore. As those countries cleared out the clutter of their colonial law, leasehold went for a Burton. Only the old country is left with the old ways.

I make that point to show that those of us who participate in today's debate calling for leasehold reforms are not, alas, bold politicians trying to break new ground; rather, we are a group of tired old hacks—I speak for myself—trying to get rid of a tired old system, and one which others reformed many years ago.

What might be suggested during the debate, and what would be new ground for English residential leaseholders, is long-established law elsewhere in the English speaking world. Indeed, it would be an unnecessary law in continental Europe. Those who doubt the need for, or efficacy of, reform must cite the advantages that accrue to Britain alone in having leasehold law, because not one of the 600 million people whom we would loosely call our richer socialist neighbours would put up with such a system.

Before leaving that point, I wish to make one general observation. Of all the great capital cities in the world, London is the only one consistently to have had a net loss of population over the past two generations. Is that because in London alone it is not possible for a flat dweller, that most common urban animal, to own his property on any basis other than as a dwindling terminal asset, worth less every passing year as his lease diminishes? If that is thought to be too fanciful, we should remember that the cities of Boston and Sydney revitalised their inner urban areas once their citizens were permitted to own and to invest in freehold flats in the hearts of their cities.

The English law of leasehold rests on a lacuna. Traditionally, it has been possible under English law to sell a property with a negative covenant on it—for example, buy a certain building, and its facade can never be changed. However, it is not possible under English law to enforce a positive covenant—for example, buy a certain building, and its common parts must be maintained. It was to get around that single quirk in the law that Victorian speculative builders—I am delighted to say that my grandfather was one of them—quite literally built on leasehold law. To paraphrase the Book of Common Prayer: "On this one commandment hang all the law and the profits." Those Victorian builders, just like the converters of flats today, sold 99-year leases because it was a way of getting around the difficulty posed by the fact that

[Mr. Dudley Fishburn]

they could not impose a positive covenant. It was most certainly not done so that, 99 years hence, the grandchildren—undeserving creatures like myself—could scoop the pool.

Flats are sold on leasehold in England and Wales because there is no other way in which they can be sold, and that is a disgraceful monopoly which needs reform. We must establish clearly that all of the varieties of leasehold reform that we shall discuss today are about property reform; they are not, and they must not be, about property grab. Look in this debate for an extension of the Government's highly successful policies of home ownership, but do not look for policies of confiscation.

I am often embarrassed by those few of my supporters in the campaign who say, "Good, these reforms will make us rich; we will be given assets that we did not have before." I do not believe that any of my hon. Friends would seek either to abrogate the law of contract or, in passing reforms, seek to force assets to be transferred by Government diktat from one private individual to another at an artificial price. I shall shortly set out the range of policies needed for leasehold reform for flats and houses, in the cities and in the countryside.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): What is the difference in principle between a private lessee buying out the interest of the landlord at a discount and the right of the council tenant to buy out the interest of the landlord at a discount?

Mr. Fishburn: I said that I did not think that the House would permit the Government to say, "We will take private assets from one individual and give them to another." I shall elaborate on that point later.

All the possibilities of leasehold reform are intended to improve the law and so to improve the lot of those living as leasehold tenants. They are also intended to encourage home ownership. However, not one of those aims is to say, as the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) appears to be suggesting, "Bad luck, mate—Parliament has decided to take your property and to give it to someone else." Those who seek to oppose the reforms that we shall be discussing today will need a better argument than that.

This Government have championed market rents and a free market in property. Each of the changes in leasehold reform that are before us is likely to increase the confidence of potential investors in residential accommodation.

I should at this stage declare an interest. I have been a resident on the Grosvenor estate continuously for 42 years. That is longer than 90 per cent. of that estate's residents, and certainly longer than the present Duke of Westminster. I imbibed leasehold reform, if not with my mother's milk, at least on my mother's knee. During that time, I have seen no fewer than three leases whittled away from underneath me or my family. However, I am now a statutorily protected tenant and therefore have no conflict of interest—as, alas, I do not have a lease—in promoting leasehold reform.

The standards of the big London landlords, and especially the Grosvenor estate that I know so well, are excellent and thorough. As landlords, they have played an important part in the conservation and the appearance of our capital city. Sadly, they are untypical; they are also only a small part of that market, which now contains some 1·5 million people living in leasehold flats.

Let us briefly consider the range of leasehold reforms on offer. First, there are the proposals for commonhold, which have been put forward by the Lord Chancellor. I was lucky enough to assist at the birth of those proposals by introducing two ten-minute Bills on the subject. However, congratulations are hardly in order, because the pace of the reforms has been painfully slow. Commonhold, under different names, has already been undertaken in many other countries.

In England, the building societies, which see at first hand the troublesome state of leasehold law, were the first to propose that we adopt a commonhold system. When 100 building societies and 70 of the largest providers of market finance, including the high street banks, speak with one mind, it is worth listening. The present commonhold proposals are a tribute to them and, above all, to the Law Commission. It is worth noting that the idea was floated earlier by the Grosvenor estate, so we should be clear about the proposal's provenance. It springs from those who believe in home ownership, capital formation and private property. Commonhold will give leaseholders in a block of flats the legal framework, as a group, to buy and be positively bound to maintain the common parts of their block, overcoming that quirk of the positive covenant. For the first time, it will permit individual flat owners to own freeholds. Furthermore, owners as a group would be obliged to maintain the common parts of their building and pay for improvements to it.

That is the ultimate leasehold reform, which is supported by the Law Commission, building societies, banks and estate agents, as well as more than 1 milllion tenants now living in leasehold blocks, from mansion blocks with 150 flats to converted town houses with perhaps only half a dozen. The law that will permit such a change is extremely detailed. The first draft, which could pass through the House with little delay, is already written, and is as thick as a telephone directory. The Lord Chancellor, on publishing it in November, asked for public comment by the end of February. Those comments are now in and are said to be overwhelmingly favourable.

The reform would allow the few remaining political questions rapidly to be decided. When should the legislation be introduced? I believe that it should be introduced now. It would be the perfect candidate for the last year of this Parliament. If it is not introduced now, the Government and the Opposition should at least make a commitment in their manifestos to adopting the draft proposals for commonhold. They should say, "Elect us and we shall take this law from a draft to a reality."

As all the homework has been done and it is now only a matter of finding parliamentary time—both sides of the House being in agreement on the broad principles—the legislation could be introduced in the first year of a new Parliament, at the latest. Although this debate will focus on other issues thrown up by commonhold, unless we have a commitment in our manifestos to adopting it fairly and squarely, it will never go beyond a debating point.

Long leaseholders, who have or have had leases of 21 years or more, should have the right of enfranchisement to buy their commonhold at the market price, provided that the majority of them in each block—say, 75 per cent.—vote so to do. For example, let us suppose that the year is 1993, there are 20 flats in a mansion block, each on a

60-year lease, and 16 of those flat-owners vote for a commonhold, knowing the rights and obligations that the new law confers on them and the price that they will have to pay to buy out their former landlord—the owner of the block—so that they can become the freeholders. The leaseholders enfranchise themselves at that market value. The building goes commonhold and each flat converts from leasehold to freehold. The obligations for the upkeep of the flat fall on the commonholder and the commonhold association is obliged to look after the common parts.

Those obligations are clearly set out in the new draft law. Money put into a building increases the value of the common parts, such as the roof, the stairs and the outside walls, which is reflected in the worth of an individual flat, owned in perpetuity by the person who lives there. Individuals keep what they invest; their flats are their assets, not someone else's.

Building societies, reluctant to lend on short and diminishing leases, would readily lend on such freeholds. As a consequence, their value would climb and when, later, the owner of a commonhold flat wished to sell it, he would find that the market value would be higher because he would be selling a freehold; more money would be available to the purchaser because the building societies, which are so reluctant to lend on leaseholds, would willingly lend on a freehold. As all commonhold property would carry the same rights and obligations wherever they were, the market for such property would flourish. People would be selling not a pig in a poke but a standard asset as defined by law.

The owner of a commonhold flat would not find that the commonhold would prevent a row with the neighbours, that it would lower the bills or that essential maintenance work could be put off. But at least the result of that row, that bill, or that essential work would all be reflected in the value of his property—a property that was his in perpetuity.

Leasehold flats vary widely, depending on the terms of the lease, the residual freeholder, the head leaseholder, the managing agents, service charges and so on. However, commonhold flats would be identical in their legal parameters, transparent in their obligations and essentially undiminishing in their worth.

At present, residual freeholders cannot, in the absence of commonhold, sell their interest to the people who would value it most. The law does not permit them to sell the freehold to an individual flat owner. They can sell their total interest to a company formed by the leaseholders. That is a welcome recent innovation, but is too complicated to have become widespread. Under commonhold, a new market opens up for the first time. The residual freeholder can, for the first time, sell his residual interest and leasehold enfranchisement would allow him to sell what had become unsellable.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): Will my hon. Friend explain how a commonhold association would deal with an original commonholder or his successor who fails to fulfil his obligations, in payment or otherwise? Would the ultimate sanction be forfeiture of his interest?

Mr. Fishburn: The ultimate sanction would be laid out in the law and would have the full effect of the commonhold law behind it. Any member of a block would be legally obliged to meet his commonhold payments, which would be identical to the legal obligations that exist today on any leaseholders. There would be no change in tenants' obligations.

I wish to set out the full range of leasehold reforms. The introduction of commonhold involves the Lord Chancellor. We are lucky to have a Scottish Lord Chancellor because, in Scotland, the approximate equivalent reform—the flying freehold—was undertaken generations ago. As I said earlier, other countries have ordered their housing laws better.

However, the other necessary reforms reside in the Department of the Environment, where the slow progress towards commonhold appears rapid by comparison. The policy of the Secretary of State for the Environment should be to encourage the maximum amount of housing stock to come on the market and be filled. Only leasehold reform will unlock that unused stock of private housing. I know that the Minister of State welcomes commonhold as a vital adjunct to our housing policy, as I do.

Of all the changes that could be made in leasehold law, the easiest—involving fewer than 20 words in an amendment to a single Act—and the least controversial and quickest to implement rests in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987. As that Act comes under the aegis of the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment—my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo)—I am grateful that he is on the Government Front Bench. That is why, when I was asked by those who arrange these matters whether I should like the debate to be answered by the Solicitor-General or the Minister responsible for housing, I had no hesitation in choosing a Department of the Environment Minister.

The essential problem with leasehold is that, although someone may buy a 99-year lease on a property and therefore have the overwhelming interest in it, the residual freeholder, whose remaining interest is tiny in comparison, still has a disproportionately large amount of clout over the person who owns the home. That clout, as I am sure we shall hear later, is used in an increasingly disreputable way throughout swathes of the country.

The problem is not with London's large traditional landlords—they are here to stay, are part of London's heritage and think in terms of generations. A different kind of landlord has recently developed in huge swathes of London. His time horizon is not 99 years but the scope for profit in 99 weeks. Few leaseholders will ever see or know their freeholders. For example, in Kensington, often freeholders are overseas investors or companies registered outside this country and are for ever churning over between themselves the legal documents on someone's home.

It has been widely proposed that residents' associations, as recognised in the Landlord and Tenant Acts 1985 and 1987, should be allowed to appoint their own managing agents, because that is where the trouble lies. The legal cog to permit that is found in section 44 in part V of the 1987 Act. The provision that landlords appoint managing agents after consulting leaseholders—which they never do—should be reversed. Leaseholders should have the ability to appoint the managing agents after consulting the landlords. After all, it is the resident leaseholders who pay the managing agents for their work. It is an old principle, which is accepted on both sides of the House, that he who pays the piper should call the tune—residents' power to residents' associations.

[Mr. Fishburn]

At the moment, the law is unsatisfactory: by allowing a landlord to choose the managing agent, it gives residents no right of veto. In case after case in my constituency, there have been managing agents who—believe it or not—once the whole market has been scoured, turn out to be 100 per cent. owned by the freeholders. There was a property in my constituency where the managing agent's fee rose to a modest 77 per cent. of the cost of the work done. After we kicked up a fuss, the amount was reduced to 42 per cent. of the cost of the work done. That is scandalous.

In a large block in my constituency with 182 flats, managing agents control a budget of more than £1 million a year. But they will not respond to the demands or wishes of residents or even meet the transparency of accounting required by law. The managing agents are strictly and exclusively the servants of the residual freeholder.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I agree with most of my hon. Friend's comments. Does he agree that, from time to time, there are problems even in well-run blocks of flats, caused by one or two lessees who are not prepared to co-operate or to pay service or maintenance charges, however reasonable those charges may be? How would commonhold deal with those difficult people?

Mr. Fishburn: I am talking here about a reform that does not involve commonhold. Clearly a leaseholder is under a legal obligation to improve his flat. Because there is a legal obligation, the leaseholder should be able to choose the managing agent who does the required work. As I explained in answer to an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), there will be no difference between the legal obligations under commonhold and those under leasehold. There is no suggestion in any of the leasehold reforms that somehow one can get a free ride. If that happened, we would get not property reform but property collapse. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) that, in all the carefully thought out draft provisions of the Law Commission, there are the same legal obligations about upkeep of flats under commonhold as under leasehold.

To a good freeholder or good leaseholder the job of the managing agent must be strictly neutral. The agent oversees the work. That is a legal condition of the lease, and no financial advantage should accrue to either side. That being so, good freeholders do not mind much about who appoints the managing agent—the expensive work which needs to be done is paid for by the residents. That makes this reform of who appoints the managing agents all the more important.

The Department of the Environment is about to undertake what it calls a detailed evaluation study of the working of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987. It will find that, where leaseholders are involved, the law is very much in need of reform. There have been so many reforms of the Landlord and Tenant Acts 1985 and 1987, being the two most recent, that it is rather like local government Acts—the more Acts there are, the worse the situation clearly is. I know that the Government wish to review the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 and I hope that, on their recent third attempt, they will continue the momentum to give leaseholders the rights that they have sorely lacked over past years.

I hope that the Department will review the malpractices of the many bad landlords who have been getting into this market during the past 10 years. I suggest that if the Department has a little money left over, it should employ one of those bad freeholders for a day's consultancy work and get out of him the ways in which such people manage to squeeze profits out of this area of the law involving the residual freeholder and the hapless leaseholder.

While the Department of the Environment is reviewing the existing leasehold reform legislation, it may care to consider those houses that were excluded from the Leasehold Reform Act 1967, which permitted leaseholders living in houses to buy their leasehold. The Act was flawed in two ways. First, it fixed a price formula. That allowed many leaseholders to acquire their freehold at artificially low prices, which meant that they exercised their right to convert and promptly sold on for a huge profit.

That runs into the problem that I laid out as one of the first principles—transferring assets from one private individual to another. It was hardly property reform in that respect but, had leaseholders had the right of enfranchisement at market prices, discounted to recognise their leasehold entitlement, it would have been a wholly different matter.

There was a second flaw in that 1967 legislation—cynics said there was a connivance between the socialist Government of the day and some of London's larger landlords and that they were both in the market of soaking the rich. For some inexplicable reason, houses that had a rateable value of above £1,500 were excluded from the enfranchisement right. Hundreds of home owners in my constituency, and I am sure in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington), found that they were barred from owning their own home by this exclusion clause.

Twenty years later, with the abolition of rates, that clause seems an historical holdover and a nonsense. All holders of long leases should have the right to enfranchise themselves at market values. I am pleased that there is growing public pressure for that to happen. The building societies believe that they could do so under commonhold legislation. I hope so. If not, perhaps my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will consider this question in the review of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): I agree with my hon. Friend that enfranchisement should be at market value. However, does he not agree that a market value requires there to be a willing buyer and a willing seller, and some mechanism for determining the market value by an independent third party? Does he further agree that any legislation would have to embody some mechanism whereby justice can be seen to be done to both parties to the transaction?

Mr. Fishburn: My hon. Friend is right, and he knows much more about the subject than I do. If one had the right of enfranchisement and spurned—as it must be spurned—a fixed price formula, because that creates inequities, a fair valuation would have to be fixed by a third party. Hon. Members who are members of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors know that such a

valuation can be obtained for a fee. It is a skilled art, but it is quite possible for a third party—or perhaps two third parties—to arrive at a specific and agreed price.

That aspect of leasehold reform was one on which my predecessor, Brandon Rhys Williams, used to fulminate. In February 1987, he introduced a ten-minute Bill that aimed at enfranchising home owners who were artificially cut off by the limit of £1,500 of rateable value from acquiring their freeholds. He concluded that debate with words that we should remember today:

"I should like to say to those who fear that the passing of my Bill will mean the end of long leasehold as a form of tenure, that I do not regard that as a matter of very deep regret. The time has come to stop playing Normans and Saxons with regard to home ownership. Everyone should be entitled to own the home in which they live and I am not content that there should be large numbers of people living in Kensington—and other parts of inner London—who are second-rate citizens in that respect."—[*Official Report*, February 1987; Vol. 109, c. 814.]

How right he was.

The final area in which leasehold law fails to meet the proper standards of equity and transparency that we rightly expect is in the churning over of freeholds, and those monstrous things, the head leases of mansion blocks and of houses alike, with no reference to the people who own by far the largest financial stake in the properties concerned—the leaseholders. In London and the provinces, regular auctions are held at which the auctioneer holds up a bundle of papers, often a handful thick, and says, "I have here an assortment of properties and under leases. What am I bid for them?" In that way, blocks of flats and whole streets are churned and churned.

The head lease on my own flat in the heart of London was sold in such a package no fewer than four times in six years. Neither the freeholders, Grosvenor Estates, nor we tenants were able to do anything. The last sale was to a bankrupt, who cost the tenants and the estate more by far in damaged property and negligence than the sum that he paid for the marginal residual head lease.

In another case, a bundle of floating freeholds sold for £100 was found to contain the underlying freehold of one of London's largest and best known squares, Eccleston square. It was of no value in itself, and none of the square's tenants knew of its existence—until they discovered that planning permission was being sought for an underground car park in the square. I am sure we will hear from other speakers that, in the same way, whole streets of northern towns in particular have been purchased by an individual whose only intention was to work in that area of the law between freeholder and leaseholder where profit can be gained by intimidation and ill practice.

In my own constituency, many underlying residual freeholds and head leases on Kensington mansion blocks are owned not by residents of this country but by companies with addresses in far-flung but normally rather convenient islands. With every year that passes, the number of complaints grows in bitterness and frustration.

The piece of paper that is the residual freehold or head lease has in such cases become detached from the residents of the property. Except in cases such as Grosvenor Estates, in almost every instance, that piece of paper has been separated by a tenfold transaction from the original granter of the lease. In that broken continuum lies all the present misery of the law—a law which prior to commonhold, prevents individual flats from carrying their own freehold. It is a law which gives the freeholder—that distant and often expatriate animal—disproportionate rights.

How fine it would be if all the owners of residual freeholds were landlords in the proper sense of that word, but why should they be? They have picked up for only a few sous the wadge of legal documents that are the underlying freeholds of properties they might never have visited. They are far more numerous than the big London estates. They will have churned over half their portfolio by the time that the future Duke of Westminster is out of nappies. The Department of the Environment must find a way of reuniting those errant freeholds with the people who need and value them—the resident leaseholders.

I am sure that we will hear this morning that leasehold law is in tatters, complaints are mounting and various Ministries—particularly the Department of the Environment and the Lord Chancellor's Office—are responding to that unsatisfactory state of affairs by introducing commonhold and reviewing the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987. Property law is momentous in the way that we make our society tick, for it is embedded in our political institutions. Brandon Rhys Williams, with his great sweep of history, went back 900 years and said that we should stop playing Normans and Saxons. We know that the last century had as its political leitmotif the marching together of property law and political law. The great Reform Acts of the 19th century were underpinned by reforms in property law and only in that way were great advances in our democracy made.

In the first part of this century, huge council estates became in effect socialist feudal empires, which did no good either for their residents or the country. That situation now has been reversed, in a way that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House acknowledge as useful and practicable.

This morning, we are considering 3 million people who have been overlooked—3 million leaseholders who have not been part of the march of reform over the years—indeed who, in the past generation, have become far less happy. They are subject to the last sector of the property market that we must reform and unlock, so that we can truly say that Britain has a property-owning democracy.

10.18 am

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Thank you for calling me so early, Mr. Deputy Speaker—you must know that my car is pointing north with the engine running.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on his good fortune in winning the raffle and on choosing a subject in which I have shown some interest in the past six or seven years, as hon. Members will know. I wish to mention an entirely different leasehold problem from that aired by the hon. Gentleman—long leases of 999 years with a ground rent of £10 or perhaps as high as £35 a year—long leases which may be meaningless in terms of tenure.

The problem is fairly localised. It certainly exists to a large extent in the north-west of England and also—so I am told—around Bristol, in south Wales, in Sheffield and, to a smaller extent, in the north-east. During the great building boom of the 1960s, when private housing estates mushroomed on green field sites on the periphery of major conurbations—I am thinking of Greater Manchester in particular—leasehold tenure became widespread. Not to

[Mr. Terry Lewis]

put too fine a point on it, it was a way for builders not so much to keep a residual interest, as to get something "for nowt", as we say in my area. They created 999-year leases, with an annual ground rent of £15 in my case, which is representative.

The cash rolled in every year and could be collected fairly simply, so the builders were not too bothered, but with the ravages of inflation, resulting in a drop in the value of the ground rent, the leases became somewhat burdensome to the original builder. When it began to cost too much to collect the minuscule amount of money every year, the builder sold on the leaseholds, sometimes offloading them at auction.

As often happens in these cases, sharp lawyers—the type who probably sail close to the legal wind—realised that money was available, might be easy to key into, and set up a new breed of property company. I shall name some of the companies that have been most active in our area and caused most problems later. The prime motive was to buy large blocks of leases, make a quick return on investment and sell them off.

The system works in this way—once they had looked at the lease and realised that one or two clauses gave a disproportionate advantage to the lease owner, these people were able to milk the leaseholder.

The block of leases might comprise an estate of 100 or 200 houses, with ground rents of £15. As soon as the block of leaseholds was bought, the new owners sent around a man with a clipboard—a surveyor—to look around the properties and make notes.

The first that the leaseholder know about it—I use the term "leaseholder" in the loosest sense; perhaps I should say "home owner"—was when a letter dropped through the door saying that their lease had been bought. Such letters—variously threatening in tone—reminded people that one of the clauses in the lease meant that they had to ask permission of the owner of the lease if they wished to make changes to the property. Another clause said that, if they did not pay the rent on time, they could be evicted or the bailiffs could be sent in. Threats of that nature were part of the classic scam.

One of the worst property companies of that type, which has operated in my constituency as well as others, is Belfort Estates Ltd. I see the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) in the House; I think that he has been involved in the same problem. Belfort Estates is operating forcefully at present. It bought ground rents from a builder and sent a surveyor round to check on improvements. Then the company sent out letters demanding money and also exploited another clause in the lease by telling home owners that they must have an insurance with a company of its choice and that if they did not do so, they would have to pay a waiver of £10 or £15.

Without going into too much detail of the letters that Belfort Estates sent out, I shall paraphrase some of them. As part of the scam on the insurance clause, Belfort Estates reminds leaseholders of their responsibilities under the obscure lease and asks for a £10 waiver fee. Very often, the insurance company knows nothing about it.

When Belfort Estates was carrying out this nonsense a year ago, it quoted Guardian Royal Exchange Assurance as the nominated insurer. I wrote to the chairman of Guardian Royal Exchange, who quickly wrote back to tell me that the company knew nothing about it and that it was not the sort of thing that it would want to be involved in, because it was sailing close to the wind. He said that he hoped that he would be able to do something about it, and to his credit he did. He investigated and found that a sub-agent who worked on a commission basis—as insurance agents often do—had been brought into the affair by the estate management company. As a result, a reputable insurer was given something of a bad reputation in my area, but that has been cured. I understand that Royal Insurance and several other companies have been similarly affected.

I have in my hand a restrospective consent application form which is sent out with the threatening letter and is another interesting activity that these companies get up to—this is where the man with the clipboard and pencil comes in. The form lists a number of alterations that the proud owner-occupier might wish to make to his or her property. One of the clauses in the lease provides that the owner-occupier must seek permission from the leaseholder before alterations are made.

I am talking about 999-year leases, with a minimaal ground rent of £10 or £15. Therefore, the lease owner has a minimal interest in the property. The real equity, the building, can have a value of up to £125,000 in my area. The leases grant a disproportionate amount of power, were set up for a wholly different purpose 30 years ago and have become utterly outmoded and out of date.

The interesting aspect of the retrospective application form is that it drops through the letterbox with the threatening letter, and the owner-occupier is reminded that he might not have asked for permission for a variety of improvements. The letter lists charges for retrospective consent for various improvements: £95 for a detached garage; £95 for a porch; £125 for a conservatory; £150 for a single-storey extension; £175 for a two-storey extension; £175 for a loft conversion. At the bottom, it mentions other minor works, such as replacement windows and chimneys, for which £85 is charged.

If that is not an outrageous scam, I do not know what is. Such a scam, together with the threat that the owner-occupier may not be able to sell his property unless he has paid those fees to the new lease owner, will mean that the lease owner will use that clause in the lease to stop a further sale of the house. One can imagine the pain and anguish that that causes to respectable owner-occupiers.

I have already mentioned Belfort Estates, but that company is not the only one currently operating in my area. Others include Salt Properties of London Ltd., which is related to a company called Munny Ltd.—that is not my regional accent—London and Auckland of Northampton, Fountaine Freeholds of Jersey and the Channel Islands, a local firm called Valerie Hawksworth Ltd. of Farnworth, the Estates Management Company of London and Hillson, (Properties) Ltd. of Peterborough. All those companies operate in and around the north-west and, in a variety of ways, they threaten people with the loophole in leases.

Mr. Summerson: Can the hon. Gentleman inform us whether it is possible for leaseholders to acquire the leasehold under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967? If so, and if they acquire their freeholds, how much do they pay? It may be better financially for people to acquire the freehold rather than to pay out sums of money for the improvements that they have made.

Mr. Lewis: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has raised that issue. The 1967 Act allows enfranchisement and suggests a sum 10 times the annual value, so an annual value of £15 would mean a fee of £150 to be enfranchised. The problem is that the companies that I have mentioned have got around that suggestion to secure extra money from owner-occupiers by adding on management fees. We accept that legal charges would be disbursed by the owner-occupier, but management fees, handling charges and all the additional charges for any improvements that may have been made can be added.

The original lease owners were benign, in that they could not have cared less what the owner-occupier did to the property. That was covered by the planning laws, by planning applications to the local authority and by building regulations. The benign nature of the original lease owners makes it that much more probable that many people will have made alterations to their properties.

When the owner-occupier applies for enfranchisement, the characters I have mentioned demand a £150 fee. Legal charges, handling charges and management costs of another £400 or £500 may be added. A serious owner-occupier who has developed his property—I have many such records on my files—may face charges of £2,000 or more. Not every owner-occupier who is struggling with a mortgage can afford that.

The worst feature of the loophole is that a recent owner of a house can be held responsible—and some are being held responsible—for developments made to the property by the previous owners under the benign lease. I hope that that has comprehensively answered the intervention of the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson).

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): Has a typical case of the type that the hon. Gentleman has told us about been tested in the courts? If so, has it been confirmed that such payments must be paid under the law?

Mr. Lewis: To my knowledge, two cases have been tested in the courts, but there were conflicting results.

Part of the problem has been the way in which the property estate management companies have operated. Two of them have been fined £2,000 in south London for the way in which they have harrassed owner-occupiers. The specific question of the lease is rather ambiguous. The leases themselves are fairly firm and, as I understand it, a court case that was also in the London area had an ambiguous result. Therefore, the issue has not been tested as satisfactorily as the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) and I would wish.

I believe that my solution to the problem is supported by the hon. Member for Kensington. We must consider leasehold reform. In its way, the 1967 Act dealt with many serious problems at that time and was amended in 1979 to deal with the problems of that time, and to some extent it succeeded. However, the Act must be reviewed. We must embrace the notion that a lease should not be transferred to a third party without the knowledge of the owner-occupier, and certainly not without his being given the opportunity to be the first purchaser of such a lease. It is outrageous that someone can attend an auction with a block of leases representing 100 or so owner-occupiers and flog it to someone else, who in turn will try to milk as much money as possible from the leaseholders through retrospective permissions, and then attend another auction with the residuary leases and flog them to someone else.

Most of the firms that I have mentioned are interrelated in some way. Nearly all are £2 nominal companies, which should be enough to encourage the House to act. No further such leases should be established. There is no moral justification for a 999-year lease in the housing market, because it is nonsense. We should establish a new formula to calculate the sale value of an existing lease to an occupier of a long-lease residential property. That is reasonable. If the House believes that 10 times the annual value is a reasonable sum, it should ensure that the on costs in such a transaction are controlled. There should be a reasonable cost, not the unreasonable cost about which I have been speaking.

In the interim, I should like to see the leaseholder relieved of the obligation to seek permission from the ground landlord to carry out improvements. My first suggestion would cure the problem completely, but I am not naive enough to suppose that it will happen merely because of today's debate. There must be interim protection for the people whom I have mentioned.

It is not much to ask that the balance of advantage be transferred from the minuscule interests of the property companies. I hope that I have demonstrated this morning that they are not well motivated in the provision of housing. They exist to make as much money as they can, as quickly as they can and sailing as close to the legal wind as they can. I hope that the Minister will take on board my suggestions about that aspect of the leasehold problem. I am grateful for the opportunity to make my point this morning.

10.40 am

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): I am most grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you have called me so early in the debate. Like the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis), I hope to get to the north-west by battling my way up the M1. I assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and hon. Members that I intend no disrespect to the House by leaving early. I recognise the importance of today's debate.

Most of the debate about leasehold tends to concentrate on flats, although there are 1 million leasehold houses in England alone. For those who reside in leasehold houses, there can be just as much trouble from the landlord as there is in flats.

I do not wish to be cynical, least of all in this place, but I wonder whether all the brouhaha connected with flats —we hear most about flats—is related to the fact that the flat problem is concentrated in London. The hon. Member for Worsley said that the pattern of tenure of leasehold houses is patchy. It is indeed. Many hon. Members may not have confronted the problems. Some 50 per cent. of leasehold houses are in the north-west.

Why are there still leasehold houses? The vestigial reason given by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) was that positive covenants cannot run with a freehold. There may be some cases—I suspect, very few—in which it is necessary for positive covenants to run with the house. I suspect that the real reason why leasehold houses are still being built for sale is simply greed—an attempt by the owners to squeeze every last penny out of the transaction.

The Building Societies Association says:

"The leasehold system is incompatible with home ownership."

[Mr. Chris Butler]

I agree with that. Our property-owning democracy will not be complete until we tackle the anomalies of the leasehold house system.

Why is there a problem with leasehold houses? There used not to be a problem. The old landlords, who were connected with the estates, who managed them responsibly and who collected the ground rents annually without fuss, are now selling out to a different breed of landlords who are less rooted in the area and who have an eye to quick capital gains or quick profits out of the transactions in which they engage. Added to that, we find that many of the old 99-year leases, which were established towards the end of the 19th century, are now falling in, or are about to, which exposes many elderly people who live in such properties to a lot of anxiety about the roofs over their heads and to exploitation by the landlord. The position will get worse.

As the hon. Member for Worsley said, freeholds are sold in packages. At auction, the price reflects the ground rent value. The landlord works over the package as soon as he has it, to try to entice or to force the tenants to buy their freeholds, usually at a price far in excess of that established by the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. Once the landlords have made their quick capital gains, they put the package straight back on the auction market, and a new landlord, determined once again to work over the package even harder and perhaps using less scrupulous methods, gets in on the act. There is a vicious circle of decline, with increasingly less scrupulous landlords buying up packages and working them over.

The hon. Member for Worsley has already given the examples of Munny Ltd. It had hundreds of properties in my constituency and about 4,000 in the country. One of the directors of the company was Mr. Samuel Antonelli, who liked to be known, in rather avuncular fashion, as "Uncle Sam". He trades from a carpet shop on Clapton common in the east end.

The letters that he sent to thousands of his tenants were clearly designed to frighten them. He demanded money for ground rents already paid and he demanded money for insurance or substantial waiver fees if the tenants had already insured with other companies. He demanded money for the retrospective approval of extensions and alterations. He even demanded money for approval of extensions and alterations that had been known to the previous landlord. He also demanded extortionate prices for freeholds, using scarcely veiled threats.

I will quote some of the language that he used to threaten tenants:

"If you don't buy maybe you enjoy the excitement of solicitors, judges, bailiffs, moving vans and public auctions . . . Some freehold ground rent buyers and/or owners are off-shore companies, bad neighbours, former spouses, or even a black sheep member of a family. You can't pick your family, only your nose . . . Future freeholders will always be checking your lease for new money making ideas (you will learn to pay for them) . . . Think about the times that you would like to go on holiday or even just shopping and your freeholder places your ground rent in a public auction and the auctioneers ask you to stay home so that possible buyers can view your property and/or confirm location of 'For Sale' sign."

Uncle Sam added, rather gratuitously that he was

"not willing to give interviews without payments to his Charity account."

Several tenants also received letters headed in bold letters, "Breach of Lease", with various monetary demands, together with the statement:

"It is not our practice to send written demands for Ground Rents. After the due date BAILIFFS—which was always written in capital letters—"will be instructed to collect on our behalf."

Uncle Sam is not the kind of person with whom I should like to go on holiday. One should realise the impact of such language on elderly pensioners, when there are unsubtle threats of eviction and court cases, and when all sorts of financial penalties are threatened.

In a separate case in my constituency, two separate landlords demanded ground rents from the same block of properties at the same time. That was rather confusing for the tenants. They could not check with the Land Registry, because there was a continuing and lengthy dispute between the two landlords and because there are long delays in registering properties with the land registry. After failing to pay to the two ground landlords; the usual threats of bailiffs and evictions followed—the general reprehensible conduct. Even I received threats from one of the companies, Sapna, in case I ever raised the matter in the House. [HON. MEMBERS: "A breach of privilege."] It is indeed a possible breach of the privilege of the House.

The law needs to be changed. It needs only simple changes. I am afraid to say that, so far, the Government have refused me those changes. However, we now have a new regime, and it is always worth floating the possibility of introducing such simple changes. They could be piggy-backed on the commonhold Bill which we all expect in the near future. After all, if there are 1 million properties with, say, 2 million people living in them, it is a thought that the approach of June may be a suitable time to start acting on the problem.

The legislation need not be confiscatory. The hon. Member for Worsley came up with some good ideas with which I wholly agreed, but I have eight suggestions of my own to make. First, to avoid any future leasehold problem, positive covenants should be allowed to run with the freeholds of houses; it would then be possible to ban the sale of any new leasehold houses, so that the problem would not recur. Secondly, housing associations could be appointed as licensing authorities to deter the sharks from becoming involved in leasehold package operations. Thirdly, although landlords may be justified in demanding insurance, the law should be amended to prevent the unreasonable withholding of consent to the use of the tenant's chosen insurance company. That may already apply in case law, but it needs clarification.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman has raised that point. Companies —especially Jersey companies in south Wales—have insisted on fixed and tied insurance deals, no doubt engaging in a professional tie-up with insurance companies, which receive the premiums. Surely, as long as the property is adequately covered, the landlord's interest should be satisfied.

Mr. Butler: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I come from south Wales, and I remember the case of Castle Beggs Investment, which may be the one to which he is referring. Demands for insurance are a stick with which the landlord can beat the tenant to try to persuade him to buy the freehold at an inflated price.

Mr. Anderson: Moreover, there must be arrangements between companies such as Castlebeegand insurance companies, as a result of which a ground landlord is given a financial incentive by an insurance company. Such action may be a means of pressurising the tenant, but it is also a means of raising finance for the company.

Mr. Butler: It can raise some finance, but the real advantage comes from the capital gain achieved by the sale of the freehold at an inflated price. That is part of the pattern of general harassment of leasehold tenants.

Another example is the refusal by landlords to grant permission for alterations or extensions unless the tenant coughs up several hundred pounds. Statute law should prevent the unreasonable withholding of landlords' consent in such cases.

Fifthly, landlords should be statutorily obliged to serve a ground rent bill and to provide a receipt at the tenant's request. Sixthly, any offer letter—such as the one from Munny Ltd., offering the freehold at an inflated price—should state whether the sum has been calculated under the provisions of the 1967 Act and should also inform the tenant of his rights under that Act. It is surprising how few people realise that they have such rights.

Seventhly, if more than one landlord claims the right to ground rent from the same property, it should be possible for the tenant to pay the money to a solicitor until the ground landlord can prove his right through the land registry. Eighthly, ground landlords should be legally obliged to warn tenants five and 10 years before their leases expire, and to notify them again of their rights under the 1967 Act.

Those eight simple, non-confiscatory measures would crack down on irresponsible landlords and minimise harassment. I hope that my hon. Friend will take them on board, and that the manifesto writer, if he is listening, will note that he may be able to bring a smile to 2 million faces in the United Kingdom at no cost to the Government. I hope that that appeals to him.

10.55 am

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): The prologue of my speech, which relates to landlord and tenant law, is unconnected with the rest.

A particularly daft decision by the Court of Appeal on the forfeiture of leases was reported this week. Section 146 of the Law of Property Act 1925 allows leases to be ended by means of a notice of forfeiture. The same Act provides that, if such a notice is served, the tenant can serve a counter-notice and apply to the court for relief from forfeiture. Let us assume that a notice of forfeiture is served because the tenant has built a porch, which is technically in breach of his lease. The tenant need only apply for relief against forfeiture, which the court would normally grant. It might award a small amount of compensation to the landlord, but the tenant would not be penalised in the long term: the court would take the sensible view about the respective interests of landlord and tenant.

According to this week's Court of Appeal decision, if a landlord does not serve a section 146 notice and exercises his old common-law right to enter the premises and demand forfeiture of the lease in a mediaeval fashion, the law will not allow relief against forfeiture. If that is the law —as a majority decision in the Court of Appeal has decided—the law is an ass, and should be amended as soon as possible. It was a disgraceful decision. As is clear from some of the examples given this morning, an unscrupulous landlord could take advantage of that decision, and a tenant whose lease had 950 years to run could find himself homeless.

Let me begin the main part of my speech in the standard way, by congratulating the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on his luck in the ballot. I agree wholeheartedly with what he said about his predecessor, Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, who was a stalwart champion of leasehold reform. For most of the time he was out of touch with the rest of the Tory party, on that issue and many others—for instance, the right of workers to sit on the board of directors, and rights relating to pension schemes. Intellectually, he often seemed to be on the side of the Labour party.

Throughout my political life I have campaigned for political reform and I am only sorry that the hon. Member for Kensington has tabled such a wishy-washy motion. It makes no proposals apart from the proposal that the law be changed. The hon. Gentleman had the chance to table quite a lengthy motion; in view of all the problems, it is disappointing that he did not choose to specify the reforms that he would like to see.

I have been involved for a large part of my time in politics with leasehold reform, not least because part of my constituency embraces the Dulwich college estates where there have been considerable leasehold problems. Between 1962 and 1964, together with Sam Silkin, who subsequently became the Member of Parliament for Dulwich, I acted as rapporteur of the Dulwich leaseholders association. We knew that thousands of people in Dulwich, Norwood and other parts of south London risked losing their homes when their leases expired. When we held meetings at places such as Kingsdale school and William Penn school, hundreds, if not thousands, of people turned up. From that experience I know of the very deep anxiety and the gross exploitation of leaseholders. The lesson that I have learnt is that the shorter the term of the lease the greater the exploitation and the greater the anxiety.

The result of our efforts between 1962 and 1964 was a report that included recommendations about preservation of the amenities of the estate. It formed the basis of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. In 1965 a Labour Government introduced a temporary provisions Act. As it was a hung Parliament, it was impossible to get the legislation through then. The temporary Act was based largely on the report produced by Sam Silkin and me. However, the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 has stood the test of time.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: The hon. Gentleman has paid a generous tribute to the part that my Labour predecessor in Dulwich played in leasehold reform. Will he also acknowledge the part played by Sam Silkin's predecessor, Robert Jenkins—a Conservative Member who for many years fought for leasehold reform in that constituency? There has been an all-party effort and campaign in Dulwich.

Mr. Fraser: Yes, all-party, in the sense that the Conservative Member of Parliament wished leasehold reform to take place, but it was not all-party in the sense

[Mr. Fraser]

of the Conservative party endorsing the views of the Conservative Member of Parliament for Dulwich. One should draw that distinction.

Mr. Anderson: My hon. Friend will remember the very special south Wales interest. Against the views of the Conservative party nationally, brave individuals such as Sir Raymond Gower stood out. However, their views went against the strong tide of Conservative opinion, which at the time acted very much as the party of the landlord. Only people such as my hon. Friend and Sam Silkin in London, George Thomas—now Lord Tonypandy—and particularly Leo Abse in south Wales spearheaded the campaign that resulted in the Leasehold Reform Act 1967.

Mr. Fraser: That is absolutely right. We must pay tribute to those other champions of the cause.

When there was such agitation and campaigning in south Wales, London and other parts of the United Kingdom the real problem was leasehold houses. The development of leasehold houses predated the development of leasehold flats. The leases of houses were coming to an end. Almost 25 years later, there is now a problem with leasehold flats. When the 1967 Act was passed there was no problem over the leases of flats, but it has now assumed great importance.

There is a basic human—indeed, animal—instinct about wanting to be in control of the space in which we and our families live. We want to be free from domination and exploitation in our own territory. That is why we demand leasehold enfranchisement. The word "enfranchisement" has three different meanings. It means to be freed from slavery—adopting the French word "franché" meaning free, and in French, the word "franchise" means freedom. Enfranchisement also means to be given the vote. To be able to participate in the control of the mansion block in which one lives is an extension of democracy. The third meaning, more recently adopted, is that of acquiring one's freehold or superior interest. In my view, however, the third meaning embraces both the first and the second.

If we study the history of almost any country, we see that there have been movements for land reform and enfranchisement. In this country there have been campaigns by tenants, crofters, peasants, farmers, traders, craftsmen and business men. Many of them were successful. The aim was to free tenants from the shackles and domination of landlords. Without the intervention of the law, the rights of landlord and tenant are seldom equal. Almost always there is domination by the landlord of the tenant, for self-evident reasons. That can never be left to market forces.

The legal structure of the ownership of blocks of flats and terraces of maisonettes in south London and other cities has always been based on the dominance of the landlord over the tenant. That was the only viable legal structure for the ownership of flats. No other legal system was available. Our land law was invented long before long leases were granted for flats. The market developed early this century. Only now, in the 1990s, do we have the problem of the shortening leases of residential flats. Unfortunately, because of the inadequacy of the law relating to landlord and tenant, the leasehold system is the only practical way of disposing of long leases of flats, not least because—as the hon. Member for Kensington said—positive covenants are not enforceable against the successors in title when one disposes of the freehold.

All of our law relating to flats and maisonettes is built on a domination that is almost an integral part of the landlord-tenant relationship. In turn, domination is the mother of exploitation.

The law relating to flats should satisfy two basic human instincts—first, the right to be in control of one's own home and, secondly, the right to collective security.

In practice, the collective need in the case of leasehold houses does not matter very much; it is relatively unimportant. Under the 1967 Act, the lessee can always buy the freehold. It is rare to find a freehold estate that possesses any communal facilities. We are the poorer for not designing new estates with communal facilities. That is not true of Dulwich where there are woods, commons and other areas that people can enjoy. In 1967 we devised a successful system that accommodated both the desire to own the freehold and the need to preserve local amenities. However, because of the nature of our land law, there are no communal areas, drying areas, playgrounds for children or visitors parking space on new estates. All the land in a freehold development has to be conveyed away.

There is something to be said for trying to ensure that in future the commonhold system is extended to the development of what are now freehold estates so that a communal element can be provided. However, I should not be sidetracked down that path. All that matters to lessees of houses is the right to control their environment by being able to buy the freehold. For householders, the right to buy the freehold is supremely important and the right to extend a lease is marginal, but for flatholders the right to buy the lease and to have continued security is supremely important and the right collectively to buy the freehold may be more marginal.

I congratulate the Law Commission and the Lord Chancellor on producing the discussion paper, which gives us an opportunity to move to legislation. Acting on the findings of the Law Commission, the Lord Chancellor has suggested a new system of land law and has set out a series of questions that we should answer. One question that is mentioned time and again in his report is whether there should be compulsion to enable the majority of leaseholders to acquire the freehold or commonhold of their block of flats. My answer is that they should be able to use compulsion against their landlord to purchase the superior interest and to run their block of flats. Many other questions in the report should be answered in more detail.

The Government have plenty of legislative time on their hands. They planned to call an election in June and ditched a great deal of legislation. We are getting an extra week for the Easter recess, which is a sure sign that they have little business to consider. My practical suggestion is that they should introduce a commonhold Bill and commit it to a Select Committee, which could consider the Lord Chancellor's report. We should try to ensure that it reaches some agreement on the detailed provisions for commonhold reform so that after the election the Labour party can introduce its Bill, based on the Committee's mature consideration, and get on with the reform fairly rapidly. A draft Bill is available, to which one or two changes may have to be made in the light of this debate.

The Government could get on with it in this Session of Parliament. Evidence could be taken from outside bodies under the Select Committee procedure.

Three questions must be answered. First, should England and Wales—there is no problem in Scotland—adopt the option of a commonhold system of ownership, by which individual owners of flats would have perpetual rights, akin to a freehold, and would collectively enjoy the perpetual rights, responsibilities and ownership of the common parts? The answer of the Law Commission, the Labour party and almost every leaseholders' group that I have met is yes. We shall hear from the Minister shortly, but the Government's answer is a definite maybe.

Secondly, should a majority of residential leaseholders have the right collectively to enfranchise, to buy the freehold, regardless of whether the landlord agrees—that is compulsion—or is a good or bad landlord? We must consider the market value in detail because it would be discounted considerably by the rights in residence of leaseholders. As long as ransom values and marriage values are excluded, I do not think that there is a problem with valuation.

My answer, and the answer of leaseholders and the Labour party, to that second question is yes, but the Government's answer is no. Under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987, the Government had the opportunity to allow collective enfranchisement. As an environment spokesman and a Back Bencher, I have tabled amendments enabling the Government to endorse that principle, but they refused them. Following the Nugee report, they did not give leaseholders the right collectively to buy their freehold; they gave them only the right of first refusal. If a landlord tells his tenants, "I want to sell my freehold for £100,000 and I am offering it to you first", those tenants still have no right to buy the freehold. Although the landlord cannot sell it to anybody else without offering it to the tenants for £100,000, he is not compelled to sell. That was the first weakness of the 1987 Act.

The second weakness of the 1987 Act—we could not have foreseen this at the time—is that, in practice, it is impossible to get many tenants together to pay a substantial sum for the freehold, particularly if they have short-term leases. It is a good idea in principle, but the 1987 Act certainly does not give tenants the collective right to enfranchise and acquire the superior interest.

As there is no right to buy the superior interest, and because the rights of first refusal do not work well, should leaseholders of flats have the right to extend their leases in much the same way as the leaseholder of a house has the right to extend his lease by 50 years under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967? That right is not often exercised for houses because it is usually preferable to purchase the freehold. Given the shortness of leases, should the tenants of leasehold flats also enjoy that right? My answer is yes, yes, yes. I have presented private Members' Bills to that end. I have taken every possible opportunity to amend the Government's housing legislation to that end. I drafted Labour housing policy to that end——

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuncaton): The hon. Gentleman encourages us to allow people to extend their lease. Would not he want to limit the period for which leases can be extended?

Mr. Fraser: I have thought about that, and I think that the right interim solution is for all leaseholders to be allowed to extend their leases by up to 50 years. Some will say that a block of flats may have a life of less than 50 years. That can be the only reasonable objection to my proposal. One could add the proviso that if the life of the block of flats was less than 50 years, the extension should be for less than 50 years. We must bear it in mind, however, that the central thrust of the Government's proposals is that if the tenants acquire the commonhold, that problem will exist in any case. Therefore, my preferred solution is for tenants to have the right to extended leases and then to be left to sort things out for themselves. Let the tenants, not the landlord, make the decisions.

Leaseholders agree with me that there should be a right to extend leases. Leaseholders are sometimes driven to distraction by the thought of their dying leases. As they get shorter and shorter—certainly once they have less than 50 years to run—they become unsaleable at a reasonable price that would enable people to acquire another home. The properties become unmortgageable for a reasonable advance. Moreover, it becomes uneconomic to improve them, and that affects the whole community. If one has a short lease, it becomes uneconomic to install expensive double glazing, central heating or insulation. I have given three sound reasons why, in the public interest, we should allow the extension of such leases.

Leaseholders are bitter about their exploitation at the hands of freeholders and property speculators who sometimes sit like vultures on the branches of their superior property interests, feasting on the dying leasehold terms. Let me give the House an example that I came across the other day. In this case, the freeholder is prepared to consider granting an extension of lease, but his solicitor has told the tenant that he must give an unconditional undertaking to pay not less than £460 in solicitor's costs before the terms of the extended lease are seen—even if they turn out to be unacceptable and even if the work involved is worth much less than £460.

A second case involves someone who lives quite close to my mother in Streatham. She is a lady in her 80s. There are only about five years left on the lease of her flat. She has no prospect of being able to sell or live anywhere else. On any reasonable valuation, the cost of purchasing the freehold or getting an extended lease would be about £25,000. In this case, however, an unscrupulous landlord who had not been seen for getting on for 12 years, extracted £59,000—the life savings of that woman, who wanted the security of her own home. No kind of market is operating under those circumstances.

In my constituency I have many rows of maisonettes —a familiar scene in London and perhaps in other English cities. The properties are very desirable; they are almost like houses. Unfortunately, the leases have only about 30 or 40 years to run. The landlords and freeholders of those maisonettes routinely charge two or three times what on any objective assessment is a reasonable price for providing an extension of the lease.

The company that owns the freehold of a block of flats in Peckham Rye—I think that it is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden)—is now charging about £8,000 to extend leases that still have about 50 years to run. I calculate that if one invested that £8,000 at current compound rates of interest, it would be worth well over £1 million by the time the existing leases expired. On any reasonable calculation, the fee that should be

[Mr. Fraser]

charged for the extension of those leases is about £2,500. I do not say that the landlord is unscrupulous in other ways, but his valuation is certainly unscrupulous. He is trading on the fears and anxieties of elderly tenants and those who simply cannot move from one part of London to another because of the shortness of their lease. In addition to demanding an excessive price for the extension of the leases, the freehold company is charging a minimum of £460 for solicitors' costs and £250 for agents' fees, even though practically nothing may be done and the agent, if not the landlord, is a captive.

Ask any leasehold flat owner with a dwindling term whether he should have the right to extend the lease and the answer will be yes. The creation of commonholds does not solve that problem. Let me put the question clearly to the Minister: should the resident owners of long leases of flats have the right to extend those leases, analogous to the rights of householders under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967? My answer is yes; the Labour party's answer is yes; the leaseholders' answer is yes. Unfortunately, I suspect that the Minister's answer will be no and that there is about as much chance of a Conservative Government providing the right to extend leases as there is of a prioress turning up at an Ann Summers tea party.

Let us examine the Tory party's record on this matter. The Conservatives voted against the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 and called it Rachmanism in reverse. Since then, they have had 12 years, but they have never given the right to people collectively to purchase the freehold of flats or individually to extend the leases on their flats. The 1987 Act gave them another opportunity. I tabled an amendment that would have provided for the right to extend. Let me quote the answer that we got from the Minister on that occasion:

"Anyone buying a lease should not be under any illusion about the nature of the interest which she or he is purchasing . . . Leaseholders of flats do not have the right to extend their leases, although they may be able to negotiate an extension."

We know all about negotiating extensions and about exploitation. The Minister continued:

"I am not sure that we would be justified in giving such a right, which would override the terms of a contract that had been freely entered into between the landlord and the tenant."

But the contract had not been freely entered into at all: the tenant had no choice in the matter. It is a case in which the law needs to intervene.

The Minister then said:

"The hon. Member for Norwood argued, rightly, that the Leasehold Reform Act has been on the statute book for 20 years. What an issue it was, I understand, 20 years ago in one part of my constituency in Oxford. That is certainly accepted by all political parties, but that is not in itself an argument or justification for leasehold enfranchisement of those living in flats." [*Official Report*, 5 May 1987; Vol. 115, c. 600.]

The Minister was talking about my amendment to allow leaseholders of flats with short leases the right to extend them. I should like a different answer today, although I suspect that I will hear the same answer as I received back in 1987.

The Government could have changed the law in the Housing Act 1980, the Housing and Building Control Act 1984 and the Landlord and Tenant Acts of 1987 and 1988. I gave the Government the chance to change the law in amendments that I tabled. However, they did nothing.

The real test of the Government's good will towards leaseholders of flats can be seen in the Housing Act 1988. In that Act the Government ratted on leaseholders. They treated them treacherously. When the lease ended, a person used to become a statutory tenant with a rent fixed by the rent officer and with generous relief from schedules of dilapidations. That was an important part of the tenant's negotiating rights. If the tenant was negotiating to buy the freehold or to extend the lease, he could tell the landlord that he had a statutory tenancy with a fair rent when that lease ended. That would make some difference to the value. However, the Government ratted on that in the Housing Act 1988.

According to the 1988 Act, once a long lease ends, the tenant will no longer be a statutory tenant and have a fair rent. He will be an assured tenant without any rent control. That substantially altered the bargaining scales between the landlord and the tenant. By ensuring that the leaseholder was an assured tenant when the lease ended, the Government robbed them of the rights of succession for a spouse or other members of the family if the leaseholder were to die after receiving the assured tenancy at the end of the lease. We know something about the Government's attitude in this respect.

Over the years improvements to leaseholders' rights have always attracted obstruction and resistance from the Tory party. The word "Tory" is an Irish word that symbolises the absent exploiting landlord. Except in an attempt to save Tory seats such as Dulwich, Streatham, Hampstead, Westminster and North Kensington, it seems that the Conservative party has little real interest——

Mr. David Martin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fraser: I was about to say that the minimum qualification for Tory party policy is to save the Finsbergs, the Fishburns, the Sheltons, the Bowdens and the Wheelers and—if we had any—the dealers as well.

Mr. Martin: The hon. Gentleman is concentrating on matters that he says divide the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) is trying to promote a reform for which there is wide support on both sides of the House. Some of us with constituency interests are waiting to support that reform. We do not want to hear a diatribe against Government policy which could be made in debates on Government Bills, not in private Members' time.

Mr. Fraser: At the end of the day, that depends on the Government introducing a Bill.

The Labour party's policy with regard to leaseholders has been clear and consistent for many years. I quote from Labour party policy from as long ago as 1985—I remember it well because I drafted most of it myself—and the policy remains the same today:

"We will give leaseholders important new rights and safeguards: the right to hire and fire the managing agents in blocks of flats;

maximum limits for management fees;

the right to have freeholder's accounts examined by an auditor of the tenant's choice . . .

the right to extend the lease (as is the law on houses);

the right to buy the freehold collectively;

the right to covenants in leases that, for instance, clearly fix the responsibility to repair and ensure . . .

revised legal framework for the sale of flats and maisonettes."

That policy encompasses the commonhold system that we have been discussing this morning.

We have stated our policy consistently and argued for it for some time. Commonhold will certainly come.

However, the immediate complementary need with commonhold is the right for leaseholders to extend their leases. My experience of these matters dates back nearly 25 years. I believe that the Government do not have the guts, the determination or the conviction to make that change. We await a Labour Government to provide the solution.

11.35 am

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on his twofold good fortune. First, he has given us the opportunity to debate leasehold reform; secondly, he has had the good fortune to win the draw to sponsor a private Member's Bill to open up, and perhaps place on the statute book sooner rather than later, the opportunity for the tenure of commonhold. My colleagues and I are delighted to be co-sponsors of the proposal and we hope that it will become legislation.

I noted the claim of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington to apostolic succession to Brandon Rhys Williams in inheriting the mantle of leasehold reform in Kensington. I can claim a similar succession. As I said earlier, two of my successors in Dulwich, one Labour and one Conservative, were greatly concerned with the need to ensure that the proper rights of a landlord are related to the proper rights of a tenant in the relationship between leasehold and freehold and the difficulties of trying to reconcile what can sometimes be conflicting interests.

The history and development of Dulwich has been the history and development of English land law, and the development of land under the freehold and leasehold systems. I was interested to note that my hon. Friend for Kensington attributed scriptural authority to the idea of leasehold and its relationship to freehold, stating that, on that, "all law stands."

I wondered whether, on this occasion beyond all others, our Chaplain this morning might have varied the time-honoured Prayers said in this House and used one of Cranmer's collects from the Prayer Book:

"Let us pray for all those who are troubled in mind, body or estate."

Today we are concerned with those who are troubled in estate. We have all witnessed the uneasy relationship between leaseholders and particularly those leaseholders for whom the leasehold is their home, and freehold landlords, especially commercial landlords.

My remarks this morning will be largely addressed to the interests of my constituents in Dulwich, many of whom are leaseholders of the estate governors of Alleyn's College of God's Gift. I have given them their full title, but in future I will refer to them as the Dulwich estates governors.

For the past 300 years, there has been benefit in the way in which the estate governors have exercised their stewardship and developed Dulwich. Over the years, into the 1980s, they have maintained Dulwich as a highly desirable residential suburb of London. Their good stewardship has ensured that the amenities of the locality are maintained. Having said that there is great good will and stewardship on the landlords' part, and while there is no malice or bad feeling on the part of the leasehold tenants, there are clear signs that problems are arising, and that there must be a new way of looking at the relationship.

That is not peculiar to the Dulwich estate or to the other large landed estates in London. Over the years, there have been makeshift arrangements to try to find something that approximates to a commonhold.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington said that the idea of a flying freehold is not unknown in Scotland. Indeed, it is well established there. There is evidence that certain developers or ground landlords have attempted to sell, with their flats, what they purport to be flying freeholds, but that is not a creature known to English law. In a sense, it is an unidentified flying object from north of the border. Closer inspection when it has landed in England and Wales reveals that it does not bear real scrutiny. Great scepticism naturally surrounds this, because what purports to be flying freehold is nothing more than a lease in fancy dress, masquerading as a freehold. It enjoys few of the benefits that a leasehold should have, and certainly none of the benefits that a freehold should have.

Clearly, therefore, there is a gap that needs to be filled, and it is the duty of the legislature to fill it. Although this morning's debate may not be taking place in the most thronged of Houses, it is nevertheless an opportunity to see that this matter is put on the agenda for further discussion. We are looking for a framework in which the uneasy relationship that exists in many places between the leaseholder and the freeholder can be developed.

We must remember the interests of the leaseholder whose flat is his home. As has already been said, there is some magic about the word "home" as opposed to "house". Most people who are owner-occupiers regard their home as more than a commercial investment; it is more of a personal investment in which they have invested not only their money, but their personality. In due course, they may wish to capitalise on that investment with some benefit—perhaps on retirement or when their family has grown up and moved away—and move, perhaps, to less costly and smaller accommodation. They wish to take with them the surplus that they have realised on selling the original investment.

That is a benefit which has been enjoyed by the freeholders of houses and many people recognise it as a provision for their retirement. Therefore, it seems particularly unfair on leasehold tenants who have purchased long leases, perhaps early in their working lives, and who, for a period, see the lease increase in value, but who then find that it declines in value just when they want to capitalise on it and make other arrangements for their retirement. They are not enjoying the benefits that they could rightfully expect from the investment that they have made in their own homes over the years. Therefore, the social context of this issue—let alone the legal and financial context—should give us cause for further consideration.

This problem could and should be solved by the proposals that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington has explained to the House today and advanced in his Bill. There is clearly a need for change. I have seen an example in my constituency—I am not referring to the Dulwich college estate in this instance—of the way in which the tenants of a block had the opportunity some 20 or so years ago to purchase their flat from the former freeholder, the Greater London council.

At that stage, what amounts to an early model of a commonhold was established. There is a management company through which the owner-occupiers with long

[Mr. Gerald Bowden]

leases individually have an equity stake in the freehold. Therefore, they are both equity stakeholders in the freehold interest of the block and possessors of a leasehold interest in the flat that they occupy. That system takes account not only of long-lease occupants who do not wish to join in but of tenants who have remained council tenants and who wish to remain in the block. In any future Committee stage that considers these proposals Ruskin Park house in Camberwell should be regarded as an illustrative model for future commonhold developments.

I return to the Dulwich college estate, where recognition of the need for change exists not only among the tenants who wish to purchase a longer lease or to ensure that they have a greater say in the way in which their block is managed or to enjoy something broader and wider than their leasehold interest at the moment, because that natural desire is also recognised by the estate governors—the landlord. At present, they are embarking with good will upon an experiment with one block to ascertain the way in which such a model might be developed.

However, there is a need for urgency as well as good will. Although negotiations can be conducted with good will, we also need a statutory framework. That is why I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington that we need a Bill containing such provisions, and we need it now. Putting my own gloss on it, I suggest that a solution might be achieved by establishing a statutory framework while holding voluntary negotiations with the freeholders to move towards a commonhold when a substantial number of the leasehold occupants of the block —for example, 75 per cent.—wish to do so.

That should be attempted on a voluntary basis first, because that would help both sides, especially where the landlord is benign and has an interest in the well-being of the estate as well as the leasehold tenants. However, if the voluntary negotiations fall, founder or come up against some impossible obstruction, mandatory arrangements should be brought into play. Many obstructive landlords might put on the face of a benign landlord with a view to protracting the negotiations and hoping that the request and requirements to move to a commonhold would dissolve. We should therefore be able to move to a statutory phase if the voluntary negotiations should fail.

The voluntary negotiations would be expedited if existing leaseholders were given the opportunity in the meantime statutorily to extend their leases for a period. That would not only protect the leaseholder, but would show that there would not be any immediate residual advantage to the freeholder in not negotiating, or in dragging his feet, until the majority or all the leases fell in, when he could then negotiate from a different basis.

The need for such change is agreed by all parties. I am not making any party political point, nor am I claiming solely to represent a particular constituency interest in the face of opposition from the Government. All sides have the will to look at this problem afresh and find ways of dealing with it. We could take this issue forward from a debate such as this morning's if that will can be shown to exist in the House to the same extent as the need exists in our constituencies. My constituents who have an interest in these matters—some of them vote for me, of course, while others certainly do not—will benefit from the proposals that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington has outlined. I hope that it will be possible to introduce legislation at an early moment.

11.50 am

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) for giving us the opportunity to discuss leasehold reform. At quite an early stage in my representation of Portsmouth, South I received an extremely articulate letter from the chairman and the secretary of the St. Helen's Court lessees association. St. Helen's Court is a substantial block of flats on the front at Southsea. The letter summed up the position that has been so elegantly and expertly presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington, especially in terms of the leasehold reform that is required.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington conducted a fascinating tour of the history of leasehold. He explained how it came about and the developments that took place, especially in the 19th century, which were subject to the leasehold arrangment. One of the main signs that leasehold has become a dated concept and that something needs to be done is that it is an arrangement which is no longer employed. No one erects blocks of flats and uses the arrangement that is set out in the letter which I received from the St. Helen's Court lessees association.

Instead, we have the sort of arrangement which my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) mentioned, although in a slightly different context—that flat owners have a share in a management company which owns the freehold. If an owner passes on his flat within the block, he also passes on a share in the management company. That company organises the common parts externally and internally, to the satisfaction, it is to be hoped, of all those living within the block.

I had experience of such an arrangement when I lived in a block of eight flats in Hammersmith. That was when I first owned a place in London jointly with my brothers and sister. Developments along these lines are common. The arrangement ensures that those who are buying what is effectively a leasehold have control of the freehold, with a share in a management company. The fact that the arrangement is used so widely rather than the arrangements that existed traditionally for leaseholds shows how unsatisfactory the leasehold arrangement has become. It is an arrangement that is not used in modern times.

I welcome to the Government Front Bench my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. I shall listen with fascination when he makes his contribution to the debate. I have been in correspondence with my hon. Friend, as I was with his precedessors, on behalf of the extremely articulate people who make up the St. Helen's Court lessees association. I shall couple what I have to say about their representations and the representations that they would wish to make through me with what appears in the Lord Chancellor's document on commonhold. I believe that the Lord Chancellor is approaching the issue in good faith with a desire to act positively. I have no doubt that his experience of Scotland will motivate him strongly to act practically to improve English law in this respect.

There is a good summary at the end of the consultation document. The heading on page 32 is

"Particular issues on which comments are sought".

I shall briefly go through some of the issues and highlight areas where I believe that practical arrangements can be made for commonhold that could be incorporated in a Bill sooner rather than later. The first is:

"Should there be a provision whereby the long-leaseholders of premises suitable for conversion to a commonhold could require the freeholder (and the owners of superior leases) of wholly or mainly residential buildings to sell them the freehold (and superior leases) in order to convert to commonhold?"

The question in the consultation document whether there should be compulsion is an important one and the answer is that there should be.

The second is:

"What should be the basis of payment for the freehold (and superior leases)? In particular, should there be any, and if so, what qualifications on open market value?"

The simple answer to that is that there should be market value with no element of confiscation in legislation. It is felt that there should be reference to ground rents in dealing with valuation.

The third is:

"Should any compulsion provision be available only if all the long-leaseholders want to take advantage of it, or should it be available to a specified majority of them? If the latter, what majority should be specified?"

The answer is 75 per cent. I understand that 80 per cent. has been canvassed, but 75 per cent. would be a sensible balance and it is one that I support.

The fourth point is:

"If the compulsion provision were to be available at the instance of a majority, how should the position of the non-participants be dealt with after the establishment of the commonhold?"

What to do with those who either do not want to or cannot afford to go along with the new commonhold arrangements is a crucial issue. The answer can be simply summed up—only the leaseholders who wish to convert should be involved and they would have to bear the cost of the conversion. Those not wishing to convert, and their successors, may subsequently join the commonhold association on payment of a sum to be agreed. I leave it in that form for the moment—on payment of a sum to be agreed. In the meantime, they should pay any ground rent and maintenance charges to the commonhold association. That would be a sensible arrangement.

The fifth point is:

"Should there be provision to override the opposition of mortgages of long-leaseholders?"

As we have heard, the building societies are very much involved and we need to satisfy the mortgagees. Where necessary, application could be made to the courts to override the opposition of mortgagees. If they were unreasonably withholding consent to the arrangements, that would be a matter for the courts.

My last point on the issues on which comments have been sought by the Lord Chancellor relates to whether there should be a ban on long leases of commonhold units. As the report said:

"Bearing in mind the implications for compulsion, should any such ban cover all long leases, or should it only apply to the grant of long leases following the establishment of the commonhold?

Should the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 be extended to provide for the enfranchisement of long-leases of commonhold flats (if it is decided not to ban long-leases of commonhold units)?"

My short answer to that is that there should be no disagreement about the granting of long leaseholds within the sphere and control of the commonhold association, once set up. That would be a matter for the association.

Those are the particular views that I wish to express. They are highly sensible, and are based on my constituency interest. I have already referred to the St. Helen's Court lessees association, the chairman of which is Mr. Gould and the secretary of which is the honourable alderman Frank Sorrell, both of whom have been most helpful in informing my mind on those issues. They represent many more people in my constituency who have problems similar to those that they face.

My final and crucial point is to question whether we have a Minister who will vigorously promote such reform in his Department. Without that vigour and enthusiasm, the commonhold provisions are never likely to reach the statute book. I personally know my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary. I must ask whether he is the sort of chap to hustle when the going gets tough. My experience of my hon. Friend on the golf course would lead me to say, "Yes, he is that sort of chap," but I wanted further guidance.

I looked at Andrew Roth's "Parliamentary Profiles" to see whether I could learn anything about my hon. Friend that I had not learnt from my personal contact with him. The only problem is that the book is rather out of date, because the modern version has not yet reached "Y". I noted one or two of my hon. Friend's past performances. He contested Bedwellty against the Leader of the Opposition in 1974, but failed to win it—not a good start. However, it gets better. He is described as

"Energetic, ambitious, independent minded, socially-conscious reformer."

That last word was the one that I was looking for, and most wanted to see. My hon. Friend is a reformer, so we can guarantee that, to the best of his ability, he will be promoting these ideas within his Department—ideas wh ichhave achieved such support not only on the Conservative Benches, but on the Labour Benches.

Whether before a new Queen's Speech in November, or at the time of a general election, I look forward to seeing my hon. Friend in his shirtsleeves, with those colourful braces that were on display at the time of the leadership election, promoting this reform as a major pillar of Government policy. We shall never again suffer the loss of a by-election such as we suffered yesterday if we have in the forefront the reform of leasehold and the creation of commonhold.

I have no doubt that, once the full force of the Under-Secretary's enthusiasm and energy is applied to this problem—I am delighted that he was chosen by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington to reply to the debate—and works in conjunction with the Lord Chancellor's ideas, we shall be able to show our constituents that the Government have achieved a reform that is second to none.

11.55 am

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on choosing this important subject. I canvassed in the by-election that brought him to this place—although not for him. I have never spoken to so many answerphones as when I walked through the streets of his constituency.

[Mr. George Howarth]

I am conscious of his sharp constituency interest in the subject. It is proper and commendable that he should take such a line on behalf of his constituents.

I, too, should declare an interest, because I own a leasehold property and am sure that I would benefit in some way from any reform of the legislation, along with 3 million others. Therefore, I shall not hesitate to continue to pursue the matter.

Over the years, many problems have arisen from a legal framework that was never intended to do what it currently does. The problems can be split into three categories. The first is the neglect and mismanagement aspect of leaseholds, the worst problems of which appear to relate to maintenance, management and insurance of buildings, together with the difficulties of getting value for money from service charges. The problem of mismanagement is rooted in the fact that responsibility for the upkeep of a property tends not to lie with the leaseholder, who is likely to be both the occupier and the person with the greatest financial interest in the property. The landlord who controls the management of a block of flats is usually non-resident and therefore has little incentive to have work done promptly, efficiently and economically. Several speeches have brought home that point strongly.

When repairs are carried out, a landlord or managing agent almost always has effective control over the choice of contractor, while the leaseholder has little option but to pay the bills. At worst, that unequal arrangement can lead to leaseholders paying large sums for virtually nothing, for fear of forfeiting their leases if they refuse to pay the charges levied by the landlord or management agency with which they do not agree. Although methods of legal redress exist, they are often expensive and difficult to use.

The second major concern is the difficulty in selling leasehold flats. Again, hon. Members on both sides of the House have outlined that problem, which involves difficulties over the satisfactory resale value of a leasehold flat, especially where the terms of a long lease have diminished significantly. That problem is primarily caused by the fact that leases are granted for a limited period only, after which ownership reverts to the freeholder. Naturally, the value of the property declines towards the end of the lease.

Research has shown that mortgage lenders require that the term of a long lease is between 25 and 35 years beyond the term of the mortgage, which is usually 25 years. Thus, flats can become unmortgageable and greatly devalued on the open market, with leases as long as 60 years to run. Many 99-year leases were granted in the 1950s and 1960s, and will soon be approaching the 60-year threshold. We can expect the saleability problem, which is already too common, to worsen.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) outlined amply the third set of problems and my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) mentioned them in a brief intervention. They do not relate specifically to London but involve south Wales, the south-west and, to a limited extent, the north of England.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worsley put the case forcefully. In the 1960s, developers offered long freeholds —usually for 999 years—at low ground rent. Unfortunately, because the value of that ground rent has diminished over the years, the buildings are often auctioned—my hon. Friend gave an exhaustive list of firms in his constituency active in that regard—and sold to organisations that deliberately set about harassing owner-occupiers under obscure clauses in leases. In the words of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), that is very much the unacceptable face of capitalism. The problem must be resolved.

Hon. Members with constituency interests have put the case forcefully, but the most extensive evidence has been collected by the Consumers Association. I am grateful to the association for the extensive briefing which it has given me and, I am sure, other hon. Members who bothered to ask for it. The association highlighted difficulties arising specifically from the major problems that I mentioned. In 1990, the association published a request in *Which?* for letters on this subject. The letters come under several headings, the first of which is neglect of the building fabric. One person said:

"All 17 residents are extremely annoyed and unhappy about paying for a Service we are not getting . . . The downpipes on the outside walls were neglected over several years which resulted in dampness which has blasted the plaster in my dining room . . . the Managing Agents are a joke —their internal administration is farcical and, above all, we believe they are not complying by the terms of the lease."

Under the heading of delays in getting repairs done and escalating costs, a resident stated,

"I live in a block of eight converted flats, all of which are owner-occupied . . . since August 1988 . . . Correspondence began at this time to urge the landlod to undertake the repairs needed without delay. He was always slow to respond, if at all, and evasive . . . The landlord to date has not yet instructed that these repairs go ahead, with the result that the dry rot has spread over the past two years. The flat in question is now uninhabitable, as are some of the rooms in the flat downstairs".

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman appreciates that, under earlier Acts, tenants can go to court to obtain a management order. Tenants can also go to environmental health officers of public health departments. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the means are already available, but does he agree that they should be used more?

Mr. Howarth: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. As has been said repeatedly in the debate, it is often difficult to track down a managing agent. A name will be recorded somewhere, but it may be difficult to find the person. Often, a freeholder lives abroad or there may be no record of his name. It can also be expensive to apply the law and difficult to track down the person who should be taken to court. I accept that provisions already exist, but the evidence is that it is difficult to pursue those people.

On the subject of unreasonable freeholders, another resident wrote:

"The vendor has failed to maintain the property, breaching the terms of the lease. He was claiming moneys for insurance, repairs, solicitors fees, and cleaning of common parts—none of which have been substantiated and which I wholly refute. The property has also been greatly devalued as a result of all the problems, plus the fact that I have spent in the region of £3,000 without any result."

That answers to some extent the point made by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg).

The resident of a large block of flats wrote:

"Our management agents are renowned crooks, who take advantage of the overwhelming power they have in order to make as much money as quickly as possible, by asking high service charges, while on the other hand flaunting their responsibilities and the law. Mr. G uses his own building contractor, D Property Services, to do repair and

redecoration work on the buildings . . . Apparently, even if lower estimates are obtained by residents, they come back with a slightly lower estimate again. They then commence work and find other things that need doing. The bill then goes up and up . . . We are not even sure whether we have proper buildings insurance cover . . . We as a residents' association are at our wits end. We obtained a surveyor's report to estimate repair work to the building, which is put at £70,000 plus. This is incredible, because in 1985, £41,000 was spent on the building . . . Apparently, the flat roof was redone, but five years later needs total replacement. How can that be? It is obvious that the sum of £41,000 did not all go on the building."

Absentee landlords and the lack of contact with them were the subject of another letter to *Which?*:

"Our leaseholder has emigrated to Australia, where we send our annual cheque for ground rent and 'maintenance'. There has been no maintenance to the property since it was converted. Even after the hurricane last year, the already-leaking roof was not repaired, and the owner of the top flat has had to repair it herself. The management company turned out not to exist."

On service charges and accounts, another resident wrote:

"I paid the first year's service charge and then asked to see the accounts, to see how the money had been spent—which I understand they are obliged to do. After five years, I am still waiting. I usually receive a bill each year, and I tell them that I cannot pay it until I see the accounts for the first year. Consequently, I have paid nothing since 1985. Fortunately, we have not needed any major repairs, but reports of minor ones have always been ignored."

Another letter received by *Which?* stated:

"The new freeholder imposed a flat-rate service charge of £50 for the cost of administering the lease. We have steadfastly refused to pay this sum . . . The leaseholder has made no attempt to examine, visit or maintain our property. All running repairs have been arranged and paid for with the other flat owners."

Building insurance was the subject of another letter to *Which?*:

"In early February this year, we were hit by a hurricane . . . The wall holding up the land below our principal approach road collapsed, closing our approach road . . . The lessor, it emerges, has not insured us sufficiently to cover this kind of event. Dealing with the insurers is complicated by the fact that our policy is not in our names. So far C's"—

the lessors—

"have done nothing about this, and over three months have passed since the loss adjuster's report was submitted to them. What can you do with such casual management? One feels quite helpless. Meanwhile, three of our 12 apartment owners are offering their apartments for sale. Despite much interest, all prospective buyers say the same thing—'We will only be interested when your present difficulties are solved.' So these lovely properties stand blighted . . . If we were freeholders, we could all club together and get the work done."

Those are just a few of the many examples that could be cited of the problems that confront leaseholders.

It is our intention to be co-operative, so, on behalf of the Labour party, I make an offer to the Minister. Earlier this week, my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) published a document entitled "New Rights for Leaseholders", which makes four main points. First, we call for the right to buy the freehold collectively from non-resident freeholders at market value; secondly, for the right to extend the lease; thirdly, for the right to choose managing agents; and, fourthly, for the right to examine the freeholder's accounts. The first demand is in line with the principle being articulated today.

In answer to the question of the hon. Member for Kensington, something to that effect will be included in the Labour party manifesto. He will have to take up with his hon. Friend the Minister or his colleagues what goes into the Conservative manifesto.

My offer is that, if the Government take up one, two, three or all of those demands, made in our policy statement earlier this week, the Opposition will co-operate in every way to ensure that the legislation—which we hope will be proposed by the Government—gets on to the statute book. We would do nothing to detain or delay such legislation and would co-operate as fully as possible, by whatever means—either those suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) in his knowledgeable and experienced speech or those suggested by other hon. Members.

I understand that the Minister is to speak immediately after me. He can intervene now to accept our offer, if he wishes. It is a genuine offer.

There are many scandals in our society, but this problem is a major scandal and need not happen. The history of the problem has been explained in some detail and we believe that there is support on both sides of the House for reform. There is certainly a need for reform, as has been illustrated by the cases that I and other hon. Members have quoted.

The hon. Member for Kensington has introduced the motion in good faith, and the House should take it up in good faith. The Opposition are certainly willing to co-operate. All we need are the right signals from the Minister when he replies. Then something could be put on the statute book this side of even an early general election.

12.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tim Yeo): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) for initiating such a timely debate on leasehold reform and pay tribute to his eloquent and forceful speech. I know that he has a long and deep interest in the subject. In the relatively brief time that he has been in the House he has attempted to introduce several Bills to improve the position for leaseholders.

I noticed in *The Guardian* diary the other day a report that Mr. Gorbachev told the Prime Minister that he thinks that a leasehold system is best for housing in Russia. My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington might like to make his contribution to the reform of the Soviet system by travelling to Moscow to advise on the benefits of leaseholds.

My hon. Friend has continued a long campaign, started by his distinguished predecessor, the late Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, to improve the present leasehold system in England and Wales. It is a system which many consider to be less than ideal for home ownership.

My hon. Friend received support from hon. Members on both sides, including my hon. Friends the Members for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) and for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin), who paid a rather over-generous tribute to my qualities as a reformer. His tactful and diplomatic use of language showed the House why he is so well qualified to be the Parliamentary Private Secretary to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary—a position which has had a number of distinguished occupants.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington has many constituents living in leasehold flats for whom he is a powerful and effective advocate. I am well aware that

[Mr. Tim Yeo]

problems have arisen with the management of such properties. Those problems are a source of great anxiety and concern to many leaseholders.

Sometimes it is suggested that mangement problems associated with leasehold flats are inherent in the basic system of leasehold ownership and that they can be overcome only by allowing long leaseholders of flats to acquire the freehold—in the same way as long leaseholders of houses can usually acquire them under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. Or it is suggested that the difficulties would be resolved were the leasehold system abolished. I am not convinced that that is the case.

In many instances, the leasehold system works perfectly well, with no cause for dissatisfaction on the part of landlord or leaseholder. It certainly works well in the case of commercial property. However, I accept that there have been many cases where things have gone wrong, especially with the management of large blocks of flats and sometimes in sheltered accommodation where long leaseholders have a legitimate cause for complaint. That is why the Government have given priority to tackling abuses of the leasehold system and have introduced those provisions now contained in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987.

At the same time we have been pressing ahead with the development of an entirely new way of owning property, called commonhold. This is a timely debate because the consultation by the Lord Chancellor on the details of our proposed commonhold legislation, which was published last year, ended only last week. It is timely also because the commonhold proposals have generated much public interest in leasehold matters generally and particularly in the question of leasehold enfranchisement for the owners of flats and maisonettes.

Many hon. Members will have received approaches from members of the commonhold flats campaign, whose aim is to give leaseholders of flats the right to purchase the freehold of the block in which they live.

The debate is also timely because, as the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) said, only yesterday the Labour party published a statement outlining its position on this issue. It is trying to leap on board the bandwagon by announcing its own commonhold proposals. It is convenient for the Labour party that we have already published a draft Bill——

Mr. Fraser: Obviously the Minister's speech was written before he heard the debate. We excuse him as he did not write it himself.

We proposed a commonhold system in the policy statement from which I quoted and which was published in 1985. The Government did not initiate the proposal for commonhold—it was initiated by the Law Commission.

Mr. Yeo: We have already had a long tour down memory lane from the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), most of it irrelevant to the debate. Clearly, he has not seen the news release published by the Labour party which described the proposal as a "new package of rights." It is convenient for the Labour party that we have published a draft Bill as that will save it the trouble of working out its own proposals.

The main difference between the Government and the Opposition is that we are analysing the results of the consultation before finalising the details of the Bill. As usual, the Opposition have rushed ahead without waiting to see the results of that consultation. The degree of interest in the subject within the Labour party can be judged by the fact that the hon. Member for Knowsley, North has been supported by only two colleagues this morning.

Mr. Howarth: Three colleagues.

Mr. Yeo: Three colleagues; I beg his pardon.

This is also a timely debate because later this month I shall receive a report on the research into the implementation of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987. That Act considerably strengthened the position of leaseholders living in blocks of flats and for the first time gave them the right of first refusal. That is the right of leasehold tenants collectively to purchase the freehold of a block where the landlord is proposing to sell his interest. In most circumstances, a landlord who wishes to sell a block of flats must give qualifying tenants, mainly long leaseholders, the first opportunity to buy the freehold before he can offer it to anyone else. He cannot offer it to anyone else at a lower price without re-offering it to his tenants. That is not a right to buy and the landlord cannot be forced to sell his interest. Where there is a purchase resulting from the right of first refusal, the leaseholders still retain their leases, but additionally acquire a share in the freehold.

I am the first to acknowledge that that is not entirely satisfactory. The tenants collectively acquire the freehold of the block, but cannot own their individual flats on a freehold basis. Although there are a few freehold flats, the owners of such properties will know that English law does not, at present, provide a satisfactory means of creating and enforcing mutual obligations among people living in separate parts of the same building. I am aware that most lending institutions are reluctant to grant mortgages on such properties.

It is widely recognised that English law is defective in failing to provide a satisfactory machinery for the imposition on freeholders of positive obligations to maintain and repair their property, or to require them to contribute towards communal maintenance costs which can then be enforced against successors in title.

In January 1984, the Law Commission recognised that fact in its report to my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor on land obligations and the law of positive and restrictive covenants.

With a view to solving that problem, the report set out and proposed a scheme of land obligations and recommended adoption of some form of condominium legislation similar to that which exists in America. As a direct result, the Government established an interdepartmental working group, under the chairmanship of a Law Commissioner, Mr. Trevor Aldridge, to produce proposals for similar legislation in this country. Its report, in July 1987, recommended commonhold as a new way of owning property.

As I said, the proposals for commonhold are similar to the American condominium system and to the system of strata title in Australia. Commonhold would facilitate the creation of freehold flats within a commonhold by providing a legislative framework under which such a system could operate.

In November last year, the Lord Chancellor published a draft Commonhold Bill, which was prepared at the Law Commission, and a consultation paper which discussed the issue of compulsion and invited views on the different problems that would need to be resolved if any provision for compulsion were to be included in the commonhold legislation.

We are keen to introduce commonhold as an alternative option to leasehold. I hope that the proposed legislation can progress with the minimum delay. I was glad to hear the hon. Members for Knowsley, North and for Norwood express their support for moving ahead in that direction.

At the same time, the Government are taking great care to ensure that we get the legislation right. Introducing a new form of tenure into our law is a major step with many pitfalls and we are conscious of the need to consult all the bodies that are likely to be affected so that we can produce a system of ownership that is both workable in practice and attractive to those who will use it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington described many of the advantages of commonhold and I accept his argument. He also acknowledged that commonhold is not a panacea for all the problems faced by leaseholders. As he said, it will not cut bills for essential work; nor will it defer the need for those works. It will not solve disputes between neighbours which, regrettably, arise from time to time.

The consultation paper deals with many issues, but the question of compulsion is perhaps the most important unresolved policy issue. I realise that for many people, the main appeal of commonhold lies in the possibility of being able to compel their landlords to sell them the freehold interest in their block of flats at full market value so that they can then establish a commonhold. I accept that there is considerable public demand for that form of enfranchisement. I also accept that without the element of compulsion, the use of commonhold may be limited—perhaps confined to new buildings. Without compulsion, the situation created by an unwilling or irresponsible freeholder will not be resolved.

I also accept that such enfranchisement is likely to be unwelcome to some landlords, including those who have treated their leaseholders well and properly. The level of compensation may turn out to be the crucial factor. I especially welcome the recognition by my hon. Friends the Members for Kensington and for Portsmouth, South of the need for fair compensation. In the case of leases that are getting short, the compensation could be substantial.

Characteristically, the Labour party document is a bit short on that aspect. Its catalogue of so-called "rights" for leaseholders is not worth a great deal on close examination, as the Labour party's fox has largely been shot by our commonhold proposals, together with the provision that already existed in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987. Labour's proposals could have damaging effects on freeholders unless the point of compensation is fully recognised. In that context, Labour's traditional hostility to private landlords is not an encouraging background. I have to say that the possibility of Labour——

Mr. George Howarth: My hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) and I entered the debate in a constructive spirit. The hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) has tried to build up a consensus on the subject in the House. The Minister is not helping the case.

We are willing to discuss with the Government, openly and genuinely, means of enacting sensible legislation. We have never suggested that we are the only people who are advancing this argument; we recognise that hon. Members on both sides of the House have the same interests. We are making a serious offer: we are prepared to discuss the issue not in a spirit of hostility towards private or any other landlords, but on the understanding that a problem needs to be resolved. We intend to resolve it, either in co-operation with the Government or when we ourselves are in government.

Mr. Yeo: I am happy to say that the latter prospect seems fairly remote, in view of the disastrous collapse of the Labour vote in the Ribble Valley by-election. Interestingly, although the Conservative vote declined by a third, the Labour vote declined by 50 per cent. I should not have thought that that result was a subject to which Labour would wish to draw our attention today.

If the hon. Gentleman is saying that Labour recognises the need for proper and adequate compensation for freeholders who may be compelled to give up their rights as a result of future legislation, I welcome that commitment. It will certainly help either the current or the next Conservative Government to pass the relevant legislation smoothly and quickly.

Providing for compulsory leasehold enfranchisement is an important process and the decision to do so should not be made lightly. The draft commonhold legislation has proved much more complex and time consuming than was originally envisaged and the issue of compulsion is especially complex. It has raised a number of important questions that need to be resolved.

For example, should compulsion apply if only a simple majority of leasehold tenants are in favour, if a larger majority are in favour or only if all are in favour? Many people may not want to convert to a commonhold or, indeed, may not be able to afford it. What would be the basis of compensation or payment for the freehold? That is a particularly complex question, which may involve the buying out of head or superior leases. What would be the position of non-participating leaseholders after the establishment of a commonhold? Should there be a ban on long leases of commonholder units? What will be the position of mortgagees?

All those questions need careful consideration and I do not think that anyone has suggested that there are easy answers to any of them. I am sure that solutions can be found, but it would be unwise to rush into a commonhold scheme without full and careful consideration of the implications. We shall certainly need procedures to resolve the disputes that will inevitably arise.

In my view, the real benefits of commonhold will be felt only if compulsion is included in the package. I am very sympathetic to the pleas of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington and I have noted his suggestion that, if a general election intervenes before the current Parliament can act, a firm commitment should be included in our manifesto.

If the House passes legislation to introduce commonhold with a right to enfranchise, we shall review the rights of leaseholders who do not opt for it and I undertake to review the right to extend leases. The Government are something of an expert on the extension of leases, having

[Mr. Yeo]

done so twice on our own account in the past few years —and as, I am sure my hon. Friends will agree, we are likely to do again at some stage in the next 15 months.

Mr. Fraser: The Minister said that the Government will review the extension of leases. Does that mean that he is for or against, or has he not made up his mind?

Mr. Yeo: It means that the legislation to introduce commonhold will be extremely complex. No doubt its progress will allow the issues to be ventilated even further. It strikes me as sensible and, indeed, desirable to leave the consideration of whether leases should be extended—and, if so, how that should be done—until we have dealt with the question of commonhold.

The Lord Chancellor's consultation paper states that the commonhold system might equally be adopted for commercial and mixed-use developments. It could be used for housing or industrial estates, or even shopping precincts with flats or offices above. I recognise that some features of the proposals have caused concern to the commercial property market. It is notable that this morning hon. Members have not suggested at any stage that commonhold should be extended to the commercial market. The existing business leasehold system works well.

It could, therefore, be argued that commonhold for business premises is unnecessary. There is no history of lobbying by business tenants for commonhold. There is a real risk that commonhold could damage the business property investment market. It could deter investors and create uncertainty over future development. It would be generally unwelcome. Those points will be considered when the responses to the consultation paper are assessed. However, it is unlikely that we shall seek to impose compulsory commonhold on an unwilling commercial property market.

The question of commonhold for residential premises is complicated by the presence in some buildings or blocks of flats of non-residential units—shops or offices. That will be a particular problem if we decide to include an element of compulsion in the provisions. We should have to consider whether commercial units ought to be included. The difficulties are recognised in the Lord Chancellor's consultation paper, although very little attention has been paid to them in the debate. There is no simple answer to the problem of using commonhold for mixed-use buildings. We shall have to look at it carefully in the light of the responses to the consultation paper.

When the Law Commissioner's interdepartmental working group reported on commonhold, it considered that legislation should not impose restrictions on the use to which buildings in a commonhold are put. The working group believed that if commonhold were restricted to residential properties, problems would arise if a commonhold unit owner subsequently wished to seek a change of use of his premises for business purposes. A balance has to be struck. Again, we shall consider the responses to that proposal.

I am aware that a number of problems have arisen in recent years, particularly with sheltered accommodation, and that they have often been a cause of great anxiety to the tenants affected. However, the launch on 22 October 1990 of the sheltered housing advisory and conciliation service will go a long way towards alleviating some of the problems. The service is being funded by a consortium of developers, private management organisations and housing associations. It offers advice about leasehold sheltered housing, including conciliation in the event of disputes arising between residents and their developers or their managing agents. It appears to be working well. I should like the new service to be allowed time to settle down. However, we shall continue to keep an eye on the possible need for action.

Mr. David Martin: That problem has arisen several times in my constituency, particularly when the managing agent is connected with the company that runs the sheltered accommodation. It gives rise to the feeling that there has been considerable abuse, even if it has not actually taken place. I am pleased that the problem is being addressed so robustly.

Mr. Yeo: I am grateful for that intervention. We shall continue to keep an eye on any alleged abuse.

The Government's main response to complaints in the 1980s about the management of leasehold flats was to set up the Nugee committee under the chairmanship of Mr. E. G. Nugee. The committee conducted a wide-ranging inquiry into the management of blocks of flats. It collected evidence of problems and of mismanagement and identified where the main difficulties lay and the solutions that seemed appropriate. The committee's recommendations were implemented as the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987.

The Act introduced the right of refusal and also provided leaseholders who considered that their landlord or managing agent was failing in his duties under the terms of the lease with the right to apply to the county court for the appointment of a manager to take over the running of the block. In extreme cases, the Act entitles long leaseholders to acquire the block compulsorily if the court is satisfied that the landlord has failed in his duties and that the appointment of a manager would be an insufficient remedy. I recognise, however, that this is a lengthy and complex process and is unlikely to be used frequently.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I pressed that issue on the Government at the time. There is no need for the process to be lengthy or expensive. We specified the county court. It would be helpful if the Minister provided encouragement instead of saying that it is a lengthy and difficult process. The provisions are there. In the county court the process is relatively easy. It would be nice if the Minister welcomed and backed it, instead of saying that there are problems.

Mr. Yeo: I did not intend my remark to be interpreted as being other than encouraging the procedure. We are happy for it to be used and I hope that in practice it will be sufficiently simple, but I do not think that every unhappy leaseholder will necessarily see it as an immediate answer to his difficulties.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington and other hon. Members argued strongly for giving long leaseholders the right to appoint managing agents. I recognise the attraction of the proposition, but my hon. Friend understated some of the difficulties that could arise. The Government considered giving long leaseholders that right, but accepted the Nugee committee's recommendation that it would blur the lines of accountability between the landlord, his managing agent and the tenant.

A managing agent is sometimes appointed by the landlord or freeholder to undertake all or some of the duties that the landlord is contracted to carry out under the terms of the lease, but the landlord does not have to use a managing agent.

The Nugee committee concluded that the standard of performance of a managing agent could best be maintained not by giving tenants a right to challenge their appointment or by giving them a hand in their appointment, but by emphasising the managing agent's accountability to the landlord and by placing squarely on the landlord the responsibility for performing his obligations under the terms of the lease. If leaseholders appointed the managing agent, as suggested, considerable practical difficulties could occur if they wished to take legal action against the landlord, who is ultimately responsible for the duties performed by the managing agent and for the satisfactory management of the block. If things go wrong, the leaseholder's main redress is against the landlord, the other party to the lease.

If leaseholders were given the right to appoint managing agents, freeholders would have to be released from some of their obligations or they in turn would be exposed to the problems that could arise from incompetent or irresponsible managing agents. In trying to solve one problem, we should be in danger of creating another. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington recognises that the solution to the problem that he identified is complex and that it must balance the legitimate interests of the leaseholder and the landlord.

If tenants were ultimately made responsible for certain duties, or if they were able to acquire the freehold of a block, there would be no practical difficulties in appointing the managing agent.

I shall shortly receive a report on research into the implementation of the 1987 Act, which, by any reckoning, was a major reform that considerably strengthened the position of the leasehold flat owner. I wish to assess the impact of the Act before considering further legislative changes, but if my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington or other hon. Members have solutions to overcome the contractual difficulties of giving leaseholders the right to appoint managing agents, I should be pleased to consider them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington referred to the Leasehold Reform Act, which since 1967 has given the majority of long leaseholders of houses in England and Wales the right to buy the freehold or to extend leases by 50 years. He said that the rateable value limits prescribed by the Act exclude some expensive properties found mainly in Belgravia, Chelsea, Kensington and Westminster.

The White Paper which preceded the 1967 Act made it clear that the right to enfranchise would not apply to the most expensive properties. The intention of the Act was to protect ordinary leaseholders, especially in the north of England and south Wales, who were disadvantaged by a leasehold system that worked unfairly against them. They were owner-occupiers in all but name.

When that Act was debated, the then housing Minister said that a line would be drawn by reference to the value of the house so that the benefit of enfranchisement was confined to those in real need. That view has prevailed and successive Governments have not wished to confer the rights of enfranchisement across the board or to apply them to people who live in expensive accommodation. I should therefore need to be persuaded that there are good reasons to change or to abolish the rental-equivalent value limits. I recognise, however, that no huge issue of principle is involved and I shall certainly reflect carefully on my hon. Friend's argument.

My hon. Friend also mentioned what he described as the mass purchase by disreputable freeholders of freehold and leasehold houses in Wales and the north of England. He gave a touching description of how he was the unwilling pawn of a series of perhaps unscrupulous property dealers as the head lease of his home was passed from hand to hand. I must say that he seems to have survived the experience pretty well.

There is nothing wrong with ground landlords selling their freehold interest in houses—whether in the north of England, in Wales or anywhere else. The legal position is clear. The respective rights and obligations of a ground landlord and a leaseholder should be clearly set out in the terms of the lease agreement. New landlords do not acquire any additional rights over and above those of the original lease.

I am aware of the practices adopted by some new ground landlords who exercise rights embodied in the terms of a lease in a way that the previous landlord did not and I deplore instances in which landlords seek to enforce leaseholders' obligations in an unpleasant or threatening manner.

Mr. Anderson: The Minister said that he deplores the practice. Does he propose to do anything about it?

Mr. Yeo: Let me develop the point further.

The hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) gave a number of examples from his constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) spoke of others—courageously as threats have apparently been made against him by unscrupulous landlords. I should point out to the House that the Landlord and Tenant Act 1927 safeguards all leaseholders against unreasonable charges for consent to alterations, extensions to the property and so on. Similarly, the 1987 Act provides that a landlord cannot require a property to be insured by his choice of insurer unless the lease specifically permits that.

I certainly do not endorse the way in which a minority of landlords conduct their business. I am aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson), who is unfortunately not with us this morning, has a number of constituents who have been asked to pay a fee before their landlord will enter into any correspondence with them. That particular landlord even asked my hon. Friend to pay a fee for answers to his letters. Hon. Members might like to consider adopting that practice on their own account, might they not?

Unfortunately, the way in which some people choose to conduct their affairs is sometimes extremely difficult to legislate for. Nevertheless, under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987, landlords have a statutory duty to provide certain information about their identity and the insurance of the property. There are also statutory provisions requiring the landlord to make facilities available for the inspection of supporting documents in connection with the insurance and with any variable service charges that the tenants may be obliged to pay. The landlord is entitled to

[Mr. Yeo]

make a small charge for providing photocopying facilities where they are available, but not for providing the information that he is statutorily bound to give.

I profoundly deplore the way in which some landlords attempt to coerce their leaseholders into purchasing the freehold when they do not wish to do so and at a price far higher than they would have to pay under the Leasehold Reform Act. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South referred to that abuse.

The vast majority of long leaseholders of houses who wish to free themselves from the terms of their leases already have the option to purchase the freehold under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967—whether or not the landlord wishes to sell. Moreover, most covenants would disappear with the acquisition of the freehold. The Act sets out the basis for a fair price and disputes can be referred to local leasehold valuation tribunals. I recommend that route to constituents of the hon. Member for Worsley and my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South who are long leaseholders encountering difficulties with their freehold landlords.

Mr. Anderson: The Minister has properly set out the possibilities available to leaseholders. But given that many leaseholders will be elderly and wary of consulting solicitors, is not there a case for including with the information that the landlord has to provide to the tenant concerning his identity and insurance information about the right to buy or extend—on the analogy of the rent book, for example? Individuals who would not otherwise be aware of their rights would then be clearly told them and would know whom they might consult.

Mr. Yeo: The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point. We should like to find ways of ensuring that all leaseholders in that position, many of whom may be elderly and unaccustomed to taking legal advice, have a clear understanding of their rights. I welcome the fact that some local authorities that have disreputable freeholders in their areas have conducted local information campaigns. My Department publishes free booklets that set out leaseholders' legal rights and any assistance in distributing those booklets would be most welcome. Whether it is possible to lay a statutory duty on the freeholder to distribute the information is something which we would wish to consider, but I recognise that the best way to deal with the problem is to ensure that all leaseholders fully understand their rights under existing law.

This has been a useful debate and several relevant and important points have been made. I assure the House that I shall take careful note of them. I have mentioned the difficulties that we believe exist in changing the law of property and the amount of detailed work that we have put into that subject over the past few years.

The most recent legislation in that respect, the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987, has been in force for less than three years. Its impact is only beginning to be felt. However, I am only too well aware that saying that we have done a lot, and saying that change is difficult, can easily be characterised as complacency. I want to conclude, therefore, by making two things absolutely clear. First, we are committed to bringing forward commonhold as soon as possible. It is only a week since consultation closed and we still have to take final decisions on details. I can safely say that the version of commonhold that we introduce will tackle the problems which hon. Members have raised. We will not introduce legislation that dodges the issue.

Secondly, commonhold is the priority and over the next few months we shall be concentrating our resources on bringing that forward. However, I assure the House that once we are clear about the shape of commonhold and once we have the results of the research on the 1987 Act to which I referred, we will take a fresh look at the position of those who remain leaseholders and who, for one reason or another, are unable to take advantage of commonhold. I hope that hon. Members will clearly understand that this is an issue which we take seriously and which, as a Government who promote home ownership, we will carry forward vigorously.

12.52 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The Minister's speech was a gem. He said that the Government take the issue seriously; they are concerned; and they deplore the activities of unscrupulous landlords. However, where was the beef? As an afterthought, the Minister referred to the commitment in relation to commonhold, but the kind of problems outlined by the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) and others have existed during the 11 years that the Government have been in office. I also remind the Minister that the Law Commission working party reported in respect of commonhold in July 1987.

There does not seem to be a sense of urgency about the matter. The Minister's speech was one of those "Rome was not built in a day" speeches. He seemed to say that these are complex issues and that, whenever we tamper with property law which dates back to the middle ages, deep private rights are involved. I contrast that laid-back approach—so laid-back as to be almost horizontal—with the more robust view taken by the Labour Government in 1964, when, after 30 years of Conservative Government, they faced problems that were in many ways no less acute than those facing the residents of mansion blocks in Kensington and other parts of the metropolis.

I concede that they faced a different sort of problem, but for the individuals concerned it is no less acute. South Wales contains estates with row upon row of private terraced houses, often built at the turn of the century. I refer to the Beaufort estates and others in Cardiff, and to similar estates in Swansea and the Welsh Valleys, where there was a groundswell of opposition based on the sheer unfairness and the anguish that was caused to so many of what we in Wales would term "tidy" individuals who found that their ownership and possession of their properties were threatened by the falling in and expiry of the lease.

The Labour Government of the day did not take a laid-back attitude. In 1965, shortly after the election, we introduced a temporary or holding Bill and then the major legislation—the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. I concede that I am the only Welsh Member in the Chamber this morning, but if this debate had taken place before 1967, the Benches would have been crowded with hon. Members representing Welsh constituencies. That shows that, to some extent, the focus of attention has now moved to the

mansion blocks in the metropolis instead of being concentrated on the smaller terraced houses of south Wales.

Nevertheless, it was a major battle. The names of those involved belong on the roll call of the great. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) was very involved. Sam Silkin, whose Parliamentary Private Secretary I was between 1974 and 1979, had a total commitment to this issue and did a remarkable job, helped by Leo Abse, who also was a solicitor and who used his own professional competence and knowledge, and added to the campaign led by those such as George Thomas, who became a distinguished Speaker of this House. We won what I suppose would now be called "the mother of battles" in that 1967 Act.

The battle having been largely won, what we are now faced with in south Wales and, I am confident, in several of the older industrial areas, is a mopping-up operation to solve the residual problems that were not tackled at that time, when attention was focused on the problems of the less prosperous individuals who occupied the properties that I have described. The reform was designed as a staged process.

The problems that now come to me in my mail bag derive from the activities of the unscrupulous landlords who were described in the remarkably good and comprehensive speech of the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler), who hails, I believe, from south Wales and who therefore has some personal knowledge of such matters.

The starting point in property legislation, the law of landlord and tenant, and the related law of the ground landlord and his tenant, is that the public interest must be to ensure that we hold the balance between the stronger and the weaker elements. Almost by definition in this area, the tenant is likely to be the weaker of the two parties. Although I accept that there are also thoroughly unscrupulous tenants, the law must seek to intervene to protect tenants from the unscrupulous activities that have now come to light.

The hon. Member for Warrington, South mentioned Castlebeeg Investments (Jersey) Ltd., which has offices in Jersey, and which tends not to reply to letters from either Members of Parliament or those writing on behalf of tenants. For time reasons, I shall not repeat all the types of exploitation that are practised—they have already been mentioned by the hon. Gentleman—but they include the insurance fiddle, in which the landlord's only interest is that his rights are adequately ensured.

Surely the landlord has no right to insist that a named insurer has the policy, but if the right for the landlord to nominate is included in the original lease, that remains the position. Surely that is wrong in principle. I accept, of course, that the legitimate interests of the landlord must be safeguarded, including insurance arrangements, extensions and adaptations.

I was recently involved in a case—I shall not give names, for obvious confidentiality reasons—in which an ordinary family of no great wealth in my constituency, wished to improve their leasehold property—to add an extension or make an adaptation. The family found—this was a Castlebeeg case—that it was difficult to get the consent of the ground landlord. Subsequently, the ground landlord insisted that his valuers or surveyors should go to the property. That added substantially to the costs of the leaseholder, who was seeking only to improve the property, which for most purposes was his. The extension was to add to the value of the property and thus provide greater security for the landlord.

Where there are disputes about insurance, extensions or adaptations, it should be possible to set up a simple and flexible procedure to deal with them. Perhaps the procedure should be on the lines of the leasehold valuation tribunals, which are effectively rent assessment committees in another form.

The tribunals have proved their effectiveness over the years in providing a simple remedy for the tenant. It may be that the same cheap and flexible arrangement could be provided to hold the balance between landlord and tenant in the sort of dispute to which I have referred. It is suspected that landlords, by actions which include adding to the professional fees of related companies, which perhaps they own, increase—improperly, in my judgment—tenants' costs.

I have already mentioned adding to the statutory obligations that fall on ground landlords by making clear to tenants the nature of their rights. Surely that would not be difficult. Ground landlords are already under an obligation to provide the tenant with the name of his landlord and the name of the insurer. Surely it would not be difficult to make it clear to the tenant in an appropriate way that he has the right to buy or the right to extend and that he, the tenant, may wish to seek advice. There are statutory terms that apply to rent books and no great imposition would result in an extension of such terms. No reasonable ground landlord would be harmed if there were a requirement that the statutory rights of the tenant were to be made clear to him or her.

The Minister has conceded that, in south Wales, the generality of tenants tend to come from the less prosperous parts of the community and live in two-up, two-down houses. These are people who are often frightened to take professional advice from solicitors, for example. They would feel worried about adding to their costs. They should be informed of their statutory rights in the recognition that, in terms of the balance of power, property companies are allowed now to exploit and not to reveal.

Perhaps a flexible approach would be to add to the responsibilities of the leasehold valuation tribunals, which have proved highly effective, by giving them the task of resolving disputes in areas where the more unscrupulous landlords will seek to exploit tenants.

When a Bill is considered to take up the greater issue that has been outlined by the hon. Member for Kensington, who is my Member—I shall not say which way I vote—and who follows in the distinguished footsteps of the late Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, I hope that note will be taken of the arguments that have been advanced today. I am delighted that the mantle of Sir Brandon has fallen on a gentleman who is prepared to take up those issues.

I hope that, when a Bill dealing with commonhold and related matters is introduced—I anticipate that it will be my party that does so—included in that will be additional protection for the sort of tenants that I have described in south Wales and in the older industrial areas.

1.5 pm

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on selecting leasehold reform as the subject of today's debate. It is a matter of great interest to him, and he has done a great deal of work on it. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State on giving a commitment that the Government are prepared to bring forward a Bill in, as I understood his words, as short a time as possible. My hon. Friend also said that he accepted the principle of compulsion and that the leaseholders of flats should have the right to purchase freeholds in some form or another, depending on how the Bill is drafted. That is, perhaps, the most important point for leaseholders who may wish to purchase the freeholds.

However, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State expressed reservations about the availability of parliamentary time, how long the Bill would take to go through the House because of its complexity and the possibility of an election this year, or definitely next year. If we adopted the right approach to a Bill, it would be much easier to get the primary legislation through Parliament—it would be enabling legislation—than it would be if we tried to incorporate a great amount of detail in the Bill, as that would delay it both in its drafting and in Committee. I urge my hon. Friend to introduce such an enabling Bill in this Session or certainly early in the next Session.

The principles that have been expounded this morning appear to have common support across the Chamber, so I am sure that an enabling Bill would go through its stages without too much difficulty. Some of the difficulties and complexities could be dealt with through regulations at a later date. That has happened with some Bills over the past 15 years and it has proved to be successful. I urge my hon. Friend to consider that suggestion.

Dealing with leasehold reform has been delayed time and again, although it has certainly not been neglected—far from it. The subject has been of interest to individuals and to the Government. Many leaseholders, especially those in London, have long been expecting some action. The issue has been raised by hon. Members, by people outside and by various organisations. It is inevitable that something must happen, but the question is when. The speeches so far, especially that of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington, have been responsible ones. Hon. Members have set out in considerable detail the problems and how they should be resolved, although it has perhaps not been stated firmly enough that some landlords exploit the leaseholders, either directly or indirectly by also being the managers of the flats. Many people are left with a feeling of great insecurity and uncertainty.

People purchase flats for reasons that suit them at the time. It may be the cheapest way to purchase a property, but people seldom realise how high charges can be through no fault of the leaseholder, who has virtually no control over them.

An increasing number of large and not so large houses in our cities are being converted from single occupancy properties to flats. Leaseholders' difficulties vary widely. In large blocks of flats, leaseholders' organisations are fairly well organised. If the flats have long leases, the block is likely to be well managed and the charges, which often depend on the district, are often reasonable, although rarely cheap. With the increasing number of houses being converted into flats, there is more and more scope for managers and landlords of the freehold property to exploit leaseholders. That is another reason for the need to introduce reforms as quickly as possible.

I shall not comment on some of the other fears that have been expressed today but shall concentrate on the subject of flats. I foresee problems in the mechanism whereby leaseholders have a right to purchase a freehold. I agree that they must have that right, but am unsure how matters can be brought to arbitration. Under the leasehold system, there already exists a possibility of arbitration when people wish to buy a freehold. We must define at an early stage how arbitration can function effectively, cheaply and quickly. It is often neither cheap nor quick to achieve a resolution.

If a majority of leaseholders want to form a commonhold association, it is relatively straightforward—provided that they can agree on the price—to define how that price will be shared by each purchaser. What about those who do not want to purchase the freehold at that time? Although the freeholder would remain in control of the other freeholds, or their equivalent, he might not wish to do so, perhaps for economic reasons. In order for the landlord to sell the freehold, will he have to sell the freehold of each flat in a block at the same time? That could create problems unless guidelines were laid down in legislation or regulations on the limit to the number of freeholds that the commonhold association could purchase. There might be a block of shares in the freehold, which the leaseholders did not want to purchase but which the landlord wanted to sell. I am worried about how the simple concept of a leaseholder having the right to purchase a freehold will affect a commonhold association.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: We could easily deal with that problem. A block in my constituency was owned by the Church Commissioners. I persuaded them not to sell the block to an offshore company but to sell it to the tenants. The tenants who did not wish to buy remained as tenants of the new company which was owned by the others and they paid a fair rent, laid down by the rent officer. They had a choice—they could buy or they could remain as tenants. That is a simple solution, which would take the Department only five minutes to put into law.

Mr. Stevens: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That is an excellent way forward.

People feel insecure because of the dwindling value of their asset as leases run down and because of exploitation by landlords and managing agents. Tenants are not given fair protection under the existing law. The sooner we have a new set of conditions for the development of commonhold, the better. It is not just a choice. To protect leaseholders, it is imperative that we have such a law.

1.15 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn). As well as being immensely fortunate in winning the debate, he has campaigned tirelessly to promote the cause of commonhold and leasehold reform. He took on the mantle that was nobly worn by his precedessor, Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, who was a dear friend of mine, and I am glad that he fights as valiantly for his constituents as Sir Brandon did.

The constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington have similar problems to my constituents. We

have neighbouring constituencies, although they touch only at the north-eastern corner of my constituency and the south-western corner of my hon. Friend's constituency. There are the same patterns of occupancy, the same types of mansion block and the same types of conversion of large houses into flats, the latter having gone on since the war.

The leasehold problem is common to west London—indeed, as we heard in the debate, common to the whole of London. It is becoming increasingly urgent, because many mansion blocks that were built in the late 19th century and the early years of this century were originally let to tenants under some form of short-term tenancy. In my constituency and in Kensington, those blocks were converted into leasehold property in the 1950s, 1960s or as late as the 1970s. On the whole, that property was let on 99-year leases and the remaining years left on the leases are causing doubts about the ability to remortgage the properties if they are sold. Those doubts figure large in the minds of the leaseholders who own them.

There is also a problem with mini-conversions. Conversions of large properties in my constituency started after the war. The properties were let by leasehold. Sometimes, there were as many as five flats to a house, but occasionally there were just two, the upstairs and the downstairs flats. That process still goes on. It is happening—this point has not been mentioned in the debate—because of right-to-buy legislation. A new group of people are becoming leaseholders in conversions and in blocks of flats which were originally council flats.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary has made an encouraging commitment to rapid progress in implementing the results of the consultation exercise on commonhold carried out with the Lord Chancellor. My constituents will be grateful for such a commitment and my hon. Friend will have my strong support in making progress as fast as possible.

Because it is impossible to remortgage a property that has less than 60 years of its lease remaining, it is made difficult for the existing leaseholder to realise a price that compensates him for what he originally paid for the property. The price falls dramatically the shorter the length of the lease remaining, with a lease of 30 years producing a marked discount in comparison with one of 60 years. That is the reverse of what one normally expects in the property market in which, over a period of time, the value of property normally increases at least as fast as inflation.

The freeholds of blocks of flats or of converted houses are often bought by people, not with the intention of becoming responsible landlords or of obtaining a return through ground rent and the management of the building, but because they are increasingly interested in the flats' reversionary value at the end of the leaseholds. Blocks where leases have been let at different times, and where the leasehold drops in over a period of some 20 years, say, at the rate of a few flats per year, make an interesting business proposition.

It is often in the freeholder's interest not to maintain the block but rather to drive out existing leaseholders so as to obtain vacant possession, with the intention of selling it on or of redeveloping the property. The freeholder ceases to have an interest in protecting the property and the block may consequently become run down. That is seen increasingly in my constituency and, I suspect, in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington.

As leases become shorter, leaseholders also take less of an interest in maintaining their property than they would if they were the owners of a freehold. The consequence is a spiral of decline in the building's fabric and maintenance, which is detrimental not only to its future but to the community at large. Commonhold is the right way of addressing that problem.

Mention has also been made of the rogue freeholder, who attempts to exploit leaseholders by forcing up service charges and terrorises them by using other methods of legal and quasi-legal manipulation, in order to extract every last penny. The Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 is helpful in dealing with such persons, but it works best where there is co-operation between the freeholder and leaseholder. Where there is an active obstruction by the freeholder to implement its provisions, it may be necessary to initiate legal proceedings. They can produce a satisfactory outcome and, because of county court provisions, may not be as expensive as leaseholders fear. Nevertheless, that course is one which many leaseholders are reluctant to pursue.

Commonhold would be beneficial to all, and particularly to responsible freeholders. I am sure that they would be delighted to see a proper price paid for their freehold, to reflect the true value of the building. It would also get them out of all the problems of managing a block of flats. Given that freeholders are being paid off at the market rate, I believe that commonhold would be attractive to them and to everyone's advantage. Also, that is a way to get around the problem of extending reducing leaseholds, which would become automatic with commonhold.

I strongly support the provision that if compulsion is to exist to enable leaseholders to insist that a freeholder sell his freehold—as I believe it should—a free market valuation that is satisfactory to both parties should be made by an independent valuer. Alternatively—that is the usual wording in these matters I believe—a valuer could be appointed by the president of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. There are all sort of mechanisms for agreeing a price in such transactions and that provision would properly protect the rights of the freeholder.

I strongly support the introduction of commonhold. It is the way forward and it is long overdue. I hope that legislation will soon be introduced to enable it to happen.

At what point do we allow leaseholders to insist on buying the freehold? One suggestion is that it should be, when leases have only 60 years left to run, but in my view that is too long. In many cases, 60 years would not solve my constituents' problems and I should like the limit to be as low as 40 years. A great deal of thought needs to go into deciding what period is right and what consultation is necessary.

How many owners of flats would have to be in favour of buying the freehold of the block for that to proceed? I understand that the Consumers Association has suggested 80 per cent., and 75 per cent. has been suggested this morning. I think that 75 per cent. might be too great, provided that proper provision is built in to protect the rights of leaseholders and tenants who do not wish to participate. It seems to me that a resident, as opposed to an absentee landlord, is of substantial benefit to everyone. If the limit were 75 per cent., the freeholder would have a real ability to block sale of the freehold by keeping control—through tenancy or vacancy—of a sufficient number of flats.

[Mr. Matthew Carrington]

I should like the percentage to be more flexible. For example, in a terraced house that has been converted into two flats, as is frequently the case in my constituency, there would have to be a choice of 50 or 100 per cent. That may be an extreme case, but in that situation it seems to me that the figure should be 50 per cent., rather than requiring unanimity between tenants. There is a case for flexibility, perhaps depending on the number of tenants and I commend that to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary.

It is important that the right protections are built in for tenants and that can easily be handled within this legislation. Having said that, everyone's rights need to be protected. It is essential that leaseholders are given control so that they can insist on managing their own blocks and are able to take on the freehold, perhaps through some sort of commonhold.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington and I end my speech with the wish that this legislation proceeds as soon as possible, ideally before the end of the next Session.

1.28 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): It is pleasant to be able to take part in this most interesting debate on a truly fascinating subject. The origins and the basis of property law go back centuries and we must be careful when we think of changing that law. By filling in one pit, we have to ensure that we do not dig another.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on his good luck in coming first in the ballot for private Members' motions. I also congratulate him on the tenacity with which he has pursued the subject. Last year—or possibly even the year before—he managed to persuade me to be a sponsor of one of his Bills, which takes some doing. It shows that he also has great powers of persuasion.

I have taken a great interest in the subject for a long time. I must declare several interests. I am a fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, a member of the Royal Agricultural College, the chairman of a firm of mortgage and insurance brokers and the director of a company whose sole asset is a number of freeholds of small blocks of flats. So I am supposed to know something about it.

In 1989, I introduced a Bill under the ten-minute rule which called for a standard form of lease. That subject causes a tremendous amount of ill odour. A person wishing to buy the lease of a flat goes to his solicitor, who may discover a problem if, for some reason, the lease is not in the correct form and, as drafted, will not be acceptable to a building society. I experienced that problem.

I bought a small flat in Westminster about three years ago. It was handy for the House, but it was a mere shoe box with a 70-year lease. I bought it when I was still a bachelor and my wife soon ensured that I got rid of it. She said that she was fed up with tripping over me every time she went in.

Before I bought the flat, my solicitor said that the lease was incorrectly drawn and must be changed. To change it, my solicitor had to contact the freeholder, who was a foreigner. I do not know where he lived, but it was not in this country—and perhaps not even in Europe. He lived thousands of miles away, so my solicitor had to contact his solicitor and we all know that such cases always benefit the legal profession. My solicitor talked to his solicitor and after much toing and froing and much correspondence, because he could not be found immediately, he was tracked down going walkabout in Australia near Ayers rock. It took a long time and the freeholder then said that he was going to charge me for changing the lease. He charged me about £2,000, which was a wholly undeserved windfall for him.

The original solicitors who drew up the terms of the leases nearly 30 years earlier had made a mistake. It seemed extraordinary that the freeholder should be able to benefit from that mistake and that it should redound to his benefit each time a flat in the block was sold. Prospective purchasers and their solicitors had to go through the same old routine and every time the freeholder collected £2,000. That is a disgraceful state of affairs which does not reflect well on the legal profession.

Having delivered myself of that, I congratulate the Lord Chancellor's Department on having drawn up its excellent consultation paper. It is large and heavy and contains a lot of paper, which shows that a lot of work has gone into it. As I said, when we are thinking of changing property law, it must be done properly. The consultation paper is well considered and well thought out. I have some reservations about the complexity of the proposed legislation, but it can be sorted out.

The period for consultation has just closed. I do not know how many people wrote in with observations on the consultation paper, but I hope that many did. I hope that we shall have a chance to debate it in future. I am very glad that we have the basis for new statute law and I look forward to a full-scale debate on it.

Some of the big estates were mentioned earlier, especially the Grosvenor estate. My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington told us that he lives on that estate. He will agree that in many respects, it is a model for the management of urban property. It is thanks to the Grosvenor estate that many parts of London are so beautiful and so appreciated, not only by residents, but by visitors. On the whole, the Grosvenor estate has done a good job in preserving the appearance of some of the most important parts of our capital city.

However, it must be said that there are problems not only on the Grosvenor estate, but in other places because leases, by definition, decline in years. That may not be such a problem on the Grosvenor estate, where a lease for a flat with only two or three years left to run still has considerable value. The lease of a flat with 40 years to run is expensive. Until the great crash of 1989, it could be said that the values of leases were increasing despite the fact that the number of years on those leases was declining. That happens only in isolated cases with estates such as the Grosvenor estate which will always be in demand.

The case is different in other areas. As the term of the lease declines, its value declines. People start to experience all the problems that go with leases that are declining in years and in value. They will probably not be able to find a purchaser, because building societies will not grant a mortgage. Other hon. Members have mentioned those problems.

In Walthamstow, several blocks of flats suffer from that problem. Leases for some purpose-built flats—not conversions—that were originally long are now down to 25 years. The elderly people who live in those flats suddenly find that although they thought they had

something of value, they do not. A 25-year lease has some value, but it is difficult to realise. No building society will grant a mortgage on a lease that has only about 25 years left to run. People find it impossible to realise the value of the equity and are in serious difficulties.

The problem is compounded by the fact that the freeholders are not performing as they should. In the case that I have in mind, the freeholders are the Freshwater group. Hon. Members have mentioned the names of other freeholders and the Freshwater group is another notorious freeholder in the London area. Constituents have come to me to complain about some of its practices, such as unitemised bills, bills coming out of the blue which are wholly unrelated to any of the usual quarter days, bills that do not comply with statute and bills that are remarkable not only for their lack of detail, but for their size. A bill will arrive which merely says, "Maintenance—£500", or whatever. That is against the law, as we all know, but it does not stop the bills arriving. Many elderly constituents are driven almost to distraction by such practices by unscrupulous people.

Even if commonhold legislation were established, there would still be a problem. The current lessees would have to purchase the commonhold, given the obvious difference in value between a 25-year lease and what is effectively a freehold. The problem could be solved by a provision allowing the assumption, on the sale of a lease of, say, 50 years, that that lease had 99 years to run. In such circumstances, rather than the entire "marriage value" going to the freeholder, a goodly proportion could go to the leaseholder, who would then be able to realise a reasonable amount of his equity on the sale of the property.

I listened with interest to what the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) had to say about leasehold houses. The original idea was that, on the sale of houses with long leases, estates built in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s could be managed as estates, for the benefit of the residents. I do not believe that any greedy motivation existed then; it was hardly worth while to collect £10 a year in ground rent from 200 houses, given the high costs of collection. Requiring all the lessees to insure with a specific company would guarantee that the amount insured was appropriate to the houses concerned. It would not have done the estate any good if a house had burnt down and proved to have been under-insured: the presence of a gaping, blackened ruin in the middle of the estate would have had a detrimental effect on the values of the other houses.

Similarly, I doubt whether the requirement for a freeholder to give the go-ahead for improvements constituted an attempt to obtain £100 here for the building of a garage and £100 there for the building of a conservatory. The aim was probably to ensure that any extensions, or insertions of dormer windows in the roof spaces, were carried out in accordance with the character of the estate. Such additions were intended not to stick out like a sore thumb, or to destroy the rhythm of the estate and thus affect its value. It is unfortunate that such good intentions have been so manipulated by unscrupulous people, whose actions have led to cries for help from lessees—cries to which we must listen.

The problem of mixed hereditaments has been mentioned, but only in passing. When, for example, a shop has a flat over it, or several flats—perhaps with part of the building serving as an office, with a garage below—there is a danger that a mixture of tenure will result. To have a freeholder, leaseholder and commonholder all working in the same building would be a recipe for chaos and possibly for disaster. We must be very careful before we go down that road.

The lease system works well with commercial properties. It is not, I believe, intended that the leases of commercial property should become commonhold. The landlord and tenant system works perfectly well in commercial buildings under the aegis of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. It is one of the better Acts relating to property. It is well understood and it governs the relationship between landlord and tenant, to the satisfaction of both parties.

Some years ago I regularly attended property auctions. What fascinating occasions they are. All sorts of extraordinary-looking people make bids for property. The sale of ground rents has always been popular. At an auction that I attended 10 or 12 years ago the freehold of a house in Kensington was offered for sale. The house had been turned into two or three flats. The leases of the flats were due to expire in about 70 years. The freehold of that property was sold on a year's purchase of only £50. That sale stuck in my mind. Ever since I have regretted not buying the freehold. I bet the lessees regretted even more not buying it. The 1987 Act has put that right. I commend the Government for it. As its provisions become better known, I hope that more and more lessees will realise that they can buy the freehold of the building in which they have flats.

One might ask why anybody should want to buy the freehold of a building that has been turned into flats which have been sold on long leases. The best example that I can give is that of a small property company based in south Kensington. Unfortunately, I do not know its name. In the 1950s and 1960s enormous houses in that area were turned into flats and sold. The freeholds had little value, particularly as the ground rent amounted to only £5 or £10 a year. That dozy little property company bought many of the freeholds in the south Kensington area. Ten or 12 years ago it suddenly discovered that, due to property prices increasing sharply and the length of leases having come down to 70, 50 or 60 years, it was sitting on a gold mine. Consequently, the company has sold extensions to leases and made a killing, not because the people who run the company are particularly able, but because they have been able to exploit this aspect of the leasehold system.

It is possible to gain income other than ground rents from these investments. One can gain income from management charges and from collecting a percentage of the cost of work carried out to a building. Insurance commission has been mentioned. Some people buy only the freeholds of blocks of flats that have flat roofs in the hope of obtaining planning permission to build so-called penthouse flats on top. Others like to buy blocks of flats in extensive grounds so that they can build garages. We must bear in mind the factors that affect the values of blocks of flats.

We have heard much about short leases. We must remember the advantages of short or comparatively short leases. For example, a foreign business man who is working in this country for five years can buy a 20-year lease on a flat, at the end of which, particularly in central London, he will have an asset to sell. In addition, despite the lease running for 15 years instead of 20 years, it may increase in value.

[Mr. Hugo Summerson]

A further advantage of the leasehold system is that sometimes a freeholder, especially a responsible freeholder, can exert pressure on recalcitrant lessees. Property maintenance is expensive. The provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 must be complied with, but some lessees cavil at having to spend money on maintenance and others will complain down to the last penny. Sometimes it is an advantage for a freeholder to be able to say, "Here are the provisions on the maintenance of the property, as set out in the lease. We are bound not only by the terms of the lease but by statute to carry out these necessary works." Compulsion can be valuable, but it would not be as strong under commonhold.

The arrangements whereby the freehold to a block of long-lease flats is owned by an association of lessees can work perfectly well, but from time to time a lessee will dig his toes in and say, "I do not care whether the maintenance is essential, I shall not contribute to the costs." That places the freeholder, the managing agents and, perhaps worst of all, the other lessees in a difficult position. They may know perfectly well that the block needs essential maintenance, but it is delayed by one or two people who simply say no. I realise that they may be unable to afford to contribute to that maintenance. In that respect, the leasehold system is inferior to the freehold system. If one owns the freehold of a house and the roof starts to leak, one can say, "I cannot afford to repair it this year, but I can afford a bucket. I will put the bucket under the leak and when I can afford to repair the roof I will repair it." Lessees do not have that luxury and that is certainly a disadvantage.

I have spoken about the compensation arrangements that would apply when lessees took over from the freeholder and set up a commonhold. If compensation is to be paid—and it will be—it must reflect the element of compulsion. We all know that there is difficulty with the channel tunnel and the main line to London. One may ask, "What on earth is the connection?" The connection is that someone whose house is acquired compulsorily at market value only will be much less happy about it than someone who is paid compensation based on the French model, which is very generous. Such compensation would make it easier for someone to give up his home. I suggest that if there is an element of compulsion—we shall have to wait to see what the legislation says—it should be reflected in the compensation that is paid.

We have had an interesting debate on an interesting subject. I think that commonhold will come and we must take every care possible to ensure that it works. When we have done that, I am sure that it will be to the advantage of most people who live in flats.

1.56 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I shall speak briefly and belatedly. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn), to the Minister and to the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen for having been delayed by meetings both inside and outside the House. I welcome the opportunity that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington has given us to discuss this subject, which is important to people in many parts of the country—not least in London. I represent a constituency where there is block after block—mansion blocks, tower blocks—you name them, I have them. The problems that could be solved by a commonhold policy are self-evident. However, I am talking not just about blocks, but about one-up, one-down conversions, where people have difficulty controlling the destiny of their own homes. Over the past few years, we have moved towards much greater self-help and collective independence for people living in blocks. We have seen co-operative movements emerge from local council blocks and I hope that, with commonhold, the same will apply to private leaseholders.

We have numerous problems in Battersea. As my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) said, some residents cannot get works done because there is difficulty in reaching agreement. The other side of the coin is that residents may object to unnecessary work being done by the freeholder and charged to them. They do not have control over their destiny. I have received letters from tenants who have had unnecessary work done to their homes at exorbitant cost by firms that arrive at unreasonable hours of the day and sometimes even at night. Such problems cannot be overcome without some help and I understand why the reform is needed. However, when an offer is made and the leaseholders are willing to purchase the freehold, the freeholder often sets the price so high that that is not feasible.

I welcome the commitment of my hon. Friend the Minister. Commonhold is the way forward, although I ask that we should examine carefully the needs of elderly people living in such properties who may be frightened by the notion of compulsion. Compulsion may well be right, but we need to examine their circumstances carefully and ensure that their requirements are properly catered for in proposals which, in broad terms, will benefit all the residents.

As we consider commonhold, I hope that we shall also examine the present system of passing the freehold on to subsidiary companies. When that happens there appears to be no requirement to consult the residents of the flats or the estate. That is unreasonable.

I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington for raising the issue and I commend my hon. Friend the Minister for making pledges. There is virtual unanimity in the House about the proposition that an Englishman's home should become a commonhold castle rather than a feudal one.

2 pm

Mr. Fishburn: I hoped to have widespread support for the motion from all parts of the House and I am delighted that that has happened. I am even more delighted that support has come from hon. Members representing all areas of England and Wales. It shows that although the problem with leasehold applies predominantly to London flats, it is by no means restricted simply to London and the south-east. Indeed, it is not simply restricted to flats; although 1·5 million people live in leasehold flats, more than 1 million people live in leasehold houses.

The hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) and my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) opened up the debate most effectively. They showed that while we may be considering 60-year leases as rapidly diminishing assets, there are poor souls in the north with 999-year leases who might have thought that those leases gave them the benefits of freehold, but have found, courtesy of cuddly Sam Antonelli and others like him, that there is a freeholder who can threaten them and

raise money from them in the most unseemly way. The nature of our dissatisfaction about leasehold spreads across the country and ranges from those on short leaseholds to those enjoying a modest 999-year lease.

The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) took me to task for moving a motion that was too brief. I would have taken his criticism more to heart had he not made a contribution lasting 45 minutes. His speech was too long. The full and proper use of the debate was made by my hon. Friends the Members for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) and for Battersea (Mr. Bowis). They contributed their thoughts and those of their constituents about the way in which we should proceed with the adoption of the Lord Chancellor's commonhold proposals. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) wanted to speak, but he had to leave before he could catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want particularly to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington), who knows a great deal about the subject. I am particularly grateful because, without him, I would not be a Member of the House. I was elected at a by-election, which is not something unknown for returning Conservative Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Fulham was my minder then and he kept me from making many mistakes. His contribution about the way in which we should proceed with the Lord Chancellor's proposals was particularly apt.

The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), on behalf of many Welsh Members, reminded us of the widespread difficulty with leasehold reform in Wales. I have spoken to many of his colleagues who represent Welsh constituencies and they welcomed the opportunity to consider the inadequacies of leasehold reform. Had this been any other day but Friday, we would have heard many a Welsh voice raised in support.

I thank especially my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) for his knowledgeable contribution because he, perhaps alone among those who have spoken today, is a fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors——

Mr. Summerson: So is my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden).

Mr. Fishburn: I had not realised that my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich is also a fellow of the RICS.

I thank the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) and my hon. Friend the Minister, not least for their courtesy in staying in the Chamber for the entire debate. That is very much appreciated. I thank the hon. Member for Knowsley, North also for the straightforward way in which he said that, as we move towards adopting commonhold procedures and passing them into legislation, the Labour party will adopt a constructive and helpful attitude and will not seek to stand in the way.

Recognising that the problem spans the House and its political parties, the hon. Gentleman said that the Labour party would extend all its good will to such legislation.

In conclusion, I must express my special thanks to my hon. Friend the Minister for his forceful speech and for listening fairly to the arguments that have been made. I shall read *Hansard* with great care on Monday, but I took it that he was making a clear commitment to push forward with the proposals for commonhold. He expressed the near-certainty—I know that my hon. Friend has to be cautious, being a Minister, but I choose to emphasise the word "certainty" rather than "near"—that the enfranchisement of leaseholds will be given as a matter of right to their leaseholders. He went on to say that as his Department reviews the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987, it will take on board several of the points that have been made today, not least the recommendation that leaseholders should have the right to nominate their managing agents. I fully understand that that was not recommended in the Nugee report and am also aware that few people in this country know more about property law than Mr. Nugee, but I regard that as a mistake and believe that a reform by which lessees could appoint their own managing agents would be worth while.

We have had a good debate and I commend my motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House believes that the law of leasehold as a method of providing residential tenure in flats or houses is in need of widespread reform.

Parliamentary Boundary Commission

2.7 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I beg to move,

That this House calls for a review of the proposed work of the Parliamentary Boundary Commission, the time between its required reports, the number of members to be elected to the House of Commons, the size and boundaries of constituencies, the required numbers of honourable Members for Scotland and Wales and other matters.

It is with great pleasure that I rise to move my motion to such a massively full House. I raise this issue for three reasons. First, all hon. Members will have received a notice from the parliamentary Boundary Commission stating that a review of parliamentary constituencies in England is about to start. Secondly, the Select Committee on Home Affairs published a report on the redistribution of seats back in 1985, which dealt with matters concerning the Boundary Commission—that has not yet been debated—the size of constituencies and the revision of constituency boundaries. A White Paper, Cm. 308 of 1987-88, was the Government's reply to the work of the Select Committee. They accepted a number of its recommendations, but it is now nearly five years since those recommendations were made and they have not yet been implemented.

Finally, several matters need looking at again. They include, first, the massive under-representation of English voters in the British Parliament and, secondly, whether the parliamentary Boundary Commission should work more quickly and report more frequently. Since the war there have been gaps of 19 or 20 years between alterations to constituency boundaries. The final consideration is whether one should alter the massive over-representation of Scotland here in the United Kingdom Parliament. If English constituencies were the same average size and had the same average number of electors as the average Scottish constituency, with Scotland having 72 Members there would be 665 English Members instead of the present 524. There is, perhaps, a 21 per cent. over-representation of the Scottish vote.

I believe that it is right to urge—this is the most controversial part of my speech—that 650 Members are too many for the most efficient working of the House. The 1984 legislation provides that the approximate size of the House should be 613 Members from Great Britain, with the addition of Members from Northern Ireland—at that time 16.

I will give some comparisons. If we take the democracies most likely to be compared with Great Britain—Germany, France, Italy, Japan and the United States, that is, the largest democracies in the world—Britain has the smallest population per seat in Parliament. For every seat in the United States Congress there are 571,000 people. In other words, there are way over half a million people in each constituency.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): That is surely a bogus point. On any account, Britain is probably the most centralised country in Europe. With the federal system which operates in the United States, there are clearly defined responsibilities for state legislators. State responsibilities must be taken into account.

Sir Peter Emery: I shall move on to other examples. The American example is such a massive one. The average number of constituents is six times the average here. In Germany, the average population of a constituency is 118,000. In France, it is 97,000 while in England it is only 88,000. If we consider the average electorate per seat for the six nations, Britain has the lowest but one. In other words, the average electorate per seat in Japan is 160,000 while it is 298,000 in America, 91,000 in Germany, 72,000 in Italy and 69,444 in Britain—that is the exact figure from the Boundary Commission. In France, the average—the figure is a little old—is 65,000.

Let us consider the number of seats in the respective Parliaments. In the United States there are 435 while there are 512 in Japan, 577 in France, 630 in Italy and 662 in Germany, which is slightly more than here. Only one nation among the examples that I have chosen has more than our 650 seats.

I recommend a reduction of 100 Members. With that reduction the House would be able to proceed more efficiently. Members would be able to speak more reasonably and more frequently. I am sure that the Chair is aware of the difficulty, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to Members trying to catch the eye of Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker or Madam Deputy Speaker.

The House sits from Monday to Friday. If we say that one-and-a-quarter hours per day is given to Front-Bench spokesmen and that there are two statements per week, there are only about 722 hours available to Back-Bench Members. There are 650 Members and 190 sitting days. If there were a reduction from 650 Members to 550, what would that mean in practical terms? Instead of having an average constituency of 69,444 electors, the average would be about 82,000. It has been said that it would be impossible for Members to cope with the additional electors. I find that difficult to believe. The facts do not substantiate that assertion. There are 38 constituencies with electorates in excess of 80,000 and a further 21 with more than 78,000. That was the position in 1987, so it is likely that constituencies with 78,000 then will have about 80,000 now.

It is interesting that the largest constituencies, where some might say that the electors are somewhat under-represented, are all held by Conservative Members, with one exception. If we take the seats with the fewest electors—50,000 as opposed to the 69,000 which should be the average—only four of the 35 are held by Conservative Members. The remainder, of course, are held by Opposition Members. It is necessary for the Boundary Commission to report much more frequently if there is to be fair representation of the electorate throughout the country in the numbers necessary to elect a Member of Parliament.

If we take the 59 seats with 78,000 or more electors, and make them average 69,000 electors, there would have to be 68 seats—another nine. If we did exactly the opposite with those seats that average 50,000 electors, instead of 35 seats we would have 23. In fact, that would mean about another 16 seats for the Conservative party, but that is not part of my argument.

The second argument against reducing the number of Members of Parliament is, perhaps, that a porker does not vote to turn itself into bacon, nor does an old cockerel dash in to become a chicken pie. Members of Parliament might find it difficult to vote for a reducation in their numbers, as that might mean losing their seats. It is difficult to vote for one's own demise, having spent a great deal of time and effort finding a way into Parliament.

Let us think about the problem for a moment. Perhaps there is a way—the only way—to deal with that. Parliament should decide to take such action, but not to apply it for 10 to 12 years, which is often the time needed by the Boundary Commission to make a recommendation. Existing Members of Parliament, by their own votes, would know that they would then have at least another one, two or three Parliaments, and during that time we might find some way to ensure that natural wastage and ability would allow the greater number of us to retain our positions in the House.

The frequency of the Boundary Commission reports causes difficulties. The memorandum that it submitted for England in July 1986 shows that the first general review took effect in 1955. The second did not take effect until 1974, but it was based on 1953 figures—some 20 years out of date. The third general review, based on the number of electors in February 1976, resulted in the Boundary Commission's recommendations being submitted with a report in 1983 and they came into effect at the 1983 general election. Those constituencies were based on 1965 figures —some 19 years out of date.

The Government need to take positive action to ensure that the work of the Boundary Commission can proceed more quickly and perhaps with greater efficiency—by which I mean without so many delays. We must ensure that the results of the Boundary Commission are legislated for by Parliament within a period of perhaps 10 years and certainly no longer than 10 years.

There are factors within the regulations that allow the Boundary Commission to have a massive elasticity in the size of constituencies. The actual recommendations make it clear that the rules for the distribution of seats and the number of constituencies in Great Britain should result in a number not substantially greater or less than 613. There are exemptions and we have moved a long way from that figure. The directive in the Act is clear. It states:

"The electorate of any constituency shall be as near to the electoral quota as is practicable."

Again, there is a let-out because the Boundary Commission may depart from the strict application of that number

"if special geographical considerations appear to them to render a departure desirable."

Part of those geographical considerations is imposed by the rules, which state that:

"no county or any part of a county shall be included in a constituency which includes the whole or part of any other county or the whole or part of a London borough . . . no London borough or any part of a London borough shall be included in a constituency which includes the whole or part of any other London borough".

That places a major constraint on constituency divisions and brings about massive variations. There are 50,000 people on the electoral registers in Glasgow—all the Glasgow constituencies have electorates of about 50,000. The list to which I referred shows that the exact opposite happens in many Conservative seats.

It is interesting to note in passing that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister represents one of the largest electorates, Huntingdon, while the Leader of the Opposition represents one of the smallest, Islwyn. I urge the Government to remove that geographical structure, which places an unfair limit on the Boundary Commission. If a Member of Parliament can represent a number of different districts and if part of a district—in my constituency, part of East Devon district council is represented by two Members of Parliament—

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir Peter Emery: Not at the moment, as I am short of time.

If a Member of Parliament can represent several districts and if part of a district can be represented by two Members of Parliament, I do not see why that division could not cross the divisions of London boundaries or of counties.

Another major and massive political hot potato is that the regulations command that there be 72 Scottish and 38 Welsh Members of Parliament. If the average electorate for the return of Scottish Members were raised from its present average of only 54,756 and those figures were issued by the Boundary Commission and applied to England, there would be 665 English Members instead of the present 524. However, if the English average of 69,000 electors were applied to Scotland, there would be only 57 Scottish Members. If this is a united Kingdom, it is strange that there is specific nationalistic fervour in favour of Scotland. I wish to start a nationalistic fervour which asks only for equal treatment for the English electorate.

The position in Wales is not quite so bad. There are on average, 58,093 electors in each constituency, and 38 Members. If Welsh constituencies had the same electorate as the average English constituency, there would be only 32 Welsh Members. Is not that position unfair? Something must be done to change it.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: What is lacking in the quantity of the Scottish electorate is made up for in the quality of Scottish representatives. England, therefore, does rather well. I remind my hon. Friend that the Prime Minister, in representing Huntingdon, represents the seat from which the king of Scotland derived the title of Earl of Huntingdon.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. We cannot have interventions on interventions.

Sir Peter Emery: The Opposition will welcome the great praise that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) gives to Scottish Members.

I have already said that the enumeration date fixed at the start of a review means that we frequently use figures that are vastly out of date. We should ensure that the Boundary Commission updates the electorate figures annually, as they are published yearly.

To sum up, House of Commons membership is too large; the Boundary Commission should be made to produce figures and legislate every 10 years; England has the right to the same representation through the appointment of Members of Parliament as Scotland and Wales; and the geographic restriction concerning counties and London boroughs should be swept away. Finally, we should not bind the Boundary Commission to operate on out-of-date figures. The Government should move more quickly than they have in the past. If they take the sensible

[Sir Peter Emery]

steps that I outlined, by the year 2001 we would have a much more fairly representative body than we have in 1991.

2.24 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I have 17 objections to the speech of the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). I shall give two in two minutes. The hon. Gentleman says that 650 is too large a number of Members for efficiency. I remind him that in a representative House there are criteria other than pure efficiency. Considerable weight must be given to the democratic nature of our system.

The hon. Gentleman talks about a reduction in the number of Scottish Members. I remind him that the Scottish electorate shows considerable good sense in returning Members and that the Conservative party has been insensitive about Scotland in other matters. His proposal would be yet another provocation to the good people of Scotland. The sensitivity of this issue should be carefully considered.

2.25 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) on raising the issue of parliamentary boundaries and the operation of the Boundary Commission. It is clear that, had more hon. Members attended, the debate would have been long and heated. I do not wish to be controversial and I certainly will not enter into a nationalistic debate as I believe that, even though there are few of us here who represent English constituencies, there are some formidable opponents here from beyond the Scottish border. I should tempt providence if I entered into such a debate.

This has been an interesting discussion. My hon. Friend clearly thought long and seriously about the issues. In the brief moments available, I shall deal with some of his comments. He spoke about his worries about the Boundary Commission in terms of its time scales, the constraints under which it works and the standard of representation in the United Kingdom. Those worries are shared by others. During my short time in my present job at the Home Office, colleagues have raised those matters with me.

As my hon. Friend knows, a thorough investigation into all the issues was carried out in 1985-86 and a report was produced in 1987. The Government responded in February 1988 in Command Paper 308. The Government acknowledged in paragraph 2.5 that new legislation was required and we have undertaken to incorporate the legislative proposals when a suitable opportunity arises. We are not about to introduce specific legislation.

Complicated arguments about devices that could be used ended in a general view that the Government were sympathetic towards various proposals, but were not convinced that the method proposed by the Home Affairs Select Committee would offer a satisfactory means of achieving the desired end—which, according to the Select Committee, was more or less to retain the present number of seats in the House of Commons.

My hon. Friend mentioned the time taken for reviews to be completed and their frequency. It would be difficult to impose time limits on the boundary commissioners without considerably curtailing their ability to consider the many issues that arise during a review. The rules provide for local inquiries to be carried out in specific circumstances. I am sure that my hon. Friend knows, as I know from my experience of boundary inquiries, that reviews take some time. They are detailed. They do not occur often, but, when they do, they take considerable time and there is considerable debate, some of it heated. The arguments must be thoroughly considered by the boundary commissioners so that they are seen to be absolutely fair. That consultation process—the preparation of draft proposals, assessment of comments and representations and the preparation of final proposals—does not readily lend itself to being speeded up.

Originally, the Representation of the People Act 1949 required the commission to report every three to seven years. That was quickly found in practice to be much too frequent. There was a change in 1958 to the current requirement, extending the period to 10 to 15 years. The Select Committee on Home Affairs considered alternatives. One was for reviews to remain in force for two normal Parliaments. I am not sure whether this Parliament will be a normal Parliament, but most do not last the full five years. It was concluded that reviews would be needed at intervals of less than 10 years, were that procedure to continue.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Bills

PIG HUSBANDRY BILL

Order read for consideration (as amended in the Standing Committee).

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker) Not moved.

GAMING (AMENDMENT) BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 40 (Committal of Bills).

DEAF PERSONS (ACCESS TO FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): With the agreement of the Member in charge of the Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), Friday 15 March.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 March.

AGE OF LEGAL CAPACITY (SCOTLAND) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 40 (Committal of Bills).

HARE COURSING BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 March.

ZOO ANIMAL WELFARE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

AIRCRAFT (NOISE RESTRICTION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

GREYHOUND BETTING LEVY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved. Second Reading what day? No day named.

BRITISH RACING COMMISSION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved. Second Reading what day? No day named.

FOOTBALL SPECTATORS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved. Second Reading what day? No day named.

PUBLIC SAFETY INFORMATION BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [8 February].

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate further adjourned till Friday 15 March.

COURTS (RESEARCH) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved. Second Reading what day? No day named.

FORESTRY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 40 (Committal of Bills).

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Resolved,

That—

(1) this House do meet on Thursday 28th March at half-past Nine o'clock;

(2) notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 17 (Time for taking questions), no Questions shall be taken, provided that at Eleven o'clock Mr. Speaker may interrupt the proceedings in order to permit questions to be asked which are in his opinion of an urgent character and relate either to matters of public importance or to the arrangement of business, statements to be made by Ministers, or personal explanations to be made by Members; and

(3) at Three o'clock Mr. Speaker do adjourn the House without putting any Question, provided that this House shall not adjourn until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts agreed upon by both Houses.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order to place on record the fact that the person who objected to my Hare Coursing Bill was not the Government Whip but the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor)?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not think that that is in order.

SEVERN BRIDGES BILL

Ordered,

That Mr. Steve Norris, Mr. Michael Knowles, Mr. Joe Benton and Mr. Edward O'Hara be members of the Select Committee on the Severn Bridges Bill.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Exchange Rate

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

2.33 pm

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): I ask the House to consider the question of the exchange rate and the particular problems that the country faces as it continues to slide into its second most serious recession since the second world war. It comes close to matching the horrors between 1979 and 1981, when 25 per cent. of Britain's manufacturing capacity went out of business, leaving it permanently weakened in the economic conflicts between nations in the struggle for trade.

No one can deny that the economy is in a full-blown recession—although it took the Government long enough to admit it. The average measure of gross domestic product has fallen by 1·4 per cent. in the third quarter of 1990, according to the latest available figures. Manufacturing output has fallen by 5·6 per cent., since its peak in April 1990. The result is a rapid rise in unemployment—it has risen by 280,000 since the trough in March 1990.

The cause of all that is the high interest rate policy pursued by the Government. Contrary to what we are now being told in the press, the Government are not reducing interest rates. Real interest rates are being maintained. They are reducing interest rates as inflation falls, but the real burden of those rates remains the same. The 2 per cent. reduction in interest rates is purely nominal, as the rate of inflation has fallen by 2 per cent. The same burden remains for British industry and for the average mortgage payer.

I argue strongly for a different approach to our economic problems. The burden of high interest rates is crippling British industry. Every day in the papers we see reports of new casualties—companies that have collapsed under the burden of the financial albatross that they have to carry round their necks, as they struggle to pay off, at inflated rates of interest, debts that they accumulated in previous years.

The financial deficit of industrial and commercial companies, at 6 per cent. of national gross domestic product in the second quarter of last year, and at 5·6 per cent. of GDP in the third quarter, is the worst since records began in 1963. That spells not merely a deep recession, but one whose ramifications will continue for a long time to come.

The domestic recession is being severely worsened by an overvalued exchange rate. When the present Government came to power in 1979, they inherited an essential equilibrium in the balance of payments. In 1979 the current account deficit was 0·3 per cent. of GDP, but by 1990 it had deteriorated to become the most prolonged and serious peacetime balance of payments deficit in United Kingdom history. There were three successive years when current account deficits exceeded 3 per cent. of GDP—1988, 1989 and 1990. That by far exceeded the two previous worst periods of deficit in post-war British history —one arising in 1951 in the aftermath of the Korean war, because of its impact on our balance of payments, and the other between 1973 and 1975, because of the crisis caused by the dramatic increase in the price of oil which followed the Yom Kippur war. The present balance of payments deficit dwarfs those.

If one aggregates the deficits of those years, the immediate post-Korean war deficit was 2·5 per cent. of GDP in 1951, and in 1972-75 it was 7·3 per cent. of GDP. However, the deficit that has set in since 1986 has already aggregated at 11·6 per cent. of GDP and we are clearly still trundling along with a deficit of the order of £12 billion a year in the depths of a recession.

As a schoolboy I grew up watching Ministers in the Harold Macmillan Government explain a succession of stop-go cycles. We were always told that when there is a balance of payments deficit the Government create a domestic recession. Imports stop or are reduced, people buy less, more resources go into exports, a balance of payments surplus results and the Government usually make a manic dash for the next general election before things get worse.

This appalling recession has left us with a balance of payments deficit of £12 billion. When the Government manufacture their mini-boom to try to get through the next general election—I do not know whether it will be this year or next—there will again be a massive increase in the balance of payments deficit. Those figures do not suggest that we shall come out of a recession and into a glowing period of growth in the 1990s but that, after a cosmetic mini-boom in the run-up to the election, there will once again be a long and sustained squeeze. Investment will fall, inflation and unemployment will no doubt once again be out of control and we shall face all the problems that we have experienced in the past.

I draw the House's attention to the Trades Union Congress's submission to the Chancellor in the run-up to Budget considerations. It called for a devaluation of the pound. The Government's strategy is flawed. Speaking as Chancellor in the debate in the House on entry into the exchange rate mechanism, the Prime Minister said:

> "The truth is that the trade gap is the result of domestic demand outstripping supply."—[*Official Report,* 15 October 1990: Vol. 177, c. 932.]

That analysis is wrong. If one examines the decade of the two Prime Ministers, which now stretches to nearly 12 years, it is clear that the trade deficit of 0·3 per cent. of GDP which they inherited has grown to 3 per cent. of GDP. That has not been caused by a massive increase in imports, which still form broadly the same proportion of GDP as they did in 1979. It is the collapse of our ability to export which has created that gap.

The Government's policy of tightening domestic consumption will not help. If we examine what is already happening, we see that exports are collapsing. Over the past few years, exports of goods and services have decreased by 3·3 per cent. between the second and third quarters of 1990. The export of goods has gone down by 3·4 per cent. between the second and third quarters of 1990. Exports of services, which peaked in the third quarter of 1987, have fallen by 11 per cent. since. If the Government's analysis were right, those figures would be the complete reverse and we should now be experiencing the beginnings of export-led growth. Instead, our export market is also collapsing.

There is currently a debate in the financial press. In the past few days, the *Financial Times* has argued that the slowdown of exports is due to the slowing of world trade. Coming to the Government's rescue, it says that it is not the Government's fault. If we compare the increase in the export of goods and services since the beginning of 1987 when the pound stabilised on the markets at roughly its

present rate, the increase in exports by the United Kingdom is 12 per cent. In Holland they rose by 20 per cent., in Italy by 26 per cent., in Germany by 27 per cent. and in France by 28 per cent. Those economies are not suffering the same impact as ours, largely because their exchange rates recognise that they must export. Our exchange rate continues to recognise the Government's priority, which is to benefit the City of London over the industrial base of the nation.

We are facing a ratcheting down of the productive base of the British economy. The Government's primary interest is to support the demands of the City of London and to neglect British industry and they are creating a virtually irreversible decline in our ability to match our European competitors.

We entered the ERM at DM2.95. Everyone in the City of London was happy, as they did nicely out of it, whereas those responsible for manufacturing argued that if we wished to be able to export and have our exports judged to be fairly priced against those of Germany, Japan and France, we should have entered nearer to DM2.60. I believe that that decision—the one decision in the Prime Minister's entire political career which is solely his responsibility—has been a disaster. It locked us into a position in which there is no prospect of sustained, long-term recovery from the recession. I urge a proper debate in the House and in the financial press about the need for a realistic exchange rate.

In our present position, with the progressive loss of markets, we should be thinking of undervaluing the exchange rate. If we consider the great success stories of Japan and West Germany in the post-war period, we see that long periods of growth came out of an undervalued currency which gave those countries a long breathing space in which to reconstruct the economy. In a Britain where we have seen the collapse of so much manufacturing, where we have taken a decade to get back to 1979 levels in manufacturing industry and where we are now seeing that turn down again, the only way forward is to accept that we must have a tremendous increase in exports if we are to close our balance of payments gap.

The only way to close the balance of payments gap is to have an interest rate that serves the needs of industry rather than the interests of finance capital based in the City of London. Until there is a reduction in the exchange rate, we shall have no real reduction in interest rates. We should reduce the exchange rate. I recognise that that would be a matter for discussion with our European partners, although Germany and France can have no interest in having the British economy constantly limping along behind the economies of the rest of Europe. Once the rate had been negotiated to a realistic level, depending on whether we wanted to settle nearer DM2·40 or DM2·60, it would open up the prospect of the Government's being able to make real cuts in interest rates. A real cut of 2 per cent. would immediately make investment in the British economy far more attractive and would immediately open up the prospect of real export-led growth. We should be broadcasting a signal to the world that more than 100 years of economic decline in comparison with our competitors was being turned round because we had taken the decision that we would prioritise our industrial base, not our financial sector.

If one looks at the Conservative Benches—not now, but when they are full—one does not see British industry assembled. One can hardly see an industrialist there any more; one sees the City of London assembled, with accountants, fringe bankers and advertising executives. They do not represent the real economy. Until the House sets a realistic exchange rate that allows British exports to start to build and opens the way to a long period of growth, as we have seen in our major competitors—Germany and Japan—the cycle of boom and bust, which we had in the 1950s and which has now come back to haunt the Government, will haunt whoever governs Britain in the coming decade.

I address my remarks not only to Conservative Members but to Labour Members. We do not want a future Labour Government to repeat the mistakes of the Wilson Administration in 1967, when they defended an unrealistic exchange rate and wasted three years. If the Government do not have the sense and the courage to set a realistic reduction in the exchange rate which will benefit our manufacturing sector, it must be the first priority of an incoming Labour Government. Unless we do that, whoever governs Britain in the 1990s is doomed to fail.

2.47 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Maples): I am sure that it will come as no surprise to the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) to learn that I do not share his analysis and that I do not agree with him about where the British economy has come from in the past few years and where it is going. No Government will ever be able to abolish the business cycle completely. Ours is not the only economy in recession. The economies of New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United States are in recession. Industrial production fell recently in France, Italy, Spain and Sweden. All of that cannot be attributed to Britain's joining the exchange rate mechanism at too high a rate.

It is interesting to look back to what the hon. Gentleman said in the debate on the exchange rate mechanism on 23 October 1990, when he pointed out, as he suggested today, that the British economy had been in "relative economic decline" for a long time because successive Governments had failed to take firm measures to arrest that decline. He cited especially the willingness of successive Governments to accept a rate of inflation worse than those of our major competitors. However, when he is now faced with a Government who are prepared to take strong action on the inflation front, he suggests a course of action—devaluation—which would completely undermine any commitment to achieving a rate of inflation comparable with those of our competitors.

The hon. Gentleman also singled out in October and today investment and our record compared with that of our major competitors. He suggested that that was also an underlying cause of decline. In fact, investment growth in the United Kingdom in the 1980s was better than that in Germany, France or Italy, while business investment in the major industrialised countries was bettered only in Japan. Moreover, during that decade the quality of investment improved enormously, as is shown by the rates of return on the profitability of the corporate sector. We believe that the corporation tax reforms contained in the 1984 Budget led to the present circumstances in which investment is undertaken to earn an economic return, rather than just for tax breaks. The net return on capital in 1988 and 1989 was higher than it had been in any year since 1973.

[The Economic Secretary to the Treasury]

When there is an economic slowdown, some fall in investment is inevitable. Nevertheless, in 1987, 1988 and 1989 there was a 45 per cent. increase in business investment. That enormous increase, which was a part of the boom that was happening then, will mean that we are in good shape to take advantage of the position when we emerge from the recession.

Over the past few years, our investment record has been rather good; so has our manufacturing productivity record. In the 1960s and 1970s, the United Kingdom experienced the slowest manufacturing productivity growth in the European Community, but in the 1980s our productivity grew faster than that of either France or Germany—by 51 per cent., an average of 4·25 per cent. a year. It grew faster than that of any other major industrialised country. I consider the growth in manufacturing productivity and profitability in that decade to be a major achievement.

The hon. Gentleman referred to exports as a share of gross domestic product. It is wrong to conclude that the United Kingdom's export performance has been poor compared with that of other countries, whose export share has often risen in comparison with a much slower growth in GDP. It is better to compare shares of world trade. In manufacturing, the United Kingdom has held its volume share of world trade throughout the 1980s and performance since 1981 has been better than that of any of our major competitors, including Germany, France and Italy. The fall in the export value share of GDP in the 1980s largely reflects a fall in the oil price in 1986, which clearly affects oil producers such as the United Kingdom more than it affects other countries. Value shares represent only one way of looking at export trends; volume shares show a rise in exports, even as a share of GDP, since 1979.

There is no reason to doubt the conclusion that United Kingdom export performance improved a good deal in the 1980s. The main reason for the deficit is the excessive growth in demand during the boom years, which we are now bringing under control. It is clear that the Government's policy is working. The trade deficit is already down from 3 per cent. of GDP in 1989 to 2 per cent. last year, and I shall be extremely surprised if our forecast of a substantial fall in 1991 is not realised.

I do not accept that the United Kingdom has been in relative economic decline under the present Government. The successes of the 1980s will leave us in a very good position to capitalise on them and an essential part of that will be the stability of the value of sterling and maintaining an inflation rate close to that of our European economic partners—which, I think, implies maintaining interest rates close to theirs.

The hon. Gentleman talked about real interest rates. Real interest rates in Germany and France are running at about 7 per cent. German interest rates are running at just over 9 per cent., while its inflation rate is about 3 per cent. French interest rates are 10 per cent., and its inflation rate is also 3 per cent. A rate of between 6 and 7 per cent. seems to be the norm. That may be a reflection of the fast growth in Germany or of a world shortage of capital, but we are not seriously out of line. We believe that if we succeed in bringing inflation down to such levels, we shall enjoy the same level of interest rates.

There can be no doubt about the effect of devaluation. We believe that it promotes inflation. Last October, the hon. Gentleman said:

"a devaluation along the lines that I and many of my colleagues would want . . . would need to be balanced by measures to protect the poorest members of society from the impact of the inflation that would feed into the system."—[*Official Report*, 23 October 1990; Vol. 178, c. 256.]

The hon. Gentleman realised that that would be a consequence of devaluation. We believe that maintaining a strong pound and bearing down on inflation holds down import prices and reduces the scope of domestic producers to pass on cost increases. A weak pound does exactly the opposite—not only does it promote inflation and devaluation, but the weaker members of society often suffer most from the inflation that follows.

Nor does devaluation guarantee a faster reduction in interest rates. Since last October, when we joined the exchange rate mechanism, we have been able to reduce interest rates by two full percentage points without any significant depreciation in sterling. That has been possible because the markets are coming to recognise our commitment to keep sterling within the ERM bands that have been set for it.

The problem with devaluation is that it inevitably leads to market concern about the next devaluation. If the Government are not prepared to stick to the present bands, why should one assume that they would be prepared to stick to the next set of bands? Devaluation carries a cost in terms of interest rates. The holders of sterling require an interest rate premium—a higher return—to compensate for the risk of further devaluation. We believe that the best prospect for sustainable interest rate reductions is to stick to the discipline imposed by the exchange rate mechanism.

The Government also do not believe that devaluation secures any lasting gains in competitiveness. First, it reduces the pressure for both sides of industry to agree to the steps necessary to control unit costs. Secondly, over time it leads to inflation, which erodes any gains in competitiveness from devaluation. If we look back to the 1970s, we see that during that decade the pound depreciated by a third and competitiveness deteriorated by 20 per cent. because prices and labour costs grew faster in the United Kingdom than in competitor countries. That eroded our competitive position.

The argument that our entry rate into the ERM was too high is not borne out by the facts. The central rate of 2·95 against the deutschmark was close to the average rate during the three to four months preceding entry. It was also close to the average real rate over the last decade. The real rate against all ERM members is close to the average of the last 25 years and is lower than in the 1980s. An interesting article was published in the last edition of the "Treasury Bulletin". It was prepared by Treasury economists who analysed this matter and bears out what I have said.

I do not believe that the assertion that the exchange rate is too high is borne out by the trade figures. Exports are rising. Excluding oil and erratics, they are up 2·5 per cent. over the last year. There has been a rise in manufacturing exports over the same period. In 1989 and 1990, exports rose by 18 per cent. and imports by 9 per cent. In the fourth quarter of 1990, the deficit in manufactures, as a proportion of GDP, was the lowest for five years. The current account deficit is falling and is now only half the

peak level reached in the third quarter of 1989. Last year the United Kingdom share of world trade rose for the second year running—all in a period during which sterling has been relatively strong.

If I were wrong about that, and if the hon. Gentleman was right that the exchange rate is so high that it is undermining competitiveness, I do not believe that exports to West Germany would have grown by 17·5 per cent. last year. At that time the hon. Gentleman and others were suggesting that the exchange rate was too high.

That argument does not seem to be true of Spain. ERM entry does not appear to have hurt its exports. Spain had a very high exchange rate—it was at the top of its band—but Spain's manufactured exports continue to grow strongly and it is increasing its market share.

Entry into the exchange rate mechanism has led to a gain in credibility for this country. In the past four years there has been only one realignment of central rates, when the Italians moved early last year to narrow bands. That means that the markets have confidence that ERM members will ensure that they stay within those bands. The stability that that will bring to the pound will enable us to enjoy lower interest rates and lower inflation, along the lines of our European competitors.

What is interesting about the hon. Gentleman's speech is that, apart from attacking our decision to join the exchange rate mechanism and the rate at which we joined it, he has by implication criticised Opposition Front-Bench Members for their support. I understand why he said what he did. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and his Front-Bench colleagues thought that joining the ERM would serve as a figleaf to cover their lack of any other credible policy to control inflation. Last year, the answer to practically every question put to Opposition Treasury spokesmen was that they would deal with it by joining the exchange rate mechanism. But it is not a soft option, as the hon. Gentleman realises—it is a tough monetary discipline to reduce inflation. The hon. Gentleman is fully aware of that. I suspect that the policies that he would like his party to pursue if it formed a Government—higher public spending, higher borrowing and a reluctance, if not a refusal, to use interest rates as an instrument of monetary policy—would make it impossible to stay within the ERM band at which we joined.

Many Labour Members share the hon. Gentleman's view. Many people have believed for a long time that we should pursue that policy, but the Government do not agree. Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen have adopted it as a disguise for their lack of policy to control inflation. It is not credible in the context of the other policies that they wish to pursue. I suspect that today we heard from the hon. Member for Brent, East the authentic voice of the Labour party, if not of its Front-Bench spokesmen.

The Government's primary objective remains the defeat of inflation. That is why we joined the ERM and why we shall stick to the discipline of the present bands. That was a decisive step which, in time, will help to reduce United Kingdom inflation to the levels of our European competitors. In turn, low inflation will lay the foundation for lower interest rates and a resumption of sustainable growth. Devaluation would undermine that objective and prejudice the long-term benefits which sticking to the ERM discipline offers.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 11 March 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

British Rail

1. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to increase investment in British Rail.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): British Rail's investment expenditure this year will be the highest in real terms since 1962, and up to £4 billion is planned for the next three years—a 60 per cent. increase on the previous three years in real terms.

Mr. Marshall: I thank the Secretary of State for that encouraging reply. Is he aware, however, of the astonishing contrast between the attitudes to public investment of British Rail's present chairman and his predecessor, both of whom were Government appointees? Is Sir Bob Reid's candour a direct result of the change of Prime Minister? Does the Secretary of State agree with Sir Bob that British Rail needs annual investment—not subsidies—of between £1 billion and £2 billion for several years? I welcome what the right hon. and learned Gentleman has said about next year's expenditure, but will it be additional investment in real terms? Exactly how much of what Sir Bob is seeking is the Secretary of State prepared to provide?

Mr. Rifkind: I have already said that the amount—up to £4 billion—that is planned for the next three years is a 60 per cent. increase in real terms. I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman is right in saying that there is a difference of view between British Rail's present and previous chairmen, but there is certainly a difference between what the Labour party is saying today and what it did when in government, when rail investment was substantially less than it is now.

Mr. Jopling: Has my right hon. and learned Friend delivered an imperial rocket to the chairman of British Rail following the way in which BR managed the service during the week of hard weather? It is no use BR's having a massive investment programme, as it has, if it can neither design nor operate its equipment. Many days after the snow had stopped falling, BR was still running a skeleton service, there appeared to be no ticket collectors and hundreds of people must have gone through without paying, and at one stage there did not even seem to be any drivers to provide a minimal service.

Mr. Rifkind: I sympathise very much with what my right hon. Friend has said. British Rail is conducting its own inquiry into the lessons to be learnt from that experience. I am also expecting to hear in the next few weeks the results of a review that I commissioned in December to see whether any lessons could be learnt from the experience of other countries with climates similar to ours, which might help to prevent a repetition.

Mr. Fearn: Is the Secretary of State aware that many of the bridges owned by British Rail and for which it is responsible are now in a very bad state of repair? Will he put the point to the chairman of British Rail and perhaps provide resources to do the bridges up?

Mr. Rifkind: I believe that British Rail has its own plans to improve and rehabilitate any bridges which may require such treatment. We shall draw the hon. Gentleman's question to the attention of British Rail.

Mr. Adley: As my right hon. and learned Friend knows, in past years the present Government and previous Governments have always exhorted British Rail to buy British. Following the question asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), may I ask whether the Government are putting any pressure on British Rail to buy British, or is it free to look to the manufacturing capacity of other countries in regard to rolling stock and locomotives? Some countries can and do build locomotives to withstand much worse weather conditions than ours.

Mr. Rifkind: Naturally, we want the travelling public to have the best available rolling stock for the price that is paid. It is for British Rail to judge how that can best be achieved when seeking to purchase new rolling stock.

Mr. Snape: Does the Secretary of State accept that what Bob Reid mark 2 is asking for is additional cash amounting to about £1·3 billion per year for some years to make up the investment shortfall, bearing in mind that the rolling stock and signalling equipment is 12 years older than it was when the Conservative Government were elected? Does he accept that Sir Bob is demanding cash, not an increase in the external financing limit, which would have to be paid for through even higher fares and even more overcrowding on our shockingly run railway system?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman's premise is incorrect. I have read the transcript of what Sir Bob Reid said. He acknowledged that the Government were providing facilities for £1·3 billion of investment this year, and expressed his desire for that to continue over the next few years. As I said earlier, the Government propose expenditure of £4 billion in the next three years—a figure very similar to the one mentioned by Sir Bob Reid.

Mr. Gregory: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that among his plans for major reinvestment in British Rail he will consider ensuring that the operating companies obtain greater productivity from their employees? They have changed their definition of "on time" so that they can pay additional sums to their senior management, but a train that arrives 10 minutes late does not strike me, or the rest of the world, as being on time. Will my right hon. and learned Friend look at the strange definitions that the operating companies have incorporated in order to pay themselves more money? Will he

also look at the subsidiary operating companies, which may operate genuine share schemes for their employees, and ensure that they benefit from the investment?

Mr. Rifkind: I note with interest what my hon. Friend says. We are anxious to ensure that British Rail recognises the need for quality control and introduces realistic and acceptable incentives for its staff in order to obtain an improvement in the quality of service. I shall look into my hon. Friend's point.

Roll-on Roll-off Ferries

2. **Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on the implementation of a higher standard of residual stability to existing roll-on roll-off ferries as recommended in the report of the steering committee for the research programme recommended by the Sheen inquiry in July 1987.

The Minister for Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): The United Kingdom has taken the lead in bringing about the consideration at the International Maritime Organisation of a higher standard of residual stability for existing roll-on roll-off ferries. In February 1991 the specialist sub-committee of the IMO on stability matters considered the United Kingdom's proposal and agreed that a higher standard of survivability should be applied to all existing roll-on roll-off passenger ships.

Mr. Davis: It is now four years since the Herald of Free Enterprise tragedy, three and a half years since the Sheen inquiry recommended a programme of research into the problems with these vessels and more than a year since the steering committee for the research programme recommended that there should be an early international agreement to impose higher safety standards on existing roll-on roll-off ferries. When will something be done? The steering committee recommended that the Government should consider taking unilateral action if there was any delay at international level. When do the Government intend to do something, or are they waiting for another tragedy?

Mr. McLoughlin: A considerable amount has already been done. The Government have spent a huge amount of money on research. As I said in my original answer, we have already taken this to the International Maritime Organisation. We have always wanted to reach agreement through the IMO, as it is the most useful means of enforcing safety regulations, but we have made it clear that if we cannot obtain agreement at the IMO, we shall consider acting unilaterally in the case of all ships operating in and out of British ports.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The Minister must answer the question that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) put to him. When do the Government intend to take action? How long shall we have to wait for the IMO to make up its mind? It is clearly seeking to delay matters even further, and it has not suffered the tragedy that the United Kingdom suffered. We need to take action now to ensure that there is no subsequent tragedy such as that which led to the Minister having to go to the IMO and argue Britain's case before it.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is universally accepted that the best way to act on safety matters is through the IMO. That is exactly what the Government are doing, but we have reserved the right, if necessary, to act unilaterally. That was applauded in two recent articles in *Fairplay* and *Lloyd's List*.

Blackwall Tunnel

3. **Ms. Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ensure that whenever repair and maintenance work is required in Blackwall tunnel, one bore is kept open for two-way traffic of private vehicles and small vans.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): Two-way traffic is operated when necessary in the southbound tunnel. This is not possible for the north bound tunnel, constructed in 1897, which is too small for high-sided vehicles in both directions.

Ms. Gordon: Is the Minister aware that daytime closures at the weekend cause massive traffic jams through the east end, particularly on Sundays? Last Sunday, not one policeman was to be seen, except those caught in the traffic jams, and when my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) asked some of them whether they were from the traffic department they said, "Very definitely not, Sir." An irate constituent wrote to me telling me that he was caught for four hours trying to get home from Kent. *[Interruption.]* I remind the Minister that the old Blackwall tunnel—now the northbound bore—carried two-way traffic, including buses, until the late 1950s—*[Interruption.]*—and could do so again. That is perfectly feasible.

Mr. Freeman: Despite the background noise, I appreciate the problems that the temporary closure of the tunnel has caused in docklands. Work will be completed after next weekend. I hope that the problem will be alleviated by the boring of a third Blackwall tunnel under the Thames, for which design contracts will be let shortly.

Airline Competition

4. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the Government's policy concerning airline competition in the European Community with special reference to the access of new entrant carriers.

Mr. Rifkind: The Government will continue to press for a liberal single market in aviation in the European Community, in which competition can flourish and which possesses effective safeguards against behaviour that is anti-competitive or exploits the consumer.

Mr. Steen: I regret the collapse of Air Europe, for which the Secretary of State and the Civil Aviation Authority bear no responsibility, but does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that he should ensure some protection from the bigger airlines, which are increasingly trying to destroy the smaller ones? Will he ensure that slots out of Heathrow and Gatwick are not used for unviable and uneconomic routes which make no money for the big airlines but which marginalise the small airlines and drive them out of business?

Mr. Rifkind: I shall comment on Air Europe in response to a private notice question at 3.30 pm.

The allocation of slots is a matter for the scheduling committees of airports. It is desirable that those slots are used in a way that will best benefit the travelling public, which is how we would wish the scheduling committees to carry out their responsibilities.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does the Secretary of State accept that any pressure on slots which made it impossible for regional airlines to use Heathrow would have a deleterious effect on the average member of the travelling public and would not be a helpful way of increasing the availability of slots at Heathrow?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Lady is correct, but she forgets that last Monday we announced that existing restrictions preventing new domestic services from applying to use Heathrow have been removed. The constraint on new domestic and international services applying to the scheduling committee for slots has also been removed.

Channel Tunnel

5. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration is being given to improve further east-west road links to the channel tunnel.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Christopher Chope): There are several major schemes in the national roads programme which will improve the main east-west routes to the channel tunnel and channel ports to meet expected demand into the next century.

Mr. Rathbone: I welcome that confirmation, but may I impress on the Minister, as a delegation of East Sussex Members of Parliament impressed on the Secretary of State the other day, the urgency of improving east-west road links to the channel tunnel before its opening? If that is not done, communications to Sussex and further west will be such that it will absolutely impossible to take advantage of the new link with the continent.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State reported on my hon. Friend's meeting with him. I cannot guarantee that all the schemes in the programme will be completed for the opening of the tunnel, but the main ones should be completed, particularly the one between Folkestone and Dover. There are about 10 schemes for the A259 in the programme, which I hope will be brought to fruition.

Mr. Aitken: At the risk of being called a southbound bore, may I press my hon. Friend for an answer on when the Government think that the channel tunnel will open? Is he aware of the need for an authoritative statement because of disturbing press reports about the likelihood of serious signalling and other technical equipment delays resulting in the tunnel being at least one year late? What is the true position?

Mr. Chope: I have nothing to add to what has been said: mid-1993 is the date for the opening.

Speed Reduction

6. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures are being taken to reduce vehicle speeds on British roads.

Mr. Chope: Current initiatives include new road hump regulations, 20 mph speed limit zones and speed limiters for heavy goods vehicles.

Mr. Stern: I congratulate my hon. Friend on that comprehensive reply. That list shows the commitment of my hon. Friend and his colleagues in the Department to the necessary reduction in speed limits. May I add to it the current proposals for increasing the likelihood of traffic light offenders being caught under the legislation? People who speed across traffic lights are a problem in major cities, such as Bristol, and anything that can be done to reduce it would be welcome.

Mr. Chope: I agree that there are a large number of traffic light offences which are a danger to road users. The new powers being taken in the Road Traffic Bill will enhance road safety significantly in that respect.

Mr. Pike: Will the Minister consider the problem which arises when the third lane disappears because of motorway works but traffic hurtles along at 70 mph plus, makes no attempt to reduce speed and tries to force its way in at the last minute, causing tremendous danger to many other motorists?

Mr. Chope: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. Too many motorists drive recklessly and dangerously.

Bicycle Lights

7. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the use of lights on bicycles at night.

Mr. Chope: I continue to receive representations about bicycles being used without lights at night.

Mr. Hannam: Is my hon. Friend aware of the increasing number of road accidents involving unlit bicycles? Will he consider making it a requirement that all new bicycles sold should have front and rear lamps fitted?

Mr. Chope: Some time ago we consulted on whether lights should be made an integral part of any bicycle before sale, but the overwhelming response was that the public did not wish that requirement to be introduced. Nevertheless, I share my hon. Friend's concern about the number of bicycles without lights on the road at night. Bicycles ridden at night are required to have proper lighting, but one of the difficulties is a lack of enforcement. In 1989, the last year for which I have figures, only 1,250 people were convicted of riding a bicycle without lights, although I am sure that it is within the experience of every hon. Member that many more people than that seem to ride bicycles without lights at night.

London Underground

8. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the chairman of London Underground to discuss future improvements to the system.

Mr. Freeman: The next regular meeting will occur within the next two weeks.

Mr. Carrington: My hon. Friend will be aware that my constituents suffer badly from overcrowding on the

District line and look forward with eager anticipation to the construction of the Chelsea-Hackney underground line. What progress is being made in the plans for that line? Can my hon. Friend give an assurance that the plans will include the construction of a new station at Stamford Bridge which, as well as serving Chelsea football club, will serve the new Chelsea-Westminster hospital which will also need adequate transport facilities?

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend refers to the Chelsea-Hackney line. He will realise that we are talking about a new underground line between Chelsea and Hackney which will permit people living as far south as Wimbledon as well as those who live in Essex to come into central London. The service provided will therefore be much greater than is apparent at first blush from the description of the new construction works. Nothing is firmly resolved at this point about the new station or the possibility of extending the line south of the river into Wandsworth. The leader of Wandsworth council is coming to the Department of Transport shortly to make representations on that subject.

Miss Hoey: Does the Minister agree that one of the most worrying aspects of travelling on the London underground, particularly for women, is fear at night? Will he take up with London Underground its intention to withdraw the extra staff who have been on the southern part of the Northern line and ensure that they are not withdrawn? I have seen the improvements at Stockwell in terms of computers and television, but nothing makes people feel safer than knowing that uniformed staff are present at night.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Lady is right that the presence of staff on the underground and on British Rail contributes to a feeling of security, but obviously both nationalised industries must live within their means. The proposed staff reductions on the underground, including the Northern line, relate mainly to ticketing staff, but I will look specifically at the southern part of the Northern line to see what consequences there will be for staff, particularly those who could be on the station platforms.

Sir William Shelton: My hon. Friend will be aware that a consultant last year recommended the continuation of the Northern line down to Streatham. Is he aware of the enormous importance that my constituents and I attach to that, and does he have any news of how it may be proceeding?

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend has raised that matter assiduously with the Department of Transport, pointing out the benefits of extending the Northern line further southwards. London Underground is looking initially at the need for refurbishment and improvement on the existing Northern line. That is badly needed and it will follow what is being done to the Central line.

I will certainly convey my hon. Friend's comments about extending the line to London Underground, which I am sure will take his representations into account in its planning.

Ms. Ruddock: Will the Minister accept that no promises of improvement for the future will offset the misery that Londoners feel when travelling on London Underground now? Does he accept that the projected loss of 950 jobs, with the consequent closure of some stations and booking offices and reductions in service, will thoroughly undermine public confidence in the tube system and jeopardise future ridership?

Mr. Freeman: I am afraid that I do not follow the hon. Lady's line of argument. As I have said, reductions of up to 5 per cent. in the number of staff are related mainly to London Underground's greater efficiency and ability to issue and collect tickets automatically. I believe that the confidence of the travelling public in the underground is much more related to increases in capacity in the system, which derive from the building programme, and to the improvements that will be manifest on the Central line next September, when new rolling stock comes into service, and on the Circle line when new, clean, refurbished and reliable rolling stock comes into service next year.

Mr. Bowis: Will my hon. Friend seek immortality in south London by agreeing to the extension of the Chelsea-Hackney line south through Wandsworth—not only because many Wandsworth residents support Chelsea football club and want to go to its matches, but because there is not one inch of underground track between the Northern line and the Wimbledon branch of the District line?

Mr. Freeman: As I have already said, we have merely safeguarded the Chelsea-Hackney line; its construction will depend on satisfactory completion of the east-west crossrail. No final decision has yet been made on the Chelsea-Hackney line. I understand the arguments either for extending the line or for changing its line of route so that it will serve Wandsworth, which is relatively under-provided for in transport terms. My hon. Friend has diligently represented his constituents' views on this score, and I shall certainly take into account what he has said.

Shipping

9. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish his response to the report of the joint working party on British shipping entitled "British Shipping Challenges and Opportunities".

Mr. McLoughlin: The working party report represents a jointly agreed analysis of the state of British shipping and its recommendations were developed as much by the Government as by the industry. The question of a separate formal response by the Government does not therefore arise.

Mr. O'Hara: Is the Minister aware that in the past 15 years the number of ships owned and registered in the United Kingdom has fallen from 1,614 to 314, that in the same period the average age of British ships has increased from 6·5 to 13·7 years, and that the number of officers and ratings employed in our merchant fleet has declined from 81,000 to 20,000? The result has been that although 95 per cent. of our export and import trade is carried by sea, only one fifth is carried by British shipping. That not only has serious consequences for our balance of trade but represents the loss of an important resource which needs to be available in times of national emergency and defence. Does the Minister agree that Britannia no longer rules the waves and that it is high time the Government did something to reverse that savage decline?

Mr. McLoughlin: As I said, the joint working party has submitted its report and its recommendations are being followed by the Government. In the past the Government have recognised the need to provide assistance for the training of ratings and officers and that was achieved under the Merchant Shipping Act 1988. There has been a large increase in the number of officers trained by the merchant fleet.

Ms. Walley: The Minister's comments are amazing. He does not seem to realise that his Government have presided over the biggest decline in shipping in any of the leading maritime nations. The Minister said that there is no need for a statement from the Government, but there must be a need for them to do something about this. The Government should do something to ensure that tax concessions are available. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if he carries on believing that there is no need for such a statement we shall see the end of the red ensign and we shall have no British merchant shipping fleet?

Mr. McLoughlin: I could not disagree more with the hon. Lady. What the British merchant fleet would most dread would be a Labour Government.

Traffic Increases

10. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department is undertaking to evaluate the environmental effects of the road traffic increases forecast by "Roads for Prosperity".

Mr. Chope: We have set up a joint study with the Department of the Environment to see what contribution the planning system can make to tackling the problem of CO_2 emissions.

Mr. Hughes: Have the Minister and his colleagues been working hard with the Department of the Environment to put pressure on the Treasury to ensure that gas-guzzling vehicles are more heavily taxed at the next Budget. [HON. MEMBERS: "Certainly not."]—or do they accept that the electoral consideration of not offending the motoring and car lobby will, as always with the Tory Government, override environmental matters, particularly in the Department of Transport?

Mr. Chope: I cannot anticipate anything that might be in the Budget. It is worth pointing out, however, that even existing motor cars with 1300cc engines may vary by up to 40 per cent. on the miles per gallon achieved. It is open to the environmentally concerned motorist to purchase a motor car that is more fuel-efficient than another in the same range.

Mr. Rathbone: Will my hon. Friend, while helping in any way that he can to reduce emissions from motor cars, not fall for the blandishments of any lobby that is trying to persuade him to cut the road-building programme?

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend makes a good point. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) shakes his head, but he may have forgotten that his colleagues, the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and the hon. Members for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and for Truro (Mr. Taylor), have recently been lobbying me for more investment in the road-building programme.

Dr. Kim Howells: Does the Minister agree that his bland statements simply add to the list of things about which we have heard in the past 10 years, including lean-burn engines and all the rest of it? Does he agree that appropriate fiscal measures would do a great deal to clean up the environment? In Germany, 98 per cent. of cars have catalytic convertors fitted. Would not it be in the interests of the nation and its environment to introduce fiscal measures to reward those who purchase cars with lean-burn engines and catalytic convertors?

Mr. Chope: The Government recognise that there may be a role for the taxation system in the process of ensuring the best improvements possible in our environment by trying to reduce CO_2 emissions. However, it would not be right to suggest that that would be a total panacea.

Aviation

12. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Airways to discuss the future of the British aviation industry.

Mr. Rifkind: I last met the chairman of British Airways on 25 February. I meet Lord King on those occasions when there is a mutual interest in doing so and I should be happy to meet him in the near future.

Mr. Soames: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply. When he next meets the chairman of British Airways will he confirm that it is the Government's intention to strengthen, not weaken, the hand of the biggest and most important carrier in the United Kingdom? Will he also explain to him why the Government have decided to substitute Virgin Atlantic on a route to Tokyo which was previously held by British Airways and which will have a materially adverse commercial effect on British Airway's prospects? Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, in all his airline policies, he seeks to bring stability to what is at the moment an extremely chaotic industry?

Mr. Rifkind: I have the greatest admiration for British Airways and the way in which Lord King, in particular, has chaired that company in the past few years.

As for our decision on flights to Japan, my hon. Friend will be pleased to know that, notwithstanding the announcement, British Airways and Virgin will be able to offer improved services on that route this summer compared with last year. Both companies should be able to increase their revenues. It was a difficult decision to reach, but it was necessary. I do not believe that it in any way suggests a lack of confidence in British Airways—quite the opposite. It is a superb, strong airline and I believe that it, as well as the British public, will benefit from the competition from Virgin Atlantic.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Has the Secretary of State seen in some of today's newspapers reports that British Airways is proposing to withdraw some of its services in Scotland, some think on the highlands and islands routes? Is not that socially undesirable and will he make representations if that proves to be the case?

Mr. Rifkind: I saw the suggestion in one newspaper that British Airways was reviewing certain services, including some in Scotland. It is obviously for British Airways to

judge which services it wishes to provide. If there is a demand for services that are not provided by British Airways, other airlines may wish to take them over. That is a matter for the airline companies to determine.

Mr. Dicks: Which decisions made by my right hon. and learned Friend's Department or the Civil Aviation Authority over the past year or so have had the full support of British Airways?

Mr. Rifkind: The purpose of the Department of Transport and the Civil Aviation Authority is primarily to serve the interest of the travelling public in the United Kingdom. I believe that, on the vast majority of occasions, that coincides with the interests of British airlines, but if I ever have to make a choice between the two, my primary obligation will be to the travelling public.

Aviation (Single Market)

13. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress towards a single market in aviation.

Mr. Rifkind: The European Community Council of Ministers is now committed to a single market in aviation by the beginning of 1993. A second, interim package of measures was agreed last June. Discussion is in progress on safeguards against anti-competitive behaviour, and the Commission is required shortly to being forward proposals on issues that remain to be settled in detail.

Mr. Butler: Will the single market bring lower fares? If not, why not?

Mr. Rifkind: All the evidence that we have shows that when restrictions are removed, bringing in freer competition, it results in downward pressure on fares. I hope that that will be the experience when the single European market is achieved.

London Underground

14. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what service reductions have been implemented on the London underground during 1991; and what estimate he has of the effect of the reductions on road congestion in London.

Mr. Freeman: London Underground Ltd. has recently written to hon. Members about service changes that it wishes to implement later this year. I understand that the proposed reduced train services would be only some 1·5 per cent. below the the potential maximum and that any staff reductions are intended to increase efficiency by, for example, taking advantage of automatic ticket machines.

Ms. Ruddock: Does the Minister accept that when there was a low fares policy on the London underground, in 1981 and 1983, there were reductions of 6 per cent. and 17 per cent. in car commuting? Does he acknowledge that there is a link between the two and that there is already a fall in ridership on the underground system which the service reductions that he noted will only exacerbate? Does he know that the chair of London Transport has acknowledged that there is expected to be a further reduction on ridership on buses? Where does he think that commuters will go if not into their cars? Will not this lead to further road congestion in London?

Mr. Freeman: When the Labour party was in office, it encouraged the GLC, when it was responsible for London Transport, to implement a low fares policy. It ran the London underground as though it were a department of social services and, as a result, neglected investment. Since 1985, there has been a significant increase in patronage on the London underground.

Ms. Ruddock: It is falling.

Mr. Freeman: It is not falling. There has been a significant increase in capital investment. The Labour party neglected London Transport and put us in the position that we are in today.

Air Fares

16. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the consequences of deregulation of air fares on the London to Amsterdam route.

Mr. McLoughlin: The relaxation of restrictions on fares was part of a broader liberalisation agreement between the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. That allowed air carriers to use their commercial judgment in responding to customers' demands within a competitive environment. Air fares between London and Amsterdam are now lower in real terms than they were before the liberalisation agreement took effect.

Mr. Marshall: Does not that show how beneficial deregulation can be? Can we look forward to more deregulation in the transport sector, in respect of both air fares and buses in London? What has happened to the number of passengers on the London to Amsterdam route since deregulation?

Mr. McLoughlin: I agree with my hon. Friend that liberalisation is essential—not least to give passengers more choice, but also to provide better opportunities for travel from regional airports. That is indeed the history of liberalisation.

Concessionary Fares

18. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring forward legislation for a national scheme of concessionary fares in outlying rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I see no need to change the present arrangements, under which local authorities decide what concessionary travel schemes to operate in their areas in the light of local needs.

Mr. Taylor: The Minister will be aware that when pensioners and others look at the differences between local authorities they are often upset to find that concessionary fares are available in one area but not in another, and they ask why that should be so. Often, the reason dates back many years to the time when schemes were originally implemented. The answer that local authorities give now is that, with the poll tax system, they simply cannot afford to introduce a scheme as they would be financially penalised for doing so. That is difficult to explain. Will the Minister make representations to his colleagues in the Department of the Environment with a view to finding a way round the problem?

Mr. McLoughlin: It may indeed be difficult to explain. It seems that the hon. Gentleman is asking the Government to explain something that local authorities should explain to their own constituents.

THE ARTS

Taunton Library

33. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has had any complaints over the adequacy of the public library facilities in Taunton.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Tim Renton): I have had no complaints. However, I should point out to my hon. Friend that provision of public library facilities is the responsibility of the local authorities—in this case, Somerset county council.

Mr. Nicholson: I recognise that neither my right hon. Friend nor Somerset county council—with or without the community charge—has a magic pot of gold. Is my right hon. Friend aware that, despite the splendid efforts of the staff of the Taunton library in assisting me, on occasions, and my constituents, the library is grossly undersized in relation to the size of the population that it serves? According to one estimate, it is only one quarter of the size that it should be to serve that expanding population, especially in respect of educational matters. As there is a proposal for a new building on the old Sainsbury's site in Taunton, will my right hon. Friend liaise with the local authority with a view to helping, if possible?

Mr. Renton: I note what my hon. Friend said. He has been closely involved in the efforts to persuade—if that is the right word—the county council to acquire new premises. I understand that, last week, the county council, in the light of other priorities, voted by a small majority against that course. However, if my hon. Friend sends me the full details I shall gladly look further into the matter. He will understand, of course, that I do not have any direct responsibility.

Mr. Fisher: Does the Minister understand that the vote against the excellent and extremely successful Taunton library's plan for development had nothing to do with the will of the local authority, but resulted from the fact that Somerset is threatened with poll tax capping? Has not he read the Library Association survey which shows that, because of the poll tax, 27 library authorities have had to make severe cuts this year and at least 37 propose to do so next year? Is not it a fact that the library closures, unfilled vacancies, cuts in book stocks and the shelving of excellent plans like that in Taunton are the results of the Government's obsession with the poll tax?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman may be rather more ignorant of the Taunton library expansion plans than he gives the impression he is. The plans call for a new building and a site of over 2,000 sq m has been examined. By contrast, the size of the present site is 800 sq m. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman does not really know the site or whether the expansion is justified. Furthermore, the community charge levels that have been set make provision for the maintenance of proper library services throughout the county. One area in which the provision of such services is in question is the county in which lies the constituency of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I am considering very carefully whether the library cuts that have been suggested in that area go beyond what is necessary for community charge purposes.

Area Museum Councils

34. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will make a statement on the funding for the area museum councils.

Mr. Renton: The Museums and Galleries Commission has increased its overall allocation to the area museum councils in England by 15 per cent. in the coming year. I am pleased to see that in the Portsmouth area this will allow the area museum service for south-eastern England to continue providing advice and assistance to the eight museums run by the city council and to the four other member museums.

Mr. Martin: I welcome my right hon. Friend's remarks, especially those which relate to Portsmouth and increased funding. Will he confirm that there will be a proper businesslike approach to the expenditure that is being made available? Will proper training and marketing skills be developed so that the money is used to improve museums, as it should?

Mr. Renton: I agree with my hon. Friend. The aim of the Museums and Galleries Commission, working closely with the area museum councils, is to ensure that the money available—as I said, the commission is increasing its grant to the museum council in the area which my hon. Friend represents in part by 15 per cent. in the year ahead—is properly spent, that there is good training and that everyone concerned should be able in due course to qualify for a standard certificate, for example, to show that they have proper professional qualifications for the museum. In that respect, the MGC and the area museum councils are working together closely and well.

Dr. Kim Howells: Does the Minister agree that area museums have a special function in that they are often the venues for travelling exhibitions of paintings? In Wales, there is probably only one great exhibition of paintings permanently on view and that is the Impressionist collection at Cardiff. It is important to many children and students outside Cardiff that the museums have proper funding so that good exhibitions can be mounted in them. Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that the poll tax means that area museums are in dire danger of being unable to mount such exhibitions in the future because the authorities always cut arts funding first?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman is correct in so far as spending on the arts is one of the discretionary areas of funding for local authorities. I hope that he will bring all his influence to bear to ensure that local authorities do not cut spending in this respect. It is not necessary for them to do so. The Welsh Arts Council has received a good increase from the Arts Council of Great Britain for the year ahead, as the hon. Gentleman knows. He should be lending his weight to ensure that local authorities do not bear down on discretionary spending on the arts.

Sir Peter Emery: When my right hon. Friend is considering these matters, will he consider especially some of the voluntary local museums? One in Honiton, containing a presentation of lace, is better than any other

in the country, yet it receives no financial benefit from the area museum councils. Some small museums do an immense amount of good for the locality and need to be encouraged as much as is humanly possible.

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend for drawing to my attention the lace museum in his constituency. As the area museum councils state in their recent, extremely good brochure entitled "Museums Working Together", they exist to help and support museums of all sorts from the smallest visual village museum to the largest city arts gallery. I see no reason, therefore, why the lace museum to which my hon. Friend referred should not receive help from the area museum council. My hon. Friend should suggest to the museum that it has another go.

Arts Spending

35. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the total amount of money spent on the arts by local authorities in England in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Renton: Local authority expenditure on the performing arts is discretionary and there is therefore no central reporting requirement. The best available estimates of net spending are those prepared by the Policy Studies Institute which draw on annual surveys by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. With permission I shall circulate the figures in the *Official Report*.

The latest available indication of local authority support was provided in a recent Audit Commission report. It suggests that net spending in England and Wales in 1988-89 was about £160 million.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to the Minister for his comprehensive answer. Does he accept that an inevitable and factual effect of the poll tax is that spending on the performing arts by local authorities has decreased as a proportion of their total budgets? That is inevitable because the spending is discretionary. Will the Minister assure the House that in the discussions that are taking place behind closed doors between Departments and at the Cabinet table on what the successor to the poll tax will be, local authorities will not be penalised for trying to keep museums and libraries open and will not suffer the draconian Government impositions that have been experienced by many boroughs such as the one which I represent? Libraries have been closed because of the local government taxation system that has been introduced by the right hon. Gentleman and the Government of which he is a member—[HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] It is not rubbish; it is quite true.

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman is anticipating decisions that have not yet been taken. For example, the London Arts Board has not yet announced the amount of money that it will make to arts organisations in Southwark. As the hon. Gentleman will know, last year, Southwark arts organisations received a great deal of money from the LAB's predecessor organisation. It will announce its budget next week, so the hon. Gentleman should keep some of his indignation until he hears how much money it proposes to give.

Following is the information:

Net Revenue Expenditure

Year	*£ million*
England and Wales	
1979-80	41·3
1980-81	50·5
1981-82	64·6
1982-83	87·2
England only	
1983-84	94·0
1984-85	98·4
1985-86	98·8
1986-87	99·1
1987-88	134·7

Haymarket Theatre, Leicester

37. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will pay an official visit to the Haymarket theatre in the city of Leicester to discuss arrangements for regional arts funding.

Mr. Renton: I have no plans to visit the Haymarket theatre in Leicester at present, but look forward to doing so in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Janner: I welcome the Minister's assurance. When he visits the Haymarket theatre, I hope that he will pay tribute to the theatre's work and the enormous efforts that are being made in Leicester to keep the arts going, through the Haymarket and other theatres, in such difficult times.

Mr. Renton: I accept the hon. and learned Gentleman's remarks. I know that the theatre has played a great part in that. Furthermore, the second Leicester international dance festival will open at the Phoenix arts centre on Friday 15 March. It will be an important arts festival, in which I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will take an active part.

CIVIL SERVICE

Privatisation

40. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what steps he has taken within his sphere of responsibility to safeguard the interests and career prospects of civil servants working in areas of responsibility affected by Her Majesty's Government's privatisation policies.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Tim Renton): Within the Cabinet Office and Office of Arts and Libraries, no civil servants have been affected by privatisation policies.

Mr. Michael: Is the Minister aware that, when some of the Export Credits Guarantee Department's operations were recentralised in Cardiff early last year, civil servants were promised that there would be no compulsory redundancies. Is he aware that some of those individuals are now threatened with compulsory redundancy? Does he accept that such matters cannot be left to the Export Credits Guarantee Department, nor to the Department of Trade and Industry, as the present and previous Secretaries of State of that Department are obsessive supporters of privatisation? Will he reassure the dedicated public servants who now work in the Export Credits Guarantee Department in Cardiff that he will take a

personal interest in the matter and bring objectivity and humanity to the consideration of their individual futures, which cannot be trusted to come from those two Departments?

Mr. Renton: In his latter comment, the hon. Gentleman does an injustice to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade. As the Minister of State told him in Committee last week, the civil service has arrangements whereby staff who are surplus to requirements in one Department are given priority when filling vacancies in other Departments. I have no doubt that the Export Credits Guarantee Department would make use of those arrangements if the occasion arose. I understand that the present estimate of the number of staff likely to be needed by the privatised company is about 600. It is possible that there might be 10 or 20 surplus people in Cardiff, depending on the timing of privatisation. That is not a significant problem and I hope that everything will be done to find good alternative jobs for those people.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, because of the entrance examinations into the civil service and the calibre of personnel employed, it is likely that most of the privatised companies will wish to retain that excellent labour force? In the event of any of them having to go, does he agree that they are some of the most desirable employees in the labour market because of their great specialisations and their thorough vetting?

Mr. Renton: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. His comments are very supportive for civil servants who, as a result of privatisation or relocation, might wish to transfer from the civil service. They will be highly qualified to find good jobs elsewhere.

Civil Service Unions

41. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he has any plans to meet representatives of the civil service unions to discuss morale within the service.

Mr. Renton: I had the pleasure in February of meeting some of the civil service union leaders informally.

Mr. Fisher: Is the Minister aware of the low morale among civil service staff at the British Library? Because of the Government's refusal to back the wonderful new investment in the St. Pancras site with adequate money, the 3,000 new reading room places which are planned will have to be reduced to 1,100. More crucially, the transfer to that site is underfunded to the tune of £8 million. Cannot the Minister understand that the opening of the new British Library should be a cause of great civic pride? Why cannot the Government back success? Will the right hon. Gentleman look at what his equivalent in France is doing and see his commitment to and support for the Bibliotheque Nationale? Our much more impressive and comprehensive British Library is liable to open less satisfactorily than it should because of the Government's meanness.

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman is very myopic. He is incapable of seeing the good parts in the curate's egg which, in the case of the British Library, are very good. Will he give credit for the fact that the Government are investing £450 million in the project, which will bring together, for the first time in many years, most of the British Library components in London? It will provide two new specialised reading rooms on a single site. It will provide vastly improved facilities and better conservation. The shadow Minister for the Arts should be blowing a trumpet in praise of the fact that we are developing the exciting new British Library site at St. Pancras.

Mr. Holt: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one thing that upsets morale more than anything else is dithering? As the Government made a firm promise some 18 months to two years ago to move the Ministry of Defence quality assurance unit from Woolwich to Teesside, but are now having second thoughts and vacillating, does my right hon. Friend understand that morale in the civil service unions would be much improved if the Government put into practice their promise to the people of Teesside?

Mr. Renton: My hon. Friend has raised this matter with me before at Question Time and I understand the seriousness that he attaches to it. As he knows, it is a matter for my colleagues at the Ministry of Defence, but I shall ensure that the points which he makes so strongly are passed on to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Minister realise that an additional reason for the low morale in the library service to which my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) referred is that civil servants realise that cuts are occurring in libraries throughout the country because of the Government's detestable poll tax? The right hon. Gentleman said earlier that he would get in touch with someone about the cuts in Derbyshire. Will he send someone with some money so that the authorities can operate the library service properly, instead of imposing poll tax capping, resulting in cuts in the library and music services?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman has not read his brief well in terms of cuts in the library service in Derbyshire. Derbyshire county council has talked about closing 11 libraries. My libraries adviser has been to Derby. In his judgment, some of the cuts may not be proportionate to the cuts in expenditure by the local authority. He submitted a detailed report to me and I am considering what further action to take.

"Next Steps" Agencies

42. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement about progress with the "next steps" initiative.

Mr. Renton: This initiative continues to go well. Last month I addressed the first conference of agency chief executives. I was very heartened by what they were able to tell me about the progress being made in their agencies to secure better value for money and quality of service.

Mr. Marshall: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer, which confirmed that the "next steps" initiative would lead to greater efficiency and a more responsive service. Does he agree that, despite what the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said, there has been a massive improvement in morale in the agencies?

Mr. Renton: I agree with my hon. Friend. The exciting thing about the initiative is that it is only just starting. At

present, there are fewer than 100,000 civil servants in the executive agencies and we hope that the number will increase by the end of the year by close to 200,000. The eventual aim will be to have perhaps three quarters of civil servants in executive agencies. Their dedication will lead to better financial performance, to management by objective and to giving better service to the customer.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May we have an assurance that when accounting officers appear before the Public Accounts Committee to deal with the "next steps" initiative and privatisation, they will bring with them the very civil servants who were responsible for administering the changes in the Department in those two respects? Will the actual officials involved come before the Committee?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman will have to be more specific about what he has in mind. Civil servants appearing before the Public Accounts Committee will always be willing and anxious to be as helpful as possible, but they cannot know in advance the precise range of questions that will be directed at them. In fairness, the Committee cannot have a huge quantity of civil servants appearing before it.

Disabled Employees

43. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many registered disabled people are employed in each of the top seven grades of the civil service.

Mr. Renton: There are 21 registered disabled staff at grades 1 to 6, 30 at grade 7 level and many more who choose not to register. A more detailed breakdown of the top six grades is not available servicewide. A report on progress in the employment of people with disabilities in the civil service is being published this week in the magazine "Independent". I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister accept that the number of people employed in the top grades of the civil service who are either registered or not registered as disabled is insufficient and sad? In view of his personal concern about such matters, what positive steps will he take to improve the prospects for disabled people to compete on a fair and equal basis, which is all that they ask?

Mr. Renton: I agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman in many ways. This week, we are publishing the magazine "Independent"—I have a copy here, but it is an advance copy, so I cannot give it to him—which deals specifically with how to encourage more disabled people either to apply for jobs in the civil service or, once they have joined, how to make their needs better known so that they can be trained and properly promoted. I was talking just last week to those members of my staff who are especially concerned with disabled people. We are anxious to ensure that the civil service remains a lead employer in helping the disabled not only to take jobs but to be promoted as far as they possibly can be.

Air Europe

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the collapse of Air Europe.

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): Air Europe, which stopped flying last week, is now in the hands of an administrator. Its parent company, International Leisure Group Ltd., which also owns some tour operators, is also in administration.

It is disappointing that the companies have found themselves in this position due to financial problems. The Civil Aviation Authority, which is responsible for financial monitoring, has been in close touch with the companies throughout their difficulties, and I myself was made aware of them.

I understand that there has been some criticism of the CAA's handling of the problem, but I do not share it. It was for the authority to decide whether and when to take action. To have withdrawn licences or to make public statements on the financial affairs of the company while there was still a serious prospect of rescue would merely have precipitated the crisis and made it inevitable. The CAA would then have been exposed to much stronger criticism, without avoiding the inconvenience that has occurred to the travelling public. One also has to bear in mind the desirability of every opportunity being explored to try to safeguard the jobs of the almost 2,000 employees of Air Europe.

There is, of course, always some impact on customers in any industry when an event like this happens. The bonding scheme, which provides a fund for making arrangements for all charter passengers, has ensured that disruption has been kept to a minimum.

The lack of a similar bonding scheme for scheduled passengers has been commented on. Other airlines have been able to take up Air Europe's passengers, and this is to be welcomed. However, I believe the time has come to ask the CAA to consider whether some arrangement might sensibly be introduced for scheduled passengers. I have asked the CAA to report to me as soon as possible.

Mr. Snape: Will the Secretary of State accept that the collapse of Air Europe and its parent company, although due partly to the economic recession and to the Gulf crisis, has also been brought about by the Government's disastrous aviation policies—*[Interruption.]* Well, it is a boom. It has been brought about especially by the Government's new air traffic distribution rules, which will cause further chaos and decline in Britain's aviation industry. Does the Secretary of State agree that the collapse of Air Europe is likely to be followed—*[Interruption.]*—Conservative Members should stop giggling and start listening—by similar financial difficulties in other independent British companies? Does he agree that the collapse will have a serious effect on services from Britain's regional airports? When did the Secretary of State and the CAA know about the problems of Air Europe, and what did either do before the collapse to try to prevent it?

What good is the Government's proclaimed liberalisation of European routes if passengers on scheduled airlines are left with worthless tickets because of the bankruptcy of a particular company? Is it not a fact that the package tour side of Air Europe's parent company was protected by a compensation bond worth £62 million administered by the Tour Operators Study Group, which is a competitor of ILG? Will the Secretary of State examine the structure of the bonding system, bearing in mind—*[Interruption.]* Listen. The Secretary of State did not mention this at all. He should bear in mind the fact that opinion within the travel industry is that the financial guarantee may have been withdrawn to prevent the entry into the British tour market of a German competitor, regardless of the disappointment, inconvenience and expense caused to British holidaymakers.

Mr. Rifkind: It is somewhat improbable that my statement on Tuesday on traffic distribution rules can have been relevant to the problems that the company faced. The company itself has not sought to make such a suggestion.

Both the Civil Aviation Authority and the Department of Transport were aware of the difficulties facing the company. I note that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) has not criticised the CAA. He is right not to criticise it because, I am sure, he shares my belief that it is desirable to try, as was being done last week, to safeguard the jobs of the 2,000 employees of Air Europe and to avoide the collapse of the company. It is significant that that attempt was made, and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for not criticising the CAA for the way in which it has operated. I listened with care to the hon. Gentleman's final point. I am not aware of any basis for his allegation.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the news of Air Europe's demise has been heard with considerable concern in my constituency? Is he aware that, in my view and that of many others, the CAA has behaved impeccably throughout the matter and has dealt with it with prudence and foresight? Nevertheless, will my right hon. and learned Friend join me in expressing to the many people who work for Air Europe, who may now find themselves without jobs, our concern that everything possible will be done to get another airline flying in its place as soon as possible? Does my right hon. and learned Friend also agree that, contrary to what the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) said, Air Europe's demise is, sadly, due to a rather over-ambitious and eccentric management?

Mr. Rifkind: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend about the difficulties faced by the employees of Air Europe. We have had that factor very much in mind. I hope, as will my hon. Friend, that the administrator who is now in charge of the affairs of the company will be successful in his efforts to find an alternative purchaser for those routes and for the facilities of Air Europe, so that as much as possible can be safeguarded and continued in the months to come.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): Is the Secretary of State aware that many regular flight passengers were informed about the collapse only when they arrived at airports? Can he state when his Department heard about the collapse—the exact date—and does he now intend to do anything with other airlines and other Governments to try to handle the situation in the future?

Mr. Rifkind: We heard about the collapse only when the decision was taken by the company to invite the administrator to take over its affairs. That obviously

[Mr. Rifkind]

created inconvenience for the travelling public. However, that inconvenience would have been caused on whatever day the decision was announced. It is a regrettable inevitability whenever such a company ceases to operate.

Mr. Michael Colvin: (Romsey and Waterside) Does my right hon. and learned Friend acknowledge that, in spite of his eccentricity, Mr. Harry Goodman did as much as anyone to promote free and fair competition in civil aviation within Europe and was immensely popular with his passengers, for whom he provided a first-class and popular service? Does he accept that what he has said about the possible introduction of a bonding arrangement for scheduled ticket passengers will be extremely popular? Will he confirm that that will need legislation, and does he feel that the mechanism for airline monitoring by the CAA is adequate? The fact that Air Europe was skating on thin ice about 12 months ago was known to everyone, and I cannot believe that the CAA could not have contacted him at least, and given him greater warning of what was likely to occur.

Mr. Rifkind: I have no reason to disagree with what my hon. Friend says about Mr. Goodman and his achievements. As far as extending bonding to scheduled passengers is concerned, it is right to ask the CAA to consider that proposal. Such a system will have problems as well as advantages, because it could have some implications for fares and therefore it is appropriate for these matters to be properly investigated. I understand that extending bonding would require legislation. I have no reason to believe that the monitoring responsibilities of the CAA are being carried out in anything other than an effective fashion, but obviously we shall wish to study closely the events of the past week to decide whether there are any factors that should be drawn to our attention.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): What assessment has been made of the effect of the collapse on Manchester airport? Was there any contact at any stage before the collapse became a fact between the CAA and airport management in Manchester? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that there has been in that city very widespread concern about the effects of the collapse on our airport?

Mr. Rifkind: The implications for Manchester airport will obviously depend upon the extent to which the administrator may be successful in finding an alternative purchaser for Air Europe, or for at least part of its activities. I am not aware whether the CAA had any contact with the airport authorities, but no doubt that matter can be addressed to the authority.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, although I have enormous admiration for his stewardship of his Department, I find it difficult to accept his dismissal of any charges against the Civil Aviation Authority? Can he please tell the House when he was first made aware that the group running Air Europe had debts of £480 million which it could not service?

Mr. Rifkind: That is not a particular figure which has been drawn to my attention. I received a visit from the senior executives of Air Europe at the beginning of last week, when they expressed optimism as to their prospects for rearranging their finances to enable the company to continue. I reminded them that it would be for the CAA, as the regulatory body, to decide whether they should be permitted to continue and that, if there were any question of the authority being dissatisfied with their being able to meet the normal statutory requirements, it would not be possible for them to continue. It appeared that there was a serious possibility of the company being rescued by the various attempts that were being made at the time.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement that he is to consult the CAA on the possibility of introducing a bonding system for scheduled services. However, in view of the ever-increasing number of independent-minded families who book scheduled services for leisure purposes, rather than use charter flights and package tour holidays, does he agree that such a bonding system should be introduced now? There is a need for such a system now. Does he agree that having further consultations and delay is not the proper way to do it? Despite the problems in establishing such a system, does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that it should be introduced as soon as possible?

Mr. Rifkind: It is not a question of further consultation—as yet, there have been no consultations. Therefore, as there would be implications, for example for fares, it is right and proper that these implications should be identified. I accept the hon. Gentleman's argument that there are some anomalies in passengers on the same aircraft being divided between those who have the benefit of the bonding scheme because they come under chartered arrangements, and others who are experiencing the same difficulties and inconvenience but are not so covered. That is why I have asked the CAA to look into the whole question of whether bonding should be extended in the way suggested.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have another statement on aviation immediately after this one and, although it is not exactly the same subject, it has similarities. I shall take two more questions from each side and then we shall move to the next statement.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that probably the greatest victim of this collapse is the passenger, the person who has been saving up to make this major purchase, his second largest regular purchase after a motor car? Does he further agree that the industry has signally failed in that, for several years, it has been asked to appoint a tourism ombudsman but has not done so? Such a person could have intervened at an early stage. Ombudsmen already act in the public interest in disputes with building societies, banks, insurance companies and pension scheme promoters, but tourism is the one major consumer area without such a voice. Will my right hon. and learned Friend now intervene to appoint such an ombudsman?

Mr. Rifkind: I note my hon. Friend's latter suggestion. He will appreciate that I am not responsible for tourism, but I shall draw his suggestion to the appropriate quarter. I agree that those who had hoped to go on holiday in the last few days with this airline have suffered serious inconvenience. Fortunately, the bond for charter flights,

which will apply to most of those people, will at least ensure that they do not suffer any financial loss as a result of this incident.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): It is now about 17 years since charter passengers were given protection by the last Labour Government. Is it not time that Government policy was governed by the needs of the consumer and not by the mindless ideology of deregulation? Can the Secretary of State imagine German companies going under in a similar way? Is it not time that he gave an assurance to the people who are affected by this breakdown that in future no Tom or Dick—or Harry—will be allowed to run an airline in this way?

Mr. Rifkind: It is a sad fact in aviation at present that a number of airlines throughout the world are experiencing serious financial problems. That is in no way peculiar to the United Kingdom. Of course it is the responsibility of the CAA to ensure that those who provide air services are financially and in other ways suitable persons to carry that responsibility.

Sir Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): While I recognise the clear difficulties which must have confronted the CAA, which had a choice between doing nothing and pulling the plug prematurely on Air Europe, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, as the CAA was appointed by the House to be the watchdog of the consumer, it might have been wise to assume that not all of us necessarily read the financial pages of the newspapers? A low-key statement indicating that some talks on financial restructuring were proceeding might at least have placed in the hands of the consumer a decision whether to buy an Air Europe scheduled airline tacket. As a result, some people might have chosen not to fly, when all those people have effectively lost their money.

Mr. Rifkind: It is a matter of judgment as to what effect such a statement might have had. The more low-key the statement, the less likely the chances of it being reported in the press and, therefore, brought to the attention of the travelling public. There was a difficult decision to be made. On this occasion, I find it difficult to fault the CAA for the way in which it shouldered a difficult responsibility.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Did the Secretary of State consult the CAA immediately after being given the assurances at the beginning of the week, and if so, did the CAA assure him that the airline was viable? If it did not, how is it that we have reached the situation in which, because the bond is being triggered, it is very unlikely that this airline can be sold as a viable company or that we will be able to retain the jobs and money of the people involved?

Mr. Rifkind: I received no assurances from the airline at the beginning of last week—only an indication of what it believed was likely to happen. It is for the authority and not the Department to make a judgment on these matters. The hon. Lady asked about the bonding arrangements. It was not only right and proper but necessary as I understand it for the bond to be called in; otherwise, those charter passengers for whom the bond is intended would not have been able to fly back to this country. They knew that the cost of doing so was covered by the bond.

Transatlantic Air Routes

3.48 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the United Kingdom-United States air negotiations.

I am pleased to announce to the House that the United Kingdom has this morning reached an agreement with the United States that offers major new opportunities to British airlines on transatlantic routes. The agreement allows two new United States airlines to take over Pan Am's and TWA's Heathrow routes, but with fewer rights than are currently available to Pan Am and TWA.

In addition, the United Kingdom will get an unprecedented wide range of new opportunities to compete in United States markets. United Kingdom airlines—especially British Airways—were closely involved in shaping the package throughout the negotiation, and I am grateful to them.

United Kingdom benefits include, first, the designation of a second British carrier to operate to the United States from Heathrow; secondly, a new facility for second or third United Kingdom airlines to fly on certain existing routes; thirdly, a completely new right to fly to the United States via continental Europe and to fly on from the United States to Mexico, the Caribbean, South America, and the Pacific; fourthly, a new ability to make marketing arrangements with United States airlines, known as code sharing, to all points from which United States carriers code share to the United Kingdom; and finally, opportunities for the first time for joint ventures between United Kingdom carriers and carriers from other European countries. Any growth of United States airlines' frequencies to and from Heathrow will be strictly limited for a three-year period.

Both sides agree that there will be further talks aimed at liberalisation of the British-American market, allowing airlines on both sides to compete on equal terms for transatlantic and internal United States traffic, without the limitations and complications of the present bilateral arrangements. Those talks will address complex questions such as cabotage and inward investment.

The agreement has not been easy to negotiate. The latest round continued throughout the weekend, and I place on record my appreciation of the skill and persistence of our negotiating team. The package that it thrashed out is a splendid one, which benefits United Kingdom carriers and offers a wide range of opportunties for airlines to compete in offering better services to the travelling public.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Will the Secretary of State clarify his statement that the two new United States airlines will have fewer rights than those currently available to Pam Am and TWA? What exactly does that mean? Is it not a fact that both new airlines, American Airlines and United Airlines, have a comprehensive internal network in the United States, unlike their bankrupt predecessors?

Who is to be the second designated British carrier to the United States from Heathrow? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman asking the House to believe that British Airways was

"closely involved in shaping the package"

[Mr. Peter Snape]

when a second designation will obviously disadvantage that operator?

Which of the second and third United Kingdom airlines are to fly on certain existing routes? Will that not seriously divide British competition, to the detriment of our major national carrier?

Although the new rights to fly to the United States vis continental Europe will be useful in the long term, will that not involve agreement with other EEC countries? Will the right to fly on from the United States across the Pacific allow destinations to include Australia and New Zealand?

Is it not a fact that the code sharing to which the Secretary of State referred will depend on co-operation from rival United States airlines? What assurances has the Secretary of State received that such co-operation will be forthcoming?

As for cabotage and inward investment, will the Secretary of State confirm that much more discussion will be needed, and that, if any progress is to be made, the United States Congress will have to change its attitude considerably?

Finally, does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that the package, far from being

"a splendid one, which benefits United Kingdom carriers",

represents a major victory for the United States, will divide and weaken the United Kingdom aviation effort, and is likely to make British Airways, for one, decide to reduce its comprehensive route network, in order better to marshal its financial resources for the transatlantic battle ahead?

Mr. Rifkind: No, I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's interpretation. The limits on the new airlines that are to replace Pan Am and TWA are capped to the level of activity that those two airlines were planning for this summer. Thereafter, for the next three years, the two new airlines will be limited to a maximum growth equivalent to the services being provided by British airlines —whereas, under the existing Bermuda 2 agreement, their predecessors could have increased their operations to 150 per cent. of those of United Kingdom airlines.

The second designated British carrier is likely to be Virgin Atlantic Airways, because it is currently the only applicant.

Not only British Airways but other airlines were involved with our negotiating team, and were consulted during the long weeks of negotiations as to the kind of package that would, at the end of the day, be acceptable in terms of the interests of British airlines. I am grateful not only to British Airways but to the other airlines that have adopted the same position.

Of course the hon. Gentleman is right in saying that British Airways will see the matter purely in terms of the impact on the company itself; but I believe that, even when seen in that perspective, the agreement presents exciting new opportunities. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where?"] I am referring especially to the seventh freedom rights, which will allow British Airways in particular the opportunity, for the first time, to fly from continental locations across the Atlantic to the United States.

In its discussions with us, British Airways identified that as one of the most important objectives that it hoped the negotiation would achieve. I am delighted that such opportunities have been agreed in the United Kingdom —almost for the first time anywhere in the world—and it is important that British Airways will be able to benefit.

The hon. Gentleman is also correct in saying that the discussions on cabotage and inward investment could lead to liberalisation only with the approval of the United States Congress, as well as that of the Administration. It is precisely for those reasons that we did not consider statements on intent by the United States Administration on those issues sufficient to form a crucial part of the existing package.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that no other country in the world treats its national flag carriers as badly as the Government treat British Airways? What are calculated to be the financial trading benefits to the United Kingdom and the United States? According to my estimation, and, I think, that of British Airways, we will lose and the Americans will gain.

Mr. Rifkind: That is simply not true. According to our estimate, British airlines will enjoy a gross benefit of some £200 million—more than the likely financial benefit to the United States from the substitution of United and American on the routes currently served by Pan Am and TWA.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): In view of the probable benefits to British airlines in general, does the Secretary of State share my hope that the current staff reductions will be no more than temporary?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course we hope that that will be the case. I am aware that British Airways, along with many other airlines throughout the world, has been cutting down on the frequency of flights, and airlines—perhaps including British Airways—will no doubt make further announcements to that effect. That is a consequence of the general state of the aviation industry throughout the world, and it is therefore all the more important that new opportunities for growth for British Airways and other British airlines are provided.

We cannot ourselves ensure that the airlines take advantage of the commercial benefits available to them; our job as a Government is to provide the legal framework within which the opportunities become available for the first time. I have great confidence in, especially, British Airways under Lord King: in the past, it has shown itself very able to act as a competitive force when the need has arisen, and I believe that it now has the opportunity to show exactly what it is capable of achieving—even in circumstances that are difficult for all the world's airlines.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): May I place on record my appreciation of the skill and persistence with which my right hon. and learned Friend has pursued the opportunity available to him in achieving this deal? Is it not worth a large amount of money to British aviation interests? Has it any implications in regard to when an American airline might start a transatlantic service from Stansted?

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. As I said earlier, according to our best estimate, the United Kingdom will benefit by about £200 million. As for the use of Stansted, we believe that the agreement will result in a substantial increase in the

number of transatlantic flights provided by a number of carriers, both British and American. Given the limited capacity of both Heathrow and Gatwick, it is probably only a matter of time before airlines will use the excellent opportunities provided by Stansted.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Can the Secretary of State persuade the House—perhaps he can—that we have not been had as suckers by the Americans in one respect? Has it been agreed that British aircraft on the other side of the Atlantic will be maintained and repaired at approximately the same prices as American aircraft? Has any agreement been reached on that crucial question?

Mr. Rifkind: The cost of the maintenance and repair of aircraft is the responsibility of the airline companies. Governments do not involve themselves in those negotiations. It is for the airline companies to negotiate with other companies, whether British or American, the precise contractual relationships.

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on a very good agreement for British passengers and customers. May I ask him to confirm that the agreement will help to bring about a competitive, multi-airline industry in Great Britain?

Mr. Rifkind: I believe that it will help in that direction. Certain of the agreements that we have extracted from the Americans allow for a second and, in some circumstances, a third British carrier to use routes that in the past were only used by one carrier. That will maximise the opportunities for the British travelling public to use the British airline of their choice, something which the House will wish to endorse.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware of the feeling in greater Manchester that, all too often, the Government forget about Manchester airport. How many additional flights to the United States will Manchester get out of this deal? What did he ask for?

Mr. Rifkind: I cannot give an exact answer. The airline companies will have to decide whether they wish to use these new opportunities. I repeat that the Government's responsibility is to liberalise the opportunities available to British airlines. It is then for the airlines to use those opportunities, according to their commercial judgment.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): May I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the completed negotiations and echo his comments about the negotiators, given that the American negotiators originally said that they wanted a straight swop, with no compensation whatsoever? May I ask him to take this opportunity to reiterate to the United States Government that we want an early decision on inward investment for airlines?

Mr. Rifkind: I agree with my hon. Friend's latter remarks. He is correct to remind the House that the United States began by suggesting that the substitution of United Airlines and American Airlines for Pan Am and TWA should be considered as merely a technical adjustment requiring no negotiation and no further changes. Due to the skill of our negotiators, we have received some extremely valuable concessions which have been identified by both British Airways and other British airlines as the ones that they wanted. I cannot emphasise too strongly that the concessions that we have extracted from the United States were identified by British airlines as the price that needed to be paid if the two existing American airlines were to be replaced by two stronger American airlines.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is not the truth of the matter that, when the agreement was negotiated, the American airlines were in deep economic trouble? Therefore, the Government and their negotiators were in a strong bargaining position. They could have screwed the Americans into the ground, but, for some reason that the Minister is not prepared to give to the House, they have finished up with an agreement that is nothing less than a carve-up for the Americans and a victory for Bush.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman's premise, although not his conclusion, is indeed correct—that the Americans on this occasion were the demanders. It was therefore appropriate for the United States Secretary for Transport, who enjoys the name of Mr. Sam Skinner, to be persuaded of the need to make important concessions. *[Interruption.]* I am not aware whether there is a family relationship between the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and the American Secretary for Transport.

Mr. Skinner: Uncle Sam tipped me off.

Mr. Rifkind: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman wishes to represent the interests of his British constituents rather than those of his American namesake.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Although the Secretary of State has worked very hard to obtain a net benefit for British airlines, is he aware of the opinion that British Airways—our major airline company with a glorious record of achievement and profitability—has to some degree been less advantageously dealt with? At a time when many airlines are disappearing, at great expense to banks, the economy and the travelling public, does he accept that it would be a mistake to deal with new airlines more favourably than with established, leading airlines?

Mr. Rifkind: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I am sure that he will be pleased to know that, as a result of the agreement, quite apart from the other concessions that we have extracted to which I referred in my statement, the two new United States airlines have fewer rights at Heathrow than their two predecessors.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): Is the Minister aware that there will probably be no growth in airline frequencies in the next three years, but have we anticipated the considerable growth thereafter at Heathrow? What did the right hon. and learned Gentleman mean by "joint carriers" at Heathrow?

Mr. Rifkind: On the early part of the hon. Gentleman's question, the ability of airlines to use the new opportunities will partly depend on the availability of slots at Heathrow, which takes us back to our exchange last week on the constraints caused by the virtual full use of Heathrow. Joint ventures provide new opportunities for British Airways to join other European airlines in challenging American providers of frequencies on transatlantic routes. In the past, such joint ventures have been impossible or very difficult, but they will be permitted under our bilateral agreements with the United States.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the seventh freedom facility for

[Mr. Michael Shersby]

British Airways will be warmly welcomed? I congratulate him on negotiating that. Will he comment on the new facilities for the second and third United Kingdom airlines to fly on existing routes? Are any of the airlines that participated in the discussions interested in using those routes?

Mr. Rifkind: It is desirable that frequencies that are not fully used by the sole carrier permitted to operate on them should be available to other British carriers. I believe that there is some interest in using the new opportunities, but the airline companies will have to make a statement to that effect.

The opportunities available under the seventh freedom facility are a major step in the right direction. They were identified by British Airways as one of its major objectives in the negotiations, but were resisted very strongly by the Americans up to the last stage of the negotiations. I am particularly pleased, therefore, that they now form part of the agreed package.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): Does the Secretary of State realise that the agreement is a poor deal in return for his decision to open Heathrow to all and sundry? Does he realise that he will never be in a stronger bargaining position to obtain cabotage within the United States? The agreement sells Britain short. Does that mean that he has given up all hope of achieving cabotage in the United States?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is clearly under a deep misapprehension. He seems to be unaware that British Airways and other British airlines thought that it would be inappropriate to seek progress on cabotage in the negotiations, because any realisation of our objectives on cabotage would justify the agreement not only of the United States Administration but of Congress, and that could not be guaranteed by the Administration. With the full agreement of British Airlines, we therefore concentrated on concessions that the United States Administration were able to deliver, and therefore could be seen as bankable assurances in the way that I have described.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I welcome the statement, but will my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State comment on its impact on regional and local airlines and say whether the dominance of British Airways since it took over British Caledonian will be increased or diminished?

Mr. Rifkind: My statement is on British-United States agreement on transatlantic routes. I believe that it will lead to a net increase in flights across the Atlantic in both directions, which will benefit not only the airlines but the travelling public. I look forward to the day when there are direct flights across the Atlantic from regional centres in the United Kingdom rather than them being overwhelmingly concentrated from airports in the south-east.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Does my right hon. and learned Friend envisage the routes that are operated by TWA and Pan Am from Heathrow to German destinations—Berlin and Frankfurt—being an issue for negotiation between the Government and the United States Administration, or will the status quo persist?

Mr. Rifkind: I would have to check the precise details of the agreement hammered out a few hours ago. I think that part of the agreement is to put a cap on the exercise of the fifth freedom by American airlines at the level which is currently operated by Pan Am and TWA.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Following that question, may I ask my right hon. and learned Friend for clarification on the fifth freedom in the United States of America, because, de facto, the Americans will have it with this arrangement within the European Community? I welcome the arrangement overall, but there may be an imbalance there. In the light of his open skies policy at Heathrow, which was announced last week, does this give rights to American carriers to have any slots at Heathrow?

Mr. Rifkind: No, the agreement has no implications for slots. That is not a matter for the Government to determine: it is purely the responsibility of the scheduling committee at Heathrow. Therefore, American or other airlines that wish to use Heathrow may find that slots are available for the future. As I said a few moments ago, there are constraints on the extent to which these new American airlines can provide fifth freedom services arising from this arrangement.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): My right hon. and learned Friend has estimated the gains to British airlines at about £200 million a year which no doubt is at the expense of our continental competitors. Can we have another look at the other side of the coin? Has he calculated what the net gains to American carriers are in this deal, which is broadly welcome?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. Although it is not possible to give an exact figure, either in our case or the American case, it is our view that the facilities available to United Airlines and American Airlines are unlikely to be worth as much as those available to British airlines. Indeed, the figure is likely to be £20 million to £30 million less in value. I must stress that those are the best judgments that can be obtained. Clearly they will depend on the extent to which the various airlines, British and American, use the new opportunities that are now available to them. That is not within our control.

Sir Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Although I in no way underestimate the announcement which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has been able to make this afternoon, may I ask him whether he agrees that the principal aspiration of British Airways, as yet unfulfilled, might be said to be on the cabotage front, which is another way of saying that it would like to be able to pick up passengers in New York and fly them to Chicago or Los Angeles? Although I recognise that some reference is made in his statement to continuing negotiations on that extremely important matter, can he say whether the negotiations will start now or whether there will be an interval? Indeed, as Congress must put its imprimatur on this, how realistic is it to talk about this at all?

Mr. Rifkind: Both Secretary Skinner and I agreed that it would be desirable, in the event of a successful outcome of these negotiations, to begin talks on further

liberalisation as soon as possible. Cabotage was not included in these negotiations, with the agreement of British Airways and other British airlines, because it would not have been a power which the United States Administration alone could have delivered. Clearly, any further discussions will have to take place on the basis that if such a facility is to be permitted, it can be implemented only once the United States Congress has passed the necessary legislation. That is an inescapable part of the provision of cabotage opportunities, so it will be reflected in our attitude towards the negotiations.

Prescription Charges

4.13 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you can be of assistance. Back-Bench Members certainly appreciate what you have often done during your time in the Chair to defend their rights. I genuinely mean that. At 3.30 pm, a written answer was given on prescription charges.

Since 1979, prescription charges have risen 17 times. There certainly should have been a statement from the Secretary of State for Health on such an important issue which certainly affects our constituents. Why is it that on such a crucial issue as prescription charges rising to £3·40 per item a written answer is given but no statement? That will undoubtedly penalise people who are ill and who are not exempted. I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will help us to get a statement from the Secretary of State.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has made his point. It is perfectly in order for a written question on these matters to be tabled—and answered. I understand that it is likely that there will be a debate on the matter anyway in due course.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the four motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Buying Agency Trading Fund Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Property Services Agency Supplies Trading Fund Order 1976 (Revocation) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Representation of the People (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Immunities and Privileges) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That the Annual Report of the Court of Auditors of the European Communities 1989 shall not stand referred to European Standing Committee B.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

ESTIMATES DAY

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY] [1ST PART]

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1990-91

CLASS V, II VOTE 3

[Relevant documents: The Second Report from the Transport Committee of Session 1990-91 on London Underground's Financial Deficit (House of Commons Paper No. 82).]

London Regional Transport

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a further sum, not exceeding £124,318,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray charges that will come in the course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1991 for expenditure by the Department of Transport on support to nationalised transport industries and to ports; rebate of fuel duty to bus operators; and costs of drivers' testing and training.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

4.15 pm

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): First, I thank the members of the liaison committee, particularly its chairman the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), for agreeing to the request from the Transport Select Committee to hold this debate today. I should also like to thank the members of the all-party Transport Select Committee for unanimously agreeing to accept my recommendation that we put in a submission to have this debate take place. The topicality of the subject has proved that it is in the public interest that the House should debate these estimates as they apply to London Regional Transport, and in particular to London Underground.

I shall be brief, as I am aware that this is a short debate and that many Members, especially those from London, wish to participate in it. I also intend to confine my remarks to London Underground and not to discuss the wider aspects of LRT.

In the past 18 months, the Transport Select Committee has held two one-off sessions interviewing the chief officers of London Underground. On each occasion, we decided subsequently to publish a report based on the evidence given to us as a result of our questioning of those chief officers.

On each occasion statements were made to us which astounded us. Eighteen months ago, we were told that overcrowding was so critical that London Underground had to increase the fares to put people off using the system in central London. Now we are told that because of its poor housekeeping, it will have to cut services, which in turn will further exacerbate overcrowding and even, perhaps, create more safety problems.

Only four months ago, we were told by the chairman of London Underground that the former finance director had many talents, but that controlling cash was not among them—what a condemnation that was of the process of selection and appointment.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Does the hon. Gentleman agree with one who sat beside him on that Select Committee that we were also told—in view of an overspend of £93 million—that, apart from the financial side, it had been a fairly successful year? Does he agree that if they were given the job of cleaning Oxford Circus station, the people who run the underground could mess that up too?

Mr. Marshall: I do not know about the hon. Gentleman's final point, but I agree that the statement to which he refers must have been the mother of all misleading statements.

Although our report is short, it is all the better for that, and it highlights the serious financial situation facing London Underground. I can summarise the report by saying that in October 1990 there was an unforeseen deficit of £35 million, which rose to £93 million two months later and fell to £52 million net only after cuts worth £41 million were made.

The causes of the deficit are listed by London Underground as lower revenues from property and fares, higher spending on safety works, and the failure of accounting procedures.

The Select Committee concluded that the extra safety expenditure was justified, especially in the light of the Fennell recommendations. We believe, however, that the London Underground budget plan was greatly over-optimistic. Avoidable errors were definitely made in forecasting large revenue increases from property sales and fares when there were already signs of a slump, especially in the property and retail trades.

The accounting procedures need to be overhauled thoroughly, as it took far too long for London Underground to realise that its financial position was unsound. The Select Committee recommended that one the Department of Transport is satisfied as to the justification of the accelerated capital spending, it should allow London Underground to borrow forward on the 1991-92 external financing limit. We also recommended that the Department should undertake a detailed review of London Underground's capital programme in the three-year period covered by the next public expenditure White Paper with a view to making further increases in capital grant.

The Select Committee's main recommendations were that the internal review of the underground's financial systems should include improved financial accountability in the engineering projects directorate, improved monitoring by the finance directorate and closer co-operation between the two before the capital budget is agreed. We also recommended a clearer distinction between capital and revenue expenditure and accounting, and the proper authorisation and accounting of capital expenditure brought forward from future years. It should not have been necessary for the Committee to recommend such prudent measures, as they should have existed before the problems ever arose.

It is fair to say that London Underground now appears to be overhauling its procedures. The Department of Transport has financed the deficit for this year to the tune of £55 million.

Mr. Dicks: The hon. Gentleman has just praised London Underground for overhauling its procedures, but can it justify having to sack 1,000 people because of its own managerial incompetence?

Mr. Marshall: I shall deal with that later, but those redundancies are one of the saddest recent developments in a long sad history of mismanagement at London Underground.

Can the Minister tell me whether the £55 million, which has been advanced to finance the current year's deficit, is an addition to this year's money? Or is it simply borrowed from next year's money, and if so, will the situation get even worse next year?

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I had an Adjournment debate on 1 March on the subject of London Underground, when I raised that very point. My understanding is that the Treasury has the right to ask London Underground to offset that £55 million against its external financing limit next year.

Mr. Marshall: I am sorry that I missed the hon. Gentleman's Adjournment debate, but perhaps I had other business that evening. I am grateful to him for bringing it to my notice.

I hope that the Minister will clarify the situation. If, as the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) suggests, that £55 million must be clawed back from next year's money, it will make the situation even worse—the very point that the Select Committee has made.

I should like to record my appreciation of our Committee Clerk Mr. Doherty and of the specialist assistant Mr. Thompson for all that they do for the Committee. Without the back-up of such good staff, the Committee could not do its work and produce reports.

Our report concentrated on the reasons for the underground's financial deficit, but the story cannot end there. The consequences of the appalling financial mess inevitably lead to much greater problems and a serious deterioration in services. The ultimate responsibility for that must lie with the Government and it is at their doorstep that most of the blame must be laid. We have been asked to vote through the substantial supplementary estimate as the result of poor performances by London Regional Transport, London Underground and, most of all, by the Government.

This year's cash crisis is a symptom of more fundamental problems. The current expenditure plans show substantial increases in the external financing limit grant of £669 million, £769 million and £1,039 million in the next three years. Much of that grant, however, will go on additions to the system—for example, on the Jubilee line, crossrail and the docklands light railway.

The cash crisis has forced a stop on the planning work for the Northern line modernisation. In paragraph 35 of our previous public expenditure report, we stated our concern that the case for new tube lines should not obscure the need to improve the capacity and quality of existing systems. Suffice it to say that our call has been completely ignored. That has been borne out by the fact that most of the new money is for new projects and that very little will be spent on improving the existing system.

Mr. Dicks: Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that we give more money to this group of incompetents so that they can waste it as they have wasted all the money that they have had before?

Mr. Marshall: I shall suggest later that we should indeed give London Transport more money, but I should like to think that the additional money will be properly accounted for and used, and that the expenditure will be properly monitored. I hope that the management of London Underground have learnt their lesson and are on their way to putting their house in order.

The lift and escalator programme may be a casualty of the financial stringency. Lift and escalator availability hit an all-time low in the late 1980s due to the penny pinching of preceding years, regardless of what the Minister may say. In a large city like London, it is absurd that dead escalators should make life difficult for the elderly and disabled and cause dangerous congestion at stations and on platforms. Can the Minister say whether lifts and escalators will be a casualty of the latest round of penny pinching?

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. A large part of the Northern line runs through my constituency. At Tooting Broadway, the lifts were out of action for months, and at Tooting Bec they have been out of action for a year. We were repeatedly told that they would be in service "next month", but they are still not in service. We are told that that is due to lack of funding. In reply to the question put by the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), therefore, we should make the point that, although these people may not be fully conversant with how the underground system should be run, the problems on the underground system will never be rectified unless we have some money.

Mr. Marshall: My hon. Friend gives a splendid illustration of the end result of the lack of investment in the underground system. I hope that the Minister will give a guarantee that such necessary and vital facilities in running an underground system will not be held up because of lack of finance. On the contrary, they should be greatly speeded up by the disbursement of additional finance, as that would be in the public interest.

One of the great mysteries about London Underground is why, in the key financial years of 1986, 1987, and 1988, it underspent its grant by £123 million when so much needed to be done. The mess that it is in today did not happen overnight—it is the result of successive years of bad management. Oddly enough, there was a similar underspending by British Rail. It seems that, in the heyday of the previous Prime Minister, despite the Government-inflicted cuts in grants, both London Transport and British Rail management were so cowed that they exceeded the targets that the Government had set. Could that perhaps be described as machismo underspending?

We are now told that sweeping changes are to be made in the 1991-92 operating budget, and they are not changes for the better. For example, 1,000 jobs are to go, peak hour services are to be cut, the Central line service is to be reduced from 72 trains to 70, the Northern line service from 86 trains to 84, the Piccadilly line from 72 trains to 69 and the Circle line by one train between April and June. Other cuts will be dealt with in more detail by other hon. Members.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I can give the hon. Gentleman an update. It has been announced today that 800 further job losses are to be made in this financial year.

Mr. Marshall: I am not grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that information, as it is even worse news than we had expected. One wonders where it will all end, and whether the underground will eventually come to a complete standstill.

I am sceptical about the proposed increase from 30 to 34 trains on the Victoria line. There should never have

[Mr. Marshall]

been as few as 30 trains in the first place. In view of all the difficulties on that line—the problems with wheels and so on—one wonders whether the increase will come about.

The cuts will do nothing to increase safety or improve staff morale or to help to recruit and retain staff—inevitably staff will have to be taken on later—and they will not instil confidence in travellers, particularly women and the elderly or anybody who travels alone or late at night. Whether one is male or female, one no longer feels safe when one sees groups of people on the underground.

When I became a Member of this House in 1979, I did not have the slightest hesitation about travelling on the underground—even on the last train. That is no longer the case. In fact, I do not use the underground after 10 o'clock in the evening. I feel a bit apprehensive—perhaps due to advancing years. There ought to be sufficient staff to make trains and stations safe for any intending passenger at any time. The new plans will result in the worst way to run a railway. I cannot think of words to describe the way in which matters are developing.

We in the Labour party want substantially increased public investment in transport, but we want to see such investment well managed and properly monitored, with proper accountability. We do not want creative accounting or mismanagement. The buck must stop at the door of those who appoint senior officials in public companies—and such appointments are made by the Government of the day.

It is not just the Labour party that wants proper management and accountability. The Confederation of British Industry has provided us with an excellent brief. Even if, as I suspect, the CBI has its Marshalls mixed up, much of the brief is to be commended. It says:

"If London is to maintain its position as the world's leading financial and commercial centre, the transport system must be world class. The CBI believes that traffic congestion in London can only be tackled by an integrated traffic system, in which road and rail complement each other."

On the need for better transport in London, the brief says:

"An improved public transport system is essential because it transports 83 per cent. of commuters . . .

On the Underground, after an increase of 64 per cent. in passenger kilometres between 1982 and 1989, an increase of at least 20 per cent. was predicted by the end of the century. More investment is essential if London Transport is to meet the growth in demand."

That is the CBI's view. Does the Minister agree with it? If not, why not?

The Government must stop chasing the fantasy of significant private sector contributions to transport, and accept that there must be a public commitment to the transport system of London, which is still the largest city in Europe. The Government must face the facts, as the CBI has done, and accept that the underground desperately needs more investment—not subsidies—if many more crises are not to come home to roost in the years ahead.

4.32 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): A few days ago, I had an opportunity to raise on the Adjournment the level of service provided by the London underground. On that occasion, I made many of the points that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) has just made in his excellent speech. I received a courteous and informative reply from my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport, who made four main points. First, he reminded the House that we are dealing with an Edwardian railway.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Victorian.

Mr. Shersby: My hon. Friend pointed out that we had to cope with the problems of our Edwardian and Victorian predecessors, and that that is a very expensive undertaking.

The Minister made what I thought was a most welcome admission—that the problems of the London underground today are partly the product of many decades of neglect. Those decades span the periods of office of both Labour and Conservative Governments. The Minister then referred to the lack of investment and to the policies that the Government were adopting to deal with that problem. He also stressed the importance of safety. He pointed out that one way of dealing with the problems facing the London underground was to increase capacity. He reminded us that the Jubilee line extension, the east-west crossrail and the safeguarding of the Chelsea-Hackney line had been given the go-ahead, and he made the point that the extension of the Jubilee line and the east-west crossrail were being fully funded.

My hon. Friend the Minister explained also some of the improvements that are being made on the Central line, on which about £700 million is being invested. That will result in new rolling stock, new track, new ballast under the track and new signalling. As a result, an additional 5,000 passengers will be carried on the Central line during peak hours. All those developments are welcome.

My hon. Friend the Minister was also able to tell the House of a feature of the improvements that has exercised my mind and doubtless that of every other Member of this place who travels in central London. I refer to the improvement that is about to be made to the Circle line, with the introduction of new or refurbished rolling stock at the beginning of July.

I welcome unreservedly all the developments to which I have referred. In addition, my hon. Friend the Minister assured me that the management of London Underground Ltd. is, in his opinion, of high calibre. He said that the chairman, Mr. Wilfred Newton, who has already run the Hong Kong mass transit system, had given an assurance to the Select Committee on Transport that the management of London Underground Ltd. will be able to cope with the problems facing it.

Mr. Dicks: As I did not have the opportunity to read the report of the Adjournment debate which my hon. Friend initiated, nor the Minister's reply, will my hon. Friend say whether the Minister said anything about the quality of the management of London Underground Ltd? Did he make any comment about the evidence given by Mr. Newton to the Select Committee on Transport? As the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) said a short while ago, there was a good financial director, but he could not handle money. Did my hon. Friend the Minister make any comment about London Underground Ltd. having a successful year save for a £93 million overdraft? Was it a successful year in London Underground Ltd.'s history? Does my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) agree that, if the equipment, including the lines, of LUL are Victorian, the same must be said of the management?

Mr. Shersby: I can tell my hon. Friend that I advanced those arguments. He probably knows that I read the minutes of evidence of the Select Committee on Transport in preparing my speech for the Adjournment debate. In reply to my arguments—I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) would have advanced them had he been present—my hon. Friend the Minister said that Mr. Wilfred Newton

"had no hesitation in taking the tough decisions that are needed to set London Underground's financial house in order. He said as much to the Select Committee on Transport."—[*Official Report*, 1 March 1991; Vol. 186, c. 1288.]

We are considering the estimates and the future of the London underground. We are considering also London Regional Transport. It has been established beyond doubt that LRT's major problem is a lack of adequate funding. That has serious effects on the quality of the day-to-day service and on the deferment of longer-term capital investment. If the problem is to be tackled, we must consider how adequate funding can be made available. It seems that a number of sources are available. First, there could be funding from central Government. Secondly, there could be funding from London boroughs. Thirdly, there could be funding from joint business ventures, involving LRT and other commercial operators. For example, there could be schemes involving LRT and the London Docklands development corporation, or a combination of the other methods of funding that I have suggested.

Funding by means of joint business ventures might appear on the face of it to be highly attractive, but I suggest that it is likely to take place only in relatively limited circumstances in which the commercial operator can see a commercial reward over a relatively short time. I suggest also that it is inconceivable that such funding would be made available to meet daily operational costs or to meet the major capital maintenance costs of the existing system—for example, new track on the Victoria line and the replacement or reconstruction of many old bridges and viaducts. We are talking about extremely big numbers.

The second option of funding by the London boroughs is likely to be feasible only on a limited basis. That is where the boroughs see that they are contributing to the maintenance or the creation of a service that they would otherwise have to fund themselves—for example, local shopping bus routes. Given the position that the London borough councils face—they must restrain expenditure to keep their community charge at a sensible level—that does not seem to be a realistic option.

There is no shadow of a doubt, therefore, that much of the funding over the short to medium term must come from the Government, as is the case in nearly all other major European cities and some cities in the United States. As a Conservative Member, I am not afraid to say that. Indeed, I believe that it is necessary to say it and that there is a great deal of cross-party agreement on the matter. It is easy for the Opposition to score points from the Government of the day because of the poor services provided by London Regional Transport and London Underground Ltd. I suspect that, if people studied the records, they would find that I probably did so myself when I was in opposition.

It is now as incumbent on me as it is on Opposition Members to approach those problems without trying to score political points and to try to bring home to the Government what is needed to deal with the problem. That may be wishful thinking, but, seeing the smiles on the faces of the hon. Members for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) and for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley), I hope that, whatever the political point scoring in which they indulge, they will address the problems in this extra day's debate on issues affecting London.

Central Government funding is necessary because much of the capital investment required by the underground services is simply not commercially attractive. The many projects to build new lines may take 20 or 30 years to provide a return on the capital investment and that is not an attractive possibility for commercial investors. Equally, the cost of replacing worn-out bridges and track has no commercial return potential, since it only prevents the existing service from collapsing altogether.

There seems to have been some suggestion, perhaps emanating from the Treasury, that the costs of investment could be met by substantially increasing the real cost of fares paid by existing passengers, thereby avoiding the need for further Government funding. If that suggestion is serious, it is extraordinary. It implies that passengers who currently travel on unreliable and overcrowded services should pay more for the comfort of future travellers. Such a suggestion is commercially illogical.

In my Adjournment debate on 1 March—I am sorry that the hon. Members for Deptford and for Stoke-on-Trent, North missed it—I tried to illustrate the problem of fares. I said that, in real terms, fare levels in 1990 were broadly the same as those in 1980 because the Greater London council's "Fares Fair" policy created a dip in the mid-1980s and fares rose again to their present level but have not gone up in real terms.

We cannot ask passengers on the London underground to pay more for an extremely uncomfortable service. I liken it to an ailing department store or, perhaps more topically, to an airline with a reputation for worn-out premises or aeroplanes. Such a company could not suggest that its existing customers could pay even higher prices to fund better facilities in five year's time. If it did so, the customers would soon disappear and the company would go out of business. Instead, any such business would have to find commercial funding to improve its facilities. It would be necessary to convince its backers that its forecasts for future improvements in its business prospects justified the investment. The better facilities would ultimately be paid for by future customers, but only after the level of service had justified the price increase.

London Underground is already losing passenger revenue as passengers are driven away by the combined effect of increased fares and massive deterioration in the service. It does not take much imagination to realise what would happen if there were substantial increases in fares. Most passengers would probably cheerfully pay more once they had a modern, frequent, reliable and customer-oriented service. I suppose that that is a classic case of cost-benefit analysis.

The London underground is a critical part of London's infrastructure. Its present inability to provide a decent service has an impact on its customers and a knock-on effect on other parts of London's environment. Its rather unreliable and freqently unpleasant conditions ensure that a large number of individuals continue to commute to central London by car. That means that the Government and local authorities must continue to spend large amounts on road maintenance, improving parking

[Mr. Shersby]

provision and parking restriction enforcement. The inadequate funding of London underground services ensures that further expenditure is necessary elsewhere. However, the nature of road expenditure means that it is not subjected to the same cost controls or to any form of balanced budget approach. It is taken for granted that building extra roads brings benefits elsewhere rather than being self-financing.

The unpleasant and frequently nightmarish journeys that many commuters now face are making it increasingly difficult for London firms to recruit the skilled staff that they need. In my constituency, people often prefer to work locally, perhaps at Heathrow airport or for local firms, rather than undergo the daily grind of a journey to London. The result is that many firms are now considering relocating elsewhere and a number have already done so. Those who stay face huge productivity losses as a result of staff arriving late. I wonder how many have arrived late in the past few months, leaving aside the extraordinary and worrying events of recent weeks.

An analysis of the problem leads to the conclusion that extra investment in London underground and British Rail services will lead to substantial savings and increased productivity elsewhere. That is precisely why most other European Governments are happy to provide major operating subsidies to their public transport networks. That brings us back to the CBI's attitude towards investment in the London underground and the need for our capital city to have a modern, efficient transport system if it is not to grind to a halt.

In my Adjournment debate, my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport told me that the autumn statement is the proper time for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to announce the rate of subsidy for London Transport. If, in his autumn statement, he cannot substantially improve on this year's figure and provide a long-term strategy for the financing of London transport, the country and London will have serious problems.

London needs an immediate commitment to put its transport service into first-class shape. That must happen not only for the sake of its passengers, but to ensure the health of businesses in the capital. If those goals are to be achieved, London Underground clearly needs a substantial injection of large sums of money as well as the installation of a competent and dynamic management. The Chairman of the Transport Select Committee—the hon. Member for Shettleston—and my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) made that point. If Lord King of Wartnaby were chairman of London Underground Ltd. and had on his board people of the calibre of Sir Colin Marshall, Richard Branson, Michael Bishop and other leading distinguished and highly competent managers of our major airlines, I wonder whether they would be prepared to put up with the problems with which Wilfred Newton must now deal.

If that action is not taken, there will be a serious problem in the long term for London Underground Ltd. More and more United Kingdom businesses will tend to decentralise, and multinationals will think twice before locating in London. The financial, management and other attempts that have been made to sort out London Underground's problems have been patchy and somewhat half-hearted. They will not do. If the work to make improvements starts now, it will not take effect on a major scale for five to 10 years. If it does not take place soon, London could be at a great disadvantage in terms of being Europe's business and financial capital.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can tell the House more than he could during the short time available to him last Friday. I hope that my contribution and those of other hon. Members will provide powerful ammunition for him in making his case to the Treasury.

4.50 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am grateful for the debate and for the fact that this subject has been selected from the estimates. I support the motion, which provides for the granting of about £124 million to Her Majesty out of the "balances kept at the bank" for charges which must be paid by the end of the year because we are going a bit short. It is vital that the money is paid. There is one matter on which there is no divide between the Government and the rest of us—London Regional Transport and the Department of Transport need the money.

We have already heard about the terrible state of London's transport. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall), who introduced the debate, and the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) repeatedly came to the central point. I think that the hon. Member for Uxbridge made it six times. Without additional money from the Government, we cannot run a decent transport system in the capital. The hon. Member for Shettleston, who chaired the Transport Select Committee, made that point equally strongly, and also dealt with the state of the transport system. Various phrases were used to describe the bad state of affairs, the hon. Member for Shettleston referring to the long, sad history of mismanagement. We have heard that there is a need for new money not only for new work and new projects but for existing projects.

Who is politically responsible for the mess? Almost uniquely in the House, my colleagues and I can ask that question in a political way. When the Greater London council ran London Transport, the Government argued that the GLC ran it incompetently, so they decided to nationalise it, although they were against nationalisation. Those of us who were selected to sit on the Standing Committee considered whether the transport system would be better or worse run by the Government. Because the Conservative party had a majority, due to the distorted way in which it is given a majority in the House the Government took over London Transport and managed it.

As the hon. Member for Shettleston made clear, it appears that for three years London Underground underspent, even in terms of the restricted spending allowed by the Government. British Rail underspent in London. Public expenditure was curbed, but the relevant managers did not even spend the amounts allocated to them. It appears that, subsequently, incompetent financial management resulted in a large deficit this financial year.

The House has had the benefit of a clear report from the Transport Select Committee on London Underground's financial deficit, with a memorandum showing that, on 3 December 1990, there was a shortfall of £53 million—broken down into £27 million in lower property receipts, £18 million in lower fares income, £8 million in additional

operational costs and £40 million in the costs of additional safety works. Reductions in project and operating expenditure came to £41 million. The Select Committee concluded that London Underground's money had not been managed properly.

A thousand job cuts were recently announced. In addition, a leaked document from the passenger services director, Ian Athurton, announced that 798 posts were to go, comprising 458 station staff, 246 train crew and 94 maintenance men—so a further 800 staff face the axe.

Whose fault is it that London Underground underspent for three years and, having got itself into a mess, now has to take draconian measures which will be hopeless at building up a proper management system for the long term? Is it the fault of the Secretary of State for Transport or, because this is a nationalised industry, is it the fault of Mr. Wilfred Newton? *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Uxbridge is gesturing in a way that suggests an answer, but I shall not embarrass him by attributing a possibly unfair answer.

Someone must take responsibility. London Underground was given a job to do and made a complete mess of it—I just managed to restrain myself then from saying something much stronger. Politically, someone must be called to account, because this is not good enough. I respect the Minister for Public Transport. He is committed to his job and to sorting out the problems that he inherited. Who takes the blame? Whoever takes it must go, or he will be acting against the principle of accountability.

Mr. John Hargreaves, LUL's finance director, has been replaced by my namesake—so I suppose that he must be a relatively good man—Mr. John Hughes, the man from the Pru. He has been brought in to sort out London Underground's finances, and I wish him well. His first job is to review 1,773 redundancies. A report in the *Evening Standard* appropriately states that he must

"cope with the backlash of passengers and the workforce."

I wish Mr. Hughes well, because there will be a large backlash.

Having asked the political question, I wish to suggest the political answer, and here I agree with the hon. Members for Shettleston and for Uxbridge. Decisions must be made by the Government because they hold the purse strings and because the method of raising money is under their control. Not enough is invested in London Underground. All other major capital cities invest more than we do. The Government subsidy in London is about 30 per cent. and falling. Paris invests 50 per cent. and Rome 80 per cent.

We cannot expect to run a decent underground system without a large amount of Government investment. As the hon. Member for Uxbridge said, the private sector is not willing to invest in sufficient amounts to make that worth its while. That has been proven over the years and is not in dispute. To catch up on what should have been done and to develop a system capable of dealing with future needs will require a lot of investment. Much of the current investment is putting right what should have been put right before—making safer what the King's Cross disaster tragically proved to be an unsafe system.

We need a co-ordinated plan, a strategy for London transport. Currently, a million commuters come in and out of London. It is predicted that there will be 1·2 million commuters by the year 2000. Bus use across London has decreased by 30 per cent., yet I am advised that, in the rush hour, buses are filled only to the extent of between 20 per cent. and 30 per cent.

There is congestion on many tube trains, as everyone who travels on them knows. There is also congestion on some bus routes. The fares are certainly not cheap—in many cases, they are expensive and off puttingly so. Our system discourages people from using public transport. The result is that they use private transport, which leads to even more congestion, with the result that business, jobs and employment are pushed out. The Confederation of British Industry made the same point as the hon. Member for Uxbridge. The London Chamber of Commerce also stated that people will not do the essential jobs in the city—jobs in the health service, in public transport, road cleaing and mending, and jobs in local authorities. There will be no one to run the capital city unless there is a properly co-ordinated transport system.

I observe in passing that, uniquely in London, local authorities do not make a contribution. There is not a levy—as there now is in other metropolitan areas—made by the transport authority on the local authorities. That was one of the consequences of London Regional Transport legislation. Ratepyayers—or poll tax payers or post-poll tax age payers or whatever they will be called next year—do not contribute. Should they? I do not suggest that there is an easy answer. Many people come to London as tourists, business people or commuters—and perhaps they should pay an equal amount. Local authorities do not get their transport supplementary grant to help them fund public transport. It is based almost entirely—if not entirely—on road use and functions. That is an inherited distortion of the Government's system, which time and again biases all transport planning in Britain in favour of roads, to great common disbenefit.

The first problem is lack of investment, the second is lack of co-ordination, and the third is the fact that there is no secure structure for investment. Unless we solve those problems, things will get worse. Public transport will become more congested and less well used.

I will illustrate the rest of what I want to say by taking some examples from my constituency, in the way Members do. One of the largest passenger interchanges in London is at Elephant and Castle. Many bus routes, a railway line and the Bakerloo and Northern line intersect there. Many people change there every day—to go to work, for recreational purposes, for shopping and for visiting. Civil servants work over it in the Department of Social Security. Yet it is felt by many to be one of the grimmest underground stations to be found in any public transport system in the world. The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment came recently, and the Government have been helping to improve the area by giving a £500,000 million city grant. That was welcome and was well spent on improving the underpasses at the Elephant.

However, the layout of the booking hall is temporary and too small. The lifts are inadequate—there are only two and they are often broken. There are no escalators, but there would be space for them if they were integrated with those in the shopping centre. There are some completely unsavoury public conveniences, which are meant to serve a huge number of people but are often closed, ill lit or simply in such a foul state that people will not use them. The entrance to the Bakerloo line is closed. I went there on Saturday, to find it was closed for no good reason other than that it needs a bit of money to complete the work to

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

open it. Now, one has to go in through a hole in the wall into a half-finished place which looks like a war-time 1940s Polish film set, with light bulbs hanging on dangling wires and with uncovered brick work taken back to the bare bones. I spoke to a relief inspector on duty, whom I shall not embarrass by naming. He said that there were two vacancies for inspectors because it was so grim that people would not work there.

The Elephant is a major interchange; the local authority is trying to redevelop the area and the business community want to do something. There are schemes for hotel development and civil service offices. Yet the Elephant is the pits.

Improvements were started, but two weeks ago the money ran out and we were told that work would probably not start again for two years. Everything was left in a half-finished state. On Friday evening, after various approaches and meetings, after indications that this debate would be held and after it had been communicated to the management that I wished to go down to the Elephant, a rumour reached the work force that, some work would start again tonight. What a surprise! I welcome it and hope that it is rushed to completion, but a transport system cannot be run on a stop-go policy.

We cannot expect people to use public transport if they are presented at the beginning of their working day with such a grim place. It leaves them feeling as though they have gone through purgatory before they even get to their desks. That is no way to run public transport. It is an obstacle course in human, physical, spiritual and mental endurance. We are not in the third world. We are supposed to be a first-world country, and we should have a first-world public transport system.

Then recently we suddenly heard about what were called "a few modest changes." On 15 February, a letter from the head of public relations was sent to me and others, stating:

"I am writing on behalf of London Underground's General Managers to advise you of some modest changes being planned for London Underground services from April."

The modest changes consist of closing booking offices early, and taking staff away from some stations. Whether it be Borough, London Bridge or Rotherhithe, they will be left with no personnel on duty at the times of day when people are most vulnerable. It is not as though there is a camera system to ensure that people are monitored as they go down the stairs or in the lift. Many people live in those areas, and for some elderly people there is no other access.

A councillor in Southwark told me that her mother who lives in Bexhill cannot come to visit her because there is no easy way for her to come if Borough station closes on Sundays or closes early. That was her easy access to get to her daughter's flat—by tube from London Bridge to Borough. She can no longer do that, and will not risk her life in a dark underground station in inhospitable surroundings, where there are no staff.

I understand that the London passenger consultative committee, which we included in the London Regional Transport Act 1984 as part of the statutory consultative process, objected on Friday and that everything has been put on hold. I hope that that means that the changes will be reviewed. We cannot encourage people to use the underground if stations are personnel-free, with no support staff, and therefore even more insecure.

My last point is linked to London Regional Transport rather than to London Underground. A few weeks ago, people were told, among other things, of a change to the route of the No. 1 bus, which ran from Bromley through the constituency of the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), through my constituency, over the bridge and into the west end. There were many complaints that the buses were always late or came in threes. The solution was a lot of little routes, but no through route. It would no longer be possible to come from Bromley without three changes.

That is fine in theory, and the service may be more frequent, but it is not fine in practice. A friend of mine who has four young children says that she now has to pay fares for each part of the journey and to wait for each bus with her children or her luggage. One cannot be certain that the next bus will be there to meet the connection, without interruption of the service. Eventually, one has to stop at the Aldwych, where the underground station is to be closed. There will not be an underground station even at the terminus of the route, as there would be if the bus continued to Trafalgar square where there are plenty of connections. If one then wants to go to Trafalgar square and one cannot walk, one has to pay the higher-rate, short-hop fare of about 70p just to go down the Strand.

What incentive is that for people to use the bus, for heaven's sake? People have already been put off using the tube—if they happen to be in a part of London in which they can get to a tube station. They may think of using the bus, but although they once had a journey all the way from outer London to the middle, they now have three separate journeys. If they do not have a travel card or pass, they will have higher fares, more inconvenience, and more risk of being in the cold and wet and of buses never coming. That is not the way to run a system.

People are consulted but, so far, consultation appears to have had no effect. The public and their representatives —this is not a party political point—are telling Government and management what they want. They have been saying the same for years. No one says that we should do away with London transport, or that we do not want the buses or the tube. People want more, efficient, better, clean and hospitable public transport. Please, whoever is the Prime Minister and whatever local government finance system we have, can we get it right? I do not know why we have got it wrong for so long.

Unless we get it right, we are condemning ourselves not only to unnecessary misery and inconvenience, and to messing up something that every other country appears to get right now, but to making our capital city less prosperous, successful and pleasant. We shall condemn millions of people to a life that there is no excuse for not helping to get right. I hope that at last, with an all-party consensus, we can get the message through that London transport needs attention from people who will put it right after decades of it going terribly wrong.

5.10 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): It is a pleasure to see my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) on the Front Bench, because, before he was promoted to his present position, he played a major role in

seeking to persuade London Regional Transport to improve the Northern line, which is important to him and to me.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) asked who was responsible for the present situation with London Regional Transport. He knows that a London Liberal Democrat can ask that question with relative impunity. The only thing for which London Liberal Democrats are responsible is the complete chaos that reigns in Tower Hamlets. If the experience in Tower Hamlets were multiplied across London, I should not like to say what would happen to London Regional Transport.

I hope that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey watched television on Friday night. If he did, he will know that the present situation with London Regional Transport is due to the locust years when it was controlled by the Greater London council. There is a huge time lag between any decision to increase investment in transport and additional trains coming into service. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) was responsible, as Secretary of State for Transport, for ensuring a massive increase in investment in London Regional Transport. The hon. Gentleman also knows full well that none of the benefits of that investment will come through until many years after my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere has left the House. The decision to increase investment and the ability to get planning permission for new lines and increased investment in rolling stock take many years to become effective.

We are suffering now from the locust years when the GLC was controlled by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who was far more interested in subsidising the fares paid by American tourists than in increasing the level of investment in London Regional Transport.

Many of my constituents have the dubious pleasure of travelling every day by the Northern line. Some years ago, Keith Bright, the then chairman of London Regional Transport, at a meeting in the House, described the Northern line as "an abomination". He said that London Regional Transport, like any consumer company, would see that its reputation was determined by the worst part of the system. There is no doubt, for me and for many others, that the Northern line service is inadequate and unsatisfactory. Although the Northern line is now celebrating its centenary, the quality of service is more that of the Victorian era than a service that should prevail in the last decade of this century.

I and my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet have frequently complained to Keith Bright, to Tony Ridley and to Dennis Tunnicliffe. I want to reiterate some of my complaints about the quality of service and about the attitude of management. There is no doubt that the attitude of the London Regional Transport management is sloppy and complacent. Following the disaster at King's Cross, London Regional Transport appointed one chap to be in charge of two stations. When one goes to the stations, one can see how concerned London Regional Transport is about the image that it produces to the public.

When I went to Hendon Central station this morning, I looked up at the clock. It told me that the time was 5.10 am. I could not decide whether I should have had another two and a half hours in bed or whether the clock was wrong. The clock, of course, was hopelessly wrong. It had stopped, and no one had bothered to start it again.

Later today, I was at Mansion House station wondering whether I would get here on time for Question Time. I looked at the clock, which said 9.58 am. The clock was still moving, because it then went on to 9.59 am. That shows a complete indifference to the needs of the travelling public. Even at 2.20 pm, the clock claimed that it was 9.59 am.

Mr. Shersby: European summer time.

Mr. Marshall: It was certainly wrong. It was either behind the time or ahead of the time, but it was not giving accurate guidance to the travelling public. This morning, as I went down the Northern line, I took note of the time at various stations. At the first station, the clock said 8 am. At the next station, the clock said 7.50 am. I was going backwards by some magic of London Regional Transport. The management's attitude should be less sloppy; they should be more determined to provide accurate information for the customer.

Mr. Dicks: My hon. Friend gave the game away when he talked about the management. Is he aware that the management say today that the 800 job losses added to the 1,000 last week are a sign that they are on the ball and a sign of their efficiency? Would my hon. Friend like to comment on that?

Mr. Marshall: When one looks at London Regional Transport, one is reminded of the old adage of Harry Truman: "The buck stops here." Unfortunately, with London Regional Transport, the buck does not stop at quite the right place. There is no doubt that some of the top management at London Regional Transport have not been as efficient as they should be. I do not include in that criticism Mr. Wilfred Newton, who has joined London Regional Transport only recently. He has come with a high reputation from elsewhere in the transport industry and from within private industry, where he worked efficiently at Turner and Newall.

It is not only the clocks on the stations that do not work: one thinks of the escalators and of the lifts. If one gets to Bank station and finds that all the lifts are working, one is likely to collapse with shock. It is a golden rule that at least one, if not two, of the lifts do not work. The same is true of the escalators. The escalator at Embankment station has not been working for months, and at London Bridge station, one escalator has been out of action for many months.

The dot matrix system is meant to inform commuters on the Northern line which train is coming next. At Brent Cross station the other morning, the indicator said that the first train which was due in two minutes would go to Bank station. It said that the following train was due in three minutes. No train appeared for another five minutes. I do not know what happened to those two trains. They must have been some of the invisible trains of the Northern line which somehow manage to get on to the dot matrix system, yet do not manage to arrive at the station on time.

Even when the trains arrive, one can almost guarantee that their destination will not be the destination that the dot matrix system said two minutes earlier that they would have. When I arrived at Hendon Central station this morning, the indicator said that the first train would go via Charing Cross. When it turned up, it was a Bank train. The public want decent, accurate information from London Regional Transport. If London Regional Transport

[Mr. Marshall]

cannot operate a dot matrix system that gives accurate information, that says something about the attitude of mind within the organisation.

Mr. David Marshall: The hon. Gentleman has just outlined an awful catalogue of mismanagement. However, he earlier laid all the blame on what he described as the "locust years" of London Regional Transport being controlled by the GLC. Does he not realise that it is now seven years since the GLC controlled London Regional Transport? How does he account for his description of events? Who is really responsible? It certainly is not the GLC.

Mr. John Marshall: It is always a pleasure to give way to cousins, however distant, from north of the border. My argument about the GLC was that the level of capital expenditure that it determined has affected the number of new trains coming into service with London Transport in recent years. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) ignores the fact that, in a large organisation like London Transport, which employs many thousands of people, one cannot change an ethos overnight.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Government have had seven years.

Mr. John Marshall: One cannot change the ethos of London Transport overnight.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, each year that the GLC controlled London Transport, from 1970 to 1984, its capital budget was set by the central Government of the day? Each leader of the GLC and each chair of finance had to go cap in hand to civil servants and Ministers to find out what capital expenditure they were allowed. Every time that we put up capital programmes, they were reduced in the initial stages by the Government of the day. That is an attack upon all Governments. If the GLC had had the freedom to run the system as we had wanted, these problems would not be with us now.

Mr. Marshall: I do not know how wise it was to give way to the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). I suspect that it was not. When he was in control of the GLC, after his Paris coup, he was more interested in subsidising fares than in increasing capital expenditure. One of the first things he did, after he had stabbed his leader in the back, was to push fares down so that many non-Londoners and people who did not need cheap fares benefited. Every American tourist get a bonus from the hon. Member for Brent, East. He would have done better by going to the Government of the day and saying that he wanted to spend extra money to improve the quality of service offered by London Transport, rather than to give cheap fares to those who often did not need them.

Those of us who travel regularly on London Transport, as I do, find that trains on the Northern line are often dirty, graffiti-ridden and somewhat infrequent. I have never understood why one of the first tasks for people who are sent to do community service cannot be to remove much of the graffiti that they put on the trains and the streets of north London. The state of trains on all routes in London is a disgrace because of graffiti.

I am able to give a typical example of the sort of arrogance which has afflicted at least certain members of London Regional Transport's management. I recently went on a deputation with the right hon. Edmund Dell to complain about a proposal for closure in my constituency. I took with me a petition signed by about 5,000 people. When I was with Mr. Tunnicliffe, I was assured that my comments would be considered. At the time, a member of the staff on the *Hampstead and Highgate Express* was being briefed by a London Transport press officer, who told him that London Transport had already made up its mind and would ignore the petition that we had handed in. Subsequently, that was denied by the chairman of London Transport, but the fact that a press officer could say that to reputable journalists shows a degree of arrogance and unwillingness to listen to what elected Members of Parliament and prominent ex-Members of Parliament are saying.

I have frequently made proposals about the Northern line to London Transport and have received promises, but the Government have yet to receive proposals for the large-scale modernisation of the line. I welcome the fact that the money is being spent on a new station at the Angel, but the real bottlenecks are at Camden Town and Kennington, where much still has to be done. When London Transport altered its priorities and decided to improve the Central line before improving the Northern line, it got its order of priorities wrong.

Whatever our complaints about certain routes in London, every hon. Member must congratulate the Government on the large increase in expenditure that has been agreed in recent years. For Londoners, one of the real frustrations is the long delay which occurs after a decision has been taken to increase expenditure. It is strange that Labour Members of Parliament, such as the hon. Members for Brent, East and for Shettleston complain that not enough Government money has been given to London Transport. The Secretary of State then comes to the House and announces that more money is to be spent and that more new routes will be introduced. The private Bill procedure is used to provide for new routes.

What happens next? Do Labour Members of Parliament all stand up and sing "Hallelujah", and say that they will speed up the process? No, of course they do not. As we all know, Bill after Bill relating to London Transport has been held up by obstructive tactics, not from my colleagues on the Conservative Benches but from Opposition Members.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I think it is easier if someone else points this out—the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) was unfair in his last observation. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) spoke to a report which was agreed at a meeting when the majority of hon. Members present were Conservatives. As I understand it, that report from the Select Committee on Transport was agreed unanimously. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can suggest that that document was party political or that its strictures on London underground as regards the matters that we are debating today were not the subject of substantial cross-party agreement.

Mr. John Marshall: I did not say that it was only Labour Members of Parliament who wanted more money spent on London Transport. It is slightly ironic that Labour Members of Parliament come to the House, criticise the level of expenditure on London Transport but, when the private Bill procedure is used to facilitate new routes in London, certain Labour Members have been obstructive, with the result that the procedure takes longer than it might have done.

There is no doubt that the financial management of London Transport has not been of the highest. I cannot understand how any organisation can suddenly find that it is £50 million adrift. A private business would have discovered that something was wrong when it was £1 million or £2 million adrift. I am not surprised that the previous finance director of London Underground disappeared from the show. That underlines a much deeper malaise, and one wonders how deep the problems are.

Sometimes, when bus routes have been put out to tender, London Transport has won and sometimes the route has gone to another operator, but I welcome the fact that tendering has always resulted in substantial savings, which must surely be beneficial.

When my hon. Friend the Minister next introduces legislation to the House, we will give Londoners the benefits of deregulation of buses which have been enjoyed by the rest of the country. If we could deregulate London buses, there would be many more routes in the suburbs. Some people say that it would lead to more congestion. I do not agree for one minute that someone will run a route from Barnet to Bermondsey, but there would be many more local routes, which would benefit commuters in London and would lead to a better transport system for all the citizens of London.

The improvement of transport in London is a herculean task. It cannot be done overnight. I congratulate my hon. Friend and his right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State on the improvements that they have made and that we know they will continue to make.

5.28 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): It is interesting to follow the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), because he has touched upon many interesting issues that I wish to refer to. The Northern line passes through a great deal of my constituency.

The statements that we have heard during the debate are obviously to be welcomed. Anyone who sees the debate on television or in the news programmes today, or reads about it in the press tomorrow and learns that there will be an improvement to rolling stock, will think that it is not before time. However, that thought will soon disappear, and people will start to say that they have heard it all before. Hon. Members from both sides of the House know from what constituents have told us that countless promises have been made about improvements to services, stations and manning levels. Sadly, that has never taken off. In the debate, we heard about welcome improvements that stemmed from the benefits of extra staff, but now we are told that the extra staff are to be removed.

For the vast majority of Londoners, the underground is the major means of transport, but they all despair at the conditions in which they are forced to travel. The Northern line goes through the Balham and Tooting area in my constituency. It is an utter disgrace today, and it will be the same tomorrow and next month and possibly next year. One cannot even say that, although the station could be a bit cleaner, at least escalators and the lifts always work and that the trains are always punctual. One cannot say much in its favour. I am sure that hon. Members who have the Northern line and possibly other underground services passing through their constituencies are frequently asked when the services will be improved.

The Minister for Public Transport visited my constituency last summer and I wrote to him afterwards and thanked him, because his visit was well received. He met and spoke to the travelling public and travelled with them on the Northern line. Therefore, he cannot be in any doubt about how those travellers feel. If he made a return visit tomorrow, the same things would be said to him. No one has ever told me, and I am sure that no one told the Minister on his visit, that we have a good service. People cannot say that, because the service continues to worsen.

There is no comfort on the trains, and many stations are dirty and stay dirty—not just for a day or two or at weekends when there is a shortage of staff, but week after week. As other hon. Members have said, lifts or escalators are often out of service for months. When the Minister came to my constituency I asked him to get off at Balham station. To his credit he said, "Of course I will get off. That is why I am making this visit." He saw there a lift that had been out of service for about eight months and asked when it was proposed to bring it back into service. He was told that it would be in use again as soon as possible, but we are still waiting.

Eventually, such matters will be put right, but it is not long before there is another breakdown. That annoys people who want to use the service, and in the end they have to give up in despair.

Mr. Simon Hughes: If a ministerial visit cannot get the lifts working, perhaps a royal visit is required. If that does not work, we may as well all give up and go home.

Mr. Cox: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman and I could have a chat to see whether the next visit can be upgraded.

Against that background of despair, fares keep going up, and that also annoys people. Now we hear that there are to be further cuts either in staff or in services. The Northern line is the key service in my area. Sadly, it has a record for mugging offences not only late at night but during the day. Some of them take place on trains and passengers are terrorised. We are often told that women will not travel on the underground because of the fear of such crime, but many able-bodied men say that they will not travel on the line because they know what happens there, and that it could happen to them.

To the credit of London transport—we must give credit where it is due—because of what was taking place, extra staff were employed. That resulted in a substantial reduction in crime on the Northern line from Clapham to Tooting Broadway, six stations in all. Confidence started to come back to the travelling public. Now we are told that the people who were employed to inspire that confidence are to be removed.

I understand from handouts that London Transport classifies that as an efficiency measure. Perhaps the Minister will tell us how that definition came about. The

[Mr. Cox]

travelling public when they become aware of that definition, as some of them are, would certainly not agree that reducing staff is an efficiency measure.

We are told that booking offices are to be closed at 8.45 in the evening. We can all imagine the scenario of a busy underground station with no staff on duty and the booking office closed. What happens if a crime occurs or a fire breaks out? Whom does one contact to report such matters? London Members with this branch of the underground in their constituencies are entitled to be told something about the thinking behind such decisions.

I have received a letter dated 26 February from a constituent about this matter:

"The proposals outlined are a complete and utter outrage to passengers and their safety. I suppose we can now look forward to a dramatic increase in crime again on the southern end of the Northern line in return for higher fare increases and the hollow promises of improvements in the quality of the service."

I also had a letter from an organisation that is respected not only in my constituency but in the borough of Wandsworth, the Wandsworth society. It is a non-political organisation, to which people from all walks of life belong. They have spent a great deal of time looking at London Transport, certainly in my area, and they have voiced enormous opposition to what they understand will happen following the efficiency measures that I have mentioned.

We have heard about conditions in Europe. I am a member of the Council of Europe and often go to meetings in Paris. Many comparisons are made between the Metro and London underground, and it is said that the Metro is a much smaller system. That may well be, but the real issues for the travelling public are the regularity and frequency of trains, the cleanliness of the stations and the number of staff. In those respects, the Metro is well above that which is provided for Londoners. No wonder the people of Paris use their system. The travelling qualities are better, and the overall cost is lower. On the Metro, one can buy a ticket for the equivalent of 30p, which permits travel on any part of the system. The Metro's individual services may be small in terms of the distances that they serve, but, overall, it covers an enormous area of Paris. We have much to learn not only from the French but from the Italians and others. Sadly, we do not appear to do so.

The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) and the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) know that, one year ago, road development was threatened in Wandsworth and adjoining boroughs. In my many years in politics, I have never known such enormous protest meetings as those which took place in the borough over that issue. They were arranged by a number of organisations, and it was a case of standing room only. At one meeting that I attended, it was estimated that there were more than 1,000 people present.

The residents who attended those meetings were deeply concerned about not only the proposed road development but the provision of better public transport. That came over time and time again. They did not object to the prospect of paying more for public transport, provided that better services were made available.

There is a need for a co-ordinated transport/traffic policy for London. Part of my constituency is not served by underground or British Rail services, but only by buses. That deficiency could be met by a transfer system that allowed one to purchase a bus ticket that could be used on the underground or on British Rail, or vice versa. That would benefit many travellers, and would encourage the public to use the capital's transport system more than they do.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that, if we encourage the public to use the capital's transport system at times when demand is already high, that will compound the problem? There are times —particularly peak periods—when so many people are using London Transport services that stations have to be closed and queues begin to form. That happens at Victoria, for example—to the great inconvenience of the public. Encouraging more people to travel could in itself exacerbate the problems that we are trying to overcome. There is certainly a case for encouraging more off-peak travel, but at other times, one would not want to do so.

Mr. Cox: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. The solution is to provide a co-ordinated transport system. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) mentioned bus services. If they were made more reliable, the point made by the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) could be met far better than it is today.

I never cease to wonder why we have failed over the years to develop the potential offered by the River Thames in providing transport for thousands of commuters, at least during the rush hour. In many European countries, river transport plays a vital role in their overall transport policy. Sadly, that is not the case in London. There is ample scope to develop that potential, and I hope that it will be examined as soon as possible.

Hon. Members have commented on the efficiency of London Regional Transport's management. I am reminded what occurs when Ministers—particularly members of the Cabinet—are sacked, when we are told how wonderful and knowledgeable they were, but a few months later, it is said that they followed all the wrong policies. That is happening now, in respect of the Government's economic policies. When a former Chancellor resigned, we were told that he had been wonderful in revitalising the country's economy, but now all its problems are blamed on his management of it.

The same happens in respect of LRT executives. I remember being told how marvellous and knowledgeable they were, but the first occasion that something went wrong, they left. I hope that whoever is managing London Regional Transport today will stay on long enough to fulfil their role in the way we want—and will have the authority to do so, in consultation with others, according to their abilities and knowledge of the system, for the benefit of the travelling public.

We have been made many promises. Let us hope that those made by London Regional Transport's present management will be kept. If that happens, I am sure that the travelling public will accept that improvements will take time to achieve—provided that they see a commitment to enhancing the services that they use day in, day out. Londoners have sought such improvements for years and years, but they have been let down. The real test of LRT's management will be whether the services for which it is responsible will improve. Whatever we may say,

and whatever may be said by Ministers or London Regional Transport, that is the yardstick by which the people of London will make their judgment.

5.46 pm

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): If my reckoning is right, given the number of hon. Members in all parts of the House present who represent London constituencies, the score at the end of this welcome debate could be 10-nil against London Regional Transport. There is much cross-party criticism of the poor standard of facilities that it provides, and the Government must tackle the way in which LRT's management caters for public demand.

We can reassure ourselves that there is no call for the construction of more major roads in London, to cope with the growing volume of commuters. As the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) mentioned, a year or so ago he and my hon. Friend for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) joined the campaign led by Wandsworth council which argued a strong, united case to the Government that the assessment studies presented by various consultants urging a mass of new roads—all of them seeming to converge on Wandsworth bridge and the borough of Wandsworth in general—were not welcome.

To the Government's credit, they not only accepted that all-party case but a number of submissions made by other London boroughs. Road building is not the current buzz phrase, and I doubt whether it ever will be for the citizens of London.

Seventy-five per cent. of commuters travel by rail to their places of work, making a total of 2·5 million travellers a day—a 60 per cent. increase since 1982. It must be evident to London Regional Transport and to Network Southeast that that trend will not go away, and that the problems it brings will not diminish. The public cannot be expected to continue to put up with dirty stations, trains that do not run on time and are overcrowded—and may break down at inconvenient points—and the broken-down lifts and escalators mentioned by hon. Members on both sides of the House, which seem to remain stationary for far too long.

No one could claim that a shortage of resources is to blame. Investment of £3 billion is planned for the next three years, which will include the costs of the Jubilee line extension and the east-west crossrail. That is three times the amount that the Greater London council spent on London Regional Transport in its last year of existence.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) strongly criticised the GLC, and I am sure that the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) will respond to that criticism. I believe that the GLC devoted far too much money to the revenue side and not enough to the capital side. That financial mismanagement had a knock-on effect, which we are now experiencing in the form of old rolling stock that is desperately in need of replacement—although some has now been replaced and there are plans to replace more.

We must be careful when we compare London with other capital cities. The hon. Member for Tooting pointed out that the Paris transport network is smaller than ours, but we invest more per head in our network than do the authorities in Paris, New York and Milan—to mention just three of the capitals with whose systems ours is often disadvantageously compared.

Investment in public transport, as opposed to road traffic, has resulted in an interesting development. In Paris, the average speed of road traffic is 9 mph; in New York, it is 7 mph; in Brussels—which, as the location of the European Commission, represents the centre of the universe for many people—it is only 6 mph. In London, it is 11 mph. Some things are improving here and, rather than comparing London so unfavourably with other cities whose transport facilities can, in fact, be criticised fairly radically, we should set our own example. I simply urge my hon. Friend the Minister to call on London Regional Transport to improve its management considerably.

There is much scope for improvement of the bus service. In 1989-90, £28 million was spent on improvements, and the number of bus miles increased by 3 per cent. during that period—although only about 14 per cent. of the total travelling public use the roads, which is considerably fewer than the number of rail travellers. As several hon. Members have pointed out, buses could benefit the public considerably. The routes, however, are often far too long: by the time a bus which started its journey in north London—which may be taking an hon. Member to his south London constituency—has sat around in traffic jams, it will be running seriously off schedule and often in a convoy. Two or three buses will arrive together at the bus stop, which is no use to travellers. LRT's management should give more thought to shortening routes and making it easier for buses to run on time.

Mr. Simon Hughes: If routes are shortened, there must be connecting routes so that people do not have to wait at the point of connection. Moreover, the cost of the entire journey must not be more expensive, or those who do not have travel cards will be disadvantaged. Apart from that, the hon. Gentleman's suggestion is logical.

Mr. Tracey: I entirely agree.

In parts of the capital, nearer the suburbs, smaller buses —Hoppas—are being used. They can move more flexibly through the traffic and can often negotiate roads down which a double-decker, or even a large single-decker, could not be driven. I think those buses must be used more.

Not enough strategic thought has been given to London's transport facilities—certainly not as much as I expected when I was a member of the Standing Committee considering the London Regional Transport Bill in 1984. As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has said, there was a good deal of discussion on both sides of the Committee. It was said that the Department of Transport would keep a close eye on the new body's strategy and that hon. Members would be able to debate the way in which London's transport was being run. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to consider whether the Department is anywhere near establishing the strategic authority for London's overall transport network that we expected when we spent so many hours and weeks debating that Bill. A number of hon. Members who are in the Chamber served on the Committee. They know what was said.

Reference has been made to the deregulation of London's buses. The Minister and his Department of Transport colleagues can learn lessons from the deregulation of buses in other parts of the country. It is about time that London's travelling public benefited from those lessons.

6 pm

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Between 1981 and 1984, I was leader of the Greater London council and had some responsibility for the administration of London Transport. Seven years later, with London Transport under Government control, Conservative Members still get up and say, "If only the Labour GLC had done something different, we should not be in this mess today." I intend, therefore, to refer to my discussions with a number of Secretaries of State for Transport between 1981 and 1984.

As I said in an intervention during the speech of the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), a Labour Government—with the support of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) who at that time was Opposition spokesperson on transport—passed the legislation which transferred control of London Transport to the Greater London council. Capital expenditure control was still with local government. However, the Greater London council's capital expenditure, which included London Transport's capital expenditure, had to be agreed by the Government of the day. Otherwise, Greater London council money resolutions would not have been carried by the House. First, the Government, then the House of Commons exercised complete control over the GLC budget, not just when I was the leader of the GLC but throughout all previous GLC administrations.

When Sir Horace Cutler went to the then Labour Government with the proposal to extend the Jubilee line to docklands, his proposal was vetoed by that Government —no doubt on Treasury advice. Labour, then in opposition on the GLC, supported Sir Horace Cutler's condemnation of the Labour Government for blocking proposals which were supported by the whole council and by people throughout London. Had the Government of the day not blocked the Jubilee line to docklands, it would by now have been operating for many years.

One of the first acts of the new GLC Labour administration in 1981 was to go back to the Government with the same proposals. We did not need to ask for money. We did not expect the Government, after two years in office, to help the GLC to extend London's public transport. We were prepared, as happened with all our capital projects except housing, to make an investment from revenue towards capital improvements in London. But the proposal was vetoed. We also wanted to construct the Hackney-Chelsea line, but the Government vetoed the proposal. The Treasury, acting through the Department of Transport under both Governments during the last 20 years, vetoed successive GLC administration proposals for increased capital expenditure on London Transport. All Governments stand condemned, but I suspect that the major villains have been the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Treasury rather than the Department of Transport.

The Government are painfully inching towards many schemes that we welcome. They now accept that London, with a population of 7 million and providing work for people who travel in from much further away, must have a good public transport system. The Government's final recognition of that fact, in their dying days, has the support of the whole House. The tragedy is that it has taken the Government so long to recognise it.

I remember my first meeting with the then Secretary of State for Transport. He has announced that he intends to retire from public life—it is a tragedy that that did not happen 12 years ago. His deputy was at the same meeting. He went on to devastate the national health service, and he is adopting the same approach to education. I told the then Secretary of State that we had been elected with a clear mandate to cut fares, which were the highest in Europe, so as to attract people back to public transport and reduce road congestion. We also wanted to initiate a major programme of capital expenditure so that there would be a major shift throughout the coming decade towards an improved and expanded public transport system. I told him that we wanted to build the Jubilee line out to docklands and the Hackney-Chelsea line, and that we wanted to extend some of the existing tube lines and build our own buses which could be specifically geared to conditions in London—a modernised version of the Routemaster for which Londoners have always had an affection.

All these proposals were vetoed by the Government when we debated the money resolutions. The GLC's chief officers had meetings with Treasury civil servants, at which they were told that they could not have this and they could not have that. We made the point every year that the Treasury was not giving us permission to spend enough money on London transport. Capital expenditure was needed. All that we asked was permission to spend. Let us not forget that the Secretary of State for the Environment's first act was to push through legislation giving the Government even more control over local authorities' capital budgets.

Conservative Members get up and say that the GLC subsidised fares and did not embark on capital expenditure. One reason for that was that in their first days in office the Government took over complete control of every penny of every council's capital spending. If the GLC had been left with the freedom to go in for capital spending, we should have a public transport system that was equivalent to that in Paris. The Government should not blame the GLC for their own policies.

We recognised that London Transport was not the first choice of transport for many people in London. The tubes do not run to many parts of south-east London. In many areas, people do not have access to the tube.

Mr. John Marshall: The hon. Gentleman talks about governmental control in 1981 and capital expenditure by local authorities. Will he confirm that councils were free to spend capital receipts if they generated them? It may be that, for ideological reasons, the GLC, when the hon. Gentleman was its chairman, did not want to generate any capital receipts.

Mr. Livingstone: On the day we took office, we instructed our officers to identify all capital assets which could be released. We sold land and houses to generate capital. In a perfect world, we should not have sold that land or those buildings, but they provided us with capital to do a little more. We were not happy about it, but we did it because we wanted every penny that we could get for capital spending. Some of the sites that we had to sell broke my heart, but we decided that it was better to spend that money on public transport than to keep those sites. Moreover, money that had been allocated to unpopular road schemes that we inherited from Sir Horace Cutler's administration was switched to public transport.

At that first meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport in June or July 1981, we said that, as the tube did not serve all parts of London, we had told British Rail that we would provide it with the same level of subsidy as we provided to the tubes so that all British Rail services in the GLC area could benefit from a fares reduction, in line with the GLC's fare reduction for London Transport. We wanted to create a common ticketing policy so that people could buy one ticket anywhere in London—a British Rail, London Transport or bus ticket—and use it anywhere in London. That policy has now been introduced for season tickets, which we welcome, but it has taken years to introduce it.

I remember the words of the Secretary of State for Transport: "For every £1 of subsidy that the GLC gives to British Rail, I'll withhold £1 of Government subsidy, thereby completely negating any subsidy that you may give." That was an act of sabotage. Who lost? The commuters lost. Those who live in the Tory outer suburbs of London—in Bromley, Croydon and Hendon—were denied a fares reduction and the integration of public transport services. I said, "We want to increase British Rail's rolling stock. We shall provide whatever subsidy is necessary to run more trains and attract people to public transport." Once again, that was vetoed.

The Government vetoed all those projects. Our only freedom was to cut fares and to squeeze whatever money we could from capital receipts to fund the limited works that we could undertake. Had there been a Conservative GLC and a Labour Government, the evil hand of the Treasury would still have prevailed and would have vetoed the projects. Transport Ministers still have to bludgeon their way past the Treasury to get a little capital investment for London Transport.

Until Londoners elect an authority to control transport in London, it will never be responsive to the needs of Londoners. So long as it is controlled by the Treasury, the main concern of which is national economic issues, Londoners will never get a fair deal on public transport. That is why there must be an elected strategic authority for London which can concentrate on tackling such problems.

I would accept the judgment of any Londoner whom one stopped on the street in the three and a half years when the GLC was responsible for transport and the seven years which followed. Although the Government blocked all our capital investment programmes, when we cut fares we saw what we predicted—a movement of people from private transport to public transport. We saw an increase of about 10 per cent. in the use of public transport and a reduction of about 5 per cent. in cars on the streets of London. That may not sound much, but it is the difference between the city moving well and effectively and being clogged up.

Almost a decade on, people still stop me on the streets, tubes and buses and say, "If only we could have the GLC's 'Fares Fair' policy back." After a decade of slander and lies from Conservative Members—"slander" is a terminological exactitude—people still remember that policy, which they enjoyed, because, after 30 years of decline in public transport in London, the system began to improve. The Government of the day, who did not want popular public spending, were determined to put in their cronies and friends to run it, and they have run it into the ground.

That policy has been a disaster. Escalators can be out of action for three weeks, three months and sometimes more than a year. If that had happened while I was leader of the GLC, Conservative Back Benchers and Ministers would have condemned it as an outrage and an indictment of socialism. I received letters if an escalator was out of action for three or four days. Nowadays, people are amazed if they can complete their journey with all the escalators working. At times, 30 per cent. of the escalators have been out of use.

That has been a damning indictment, and I do not believe that it is right that the transport of the capital city should be a matter for central Government. Such problems will bedevil any Government who take office, however pro-public transport they are, because the body best able to run London transport is an authority elected primarily for that purpose which will be answerable to Londoners and therefore much more responsive to their needs.

If the Government think that they have any popular support for their maladministration of London transport for the past seven years, I suggest that they put a simple question to the people of London: would they prefer Ken Livingstone to be taken down to Westminster tube and tied to the rails because of the maladministration of the GLC, or would they like the same fate for Ministers who have run London transport into the ground for the past seven years? I know whom Londoners would choose to sacrifice for the incompetence that has been visited on them. The only problem is that Ministers strapped to the Circle line would die of old age before a train came along.

Public transport in London will be the nail in the coffin of every Tory who in the past decade has trooped through the Lobby as the Government have demolished London transport. Our message to the people of London at the election will be, "If you want to save London transport, get rid of the bunch of gangsters who have been running it with their cronies and friends, and elect people who not only want to run it but travel on it."

6.15 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Methinks the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) will

> " remember with advantages
> What feats he did that day."

He should remember, as we do, that many Londoners liked, and like, the idea of reducing fares to increase the attraction of public transport. However, they wanted to ensure that the increased income was invested in improved services. Sadly, the GLC's management did not lead to improved services.

When the Conservative Government took office, they had to rectify the mess in which the economy was left by the previous Labour Government. We have turned the economy round, and can join forces across the Chamber to seek improvements to public transport.

At Transport Questions today, I offered my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport immortality if he would extend the underground from Hackney to Chelsea south through Wandsworth. The stone masons are ready to erect his statue if he agrees. We were in Balham the other day discussing the possibility of erecting a statue to commemorate the famous people of Balham. We mentioned a Roman centurion because of Stane street, and Peter Sellers because of the gateway that he provided for Balham, but my hon. Friend, the "freeman" of Wandsworth borough, would be a fitting subject for a statue if he agreed to extend the Hackney-Chelsea line south into that barren territory.

[Mr. John Bowis]

The problem is that there is little public transport in south London. Anyone reading an underground map of London would think that London's southern border was the River Thames. Five small tube lines dip beneath the river.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bowis: I cannot give way; I am trying to speed through.

Although 85 per cent. of commuters into central London use public transport, there is no public transport for them to cross boroughs south of the river and they must use their cars. I beg my hon. Friend the Minister to persuade London Regional Transport to make the southern circular connection, bringing the east London line across to Balham, the Balham line to Clapham junction and up through the west London line to Willesden so that, at last, we have the outer circle line that south London so needs.

We must provide more park and ride facilities on the outer rim of the underground network to encourage people to use it. When we consider access to the underground system, we must bear in mind people with disabilities, and ensure that, at all stations, trains are sufficiently flush to platforms.

I know that I must be brief, so I shall refer quickly to one or two subjects on which I have written to my hon. Friend the Minister. I again ask him to speak to the management of London Regional Transport about Dial-A-Ride. It is being run for the convenience of LRT management. I want to ensure that the service is provided for the convenience of the users—those with disabilities. That does not necessarily mean imposing a regional structure on the system; it means allowing local people with disabilities to run their own service.

I have to hand over to the Front Benches now, so I shall conclude. There are good signs of more investment in the underground and the Government can claim credit for that. More money is being invested in the underground than ever before and more in the whole rail system than at any time since the Conservative Governments of the 1950s. We now need a responsive management. My hon. Friends referred to the possibility of private assets being brought into the public transport system. The asset that we need above all is private management skills, so that better use can be made of public financial investment.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I call Ms. Joan Ruddock.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You are the guardian of Back-Bench Members' interests. It is outrageous that London Back-Bench Members cannot speak in a debate on London transport which affects their constituencies. A short debate of about three hours on this important subject—virtually the only such debate in the year—is a poor show. More time should have been made available so that Back-Bench Members, like myself, could defend their constituents' interests. The lack of time is offensive: I hope that you can get that message across to the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's anxiety to take part in the debate, and I regret that he has not had the chance to do so. He will recognise that I am only following the conventions of the House.

6.20 pm

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): I share the dismay of my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), who may wish to intervene in my speech. I hope that I defend the interests of his constituents as I do those of other London Members.

I congratulate the Select Committee on Transport on its timely and concise, but damning, report on the finances of London Underground. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) for his presentation as Chairman of the Select Committee. On 22 October, in advance of its deliberations, I wrote to the previous Secretary of State for Transport expressing alarm at the then newly identified and previously unforeseen deficit of about £40 million.

I urged the Government to step in with a rescue package, but the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) replied that London Transport

"like any other business must live within its means",

and that he had no plans to

"increase their grant ceiling for the present financial year."

Months of unnecessary uncertainty have followed, but it is to the credit of the new Secretary of State that he has responded positively to the combined pressures of the all-party Select Committee report, Opposition Members and trade unions by increasing London Transport's grant in this financial year.

Perhaps the Minister will bring us more good news today. He knows that, welcome though that increase is, it does not solve the continuing crisis of London's most important mass transit system, or set it on a secure financial footing for the future. Indeed, the Select Committee found a gross deficit in London Underground's finances of £93 million, leading to a net budget shortfall of £52 million.

The Select Committee examined the causes and made some recommendations for immediate action. Sadly, it did not report substantially on the consequences of the deficit, although it ended its report by saying:

"we are concerned that services to the public should be affected as little as possible."

That is a pious hope. Drastic measures have already been announced by London Underground. I challenge the Minister to demonstrate today that the planned cuts in staff and services will not further undermine confidence in London Underground, lead to a further drop in ridership and yet another cash crisis.

The Select Committee found that

"poor forecasting of income from both property and fares made the 1990-91 Business Plan impossible to achieve."

That statement came as no surprise to Members on this side of the House. We have constantly criticised the fundamental philosophy on which London Transport's business plans are based. The Government, oblivious of the fact that it is achieved nowhere else in Europe, have charged London Transport with making a profit. It is their wholly unrealistic and unjustified approach which led London Underground into flights of financial fantasy that ignored the collapse of the property market and the limits of passenger tolerance.

The Select Committee identified the three causes of the immediate crisis as a drop in ridership, a drop in property sales and the safety programme. A drop in ridership was inevitable. We predicted that it would occur if the Government persisted in their philosophy. Only a year ago, the chairman of London Transport said that his policy was to

"price people off the tube."

In August last year, the managing director of London Underground said:

"I see no reason why the customer should not pay the cost of running the system, and that includes replacing assets and repairing trains."

Ms. Gordon: Bus services are being cut, too.

Ms. Ruddock: Indeed they are. The managing director went on to say that it would require five to seven years of real fare increases to achieve that objective. This year's increases are a good example. Tube fares rose on average 10 per cent., with some passengers facing an increase in season ticket prices of as much as 11·7 per cent.

Does the Minister not accept that combining the highest tube fares in Europe with one of the poorest services is likely to prove a disincentive to passengers? Does he think it desirable for people to be priced off the tube? Does he think it desirable for people to take to their cars instead? Does he not accept that such consequences impose wholly unjustifiable costs on London's environment, hospital casualty wards and overall business efficiency, through increasing congestion and accidents on our roads? What does he make of Mr. Newton's admission in the Select Committee that, although the pricing-off policy was supposed to apply to peak hour travel, there has been a

"reduction in discretionary demand"?

Such a reduction in demand is a clear indictment of Government policy, exposing yet again the lack of strategic planning and co-operation in the capital's transport system.

I shall digress to give the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who is active in transport debates, but unfortunately cannot be with us because he is in Brussels. He has asked me to record tonight the fact that the closure of the Acton Railway works, wholly owned and operated by London Transport, has meant that rebuilding and major overhauls of some underground stock must now take place elsewhere. It is ludicrous that stock must now be run up British Rail lines to the Birmingham area to be attended to.

My hon. Friend also points out that the new timetables for the Circle line trains to operate from April to July include some gaps of 15 minutes. He asks us to note that, in 1885, there was a regular timetabled service by steam-hauled trains on the Circle line, serving Westminster station at regular 10-minute intervals. Today, the service is worse than it was 100 years ago.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend has referred to fares. If I had had the opportunity to make a speech, I should have talked about the impact of fares on the many people in my constituency and in those of other hon. Members who live on low incomes. Is my hon. Friend aware that, if a person on low income buys a five-day travel pass of the £2·60 variety, it will cost him about £13 a week? From April, income support will be £39·65 a week, and unemployment benefit £41·40. So almost a third of such people's weekly incomes will go on fares, even before they have paid for their poll tax, food or rent. Is not that scandalous?

Ms. Ruddock: I wholly endorse what my hon. Friend has said. As we have said repeatedly in the House, we have the highest fares in Europe for any comparable service.

The other two causes of LUL's financial crisis were identified as falling receipts from property sales, and safety measures. On that score, the Secretary of State has much to answer for as well. Surely he must accept that it is nonsense to make public policy in an area as vital as the capital's mass transit system dependent on speculative gains in a notoriously unstable property market. Does the Minister accept that that source can no longer be relied upon? As for the £40 million deficit which is said to have arisen from additional safety works, the mind positively boggles. How could LUL not have been able to predict the pace at which it would do the works and thus know in which financial year the costs would fall? Why, as the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) asked in Committee, did not LUL immediately seek an extension of the external financing limit to cover these works?

What proportion of the £62·55 million payment to London Transport announced on 14 February will go to London Underground? The Minister implied in an Adjournment debate on 1 March that £55 million dealt specifically with the cash flow problems of London Underground. As I understand it, that is not what London Underground believes. I repeat the question that has already been asked: is this a grant or is it forward borrowing against the EFL of 1991-92 which must subsequently be repaid? If it is forward borrowing on next year's EFL, does the Minister accept that the same cycle will repeat itself next year?

The Select Committee's report has provided us with a quantitive insight into London Underground's affairs, but it is of course on quality that the travelling public will pass their judgment. Does the Minister accept that the recent reductions in service made by London Underground because of its financial difficulties are already undermining passenger confidence, and are thus likely to undermine the revenue base for the next financial year? We predict that the financial crisis revealed by the Select Committee's report is but the thin edge of the wedge. LUL is negotiating staff cuts amounting to close on 1,000 posts.

In a recent Adjournment debate, the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) questioned the Minister for Public Transport on this same issue. The Minister replied:

"there will be no significant change in service. I understand that the proposed staff cuts of 1,000 are related mainly to the introduction of new automatic ticket barriers . . . Those moves are designed to make the underground as efficient as possible. They are not a reaction to a financial crisis".—[*Official Report*, 1 March 1991; Vol. 186, c. 1290.]

Mr. Tracey: Before the hon. Lady sits down, will she tell us how much extra money a Labour Government would spend on London transport? And does the hon. Lady have the approval for her answer of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith)?

Ms. Ruddock: The hon. Gentleman knows better than to ask such silly questions. We are dealing with the Select Committee's report and the Government's policies.

The Minister said that cuts in staff were not a reaction to a financial crisis. I say that LUL's staff would regard that statement as a joke, were the consequences not so

[Ms. Ruddock]

painful. LUL's senior managers appear to have done their best to follow the Government's line. Memos to staff speak of good housekeeping and efficient use of resources, but even the most loyal among them seem to think that the Government's financial policies have something to do with the problem. The general manager of the Northern line told his staff in a memo that the Government were faced with huge demands for education and health and as yet did not know the full costs of the Gulf war. The manager of the Victoria line—12 trains short for much of last year; six trains short now—told his staff that their new timetable will be more realistic to operate. As there are to be 10 fewer train operators, we can assume that there will be fewer trains. Perhaps the Minister can confirm that only 24 trains are running regularly now at peak times on the Victoria line.

The manager of Central line acknowledges that the volume of his customer traffic fell by 4 per cent. in 1989 and by 5·5 per cent. in 1990. At Question Time today, the Minister denied that ridership was falling. Perhaps I can press him to say whether it is falling on Central line, and whether he expects a further fall in ridership on that line, given that it too is scheduled to sustain significant staff cuts and a 3 per cent. reduction in peak hour services.

The actual list of job cuts over which the Minister drew a veil today includes but 300 booking office clerk jobs—out of a total of 980 jobs, including those of train operators, guards, leading railwaymen, station foremen, and passenger services support jobs and engineering operations. How does all that accord with the Minister's statement that the job losses are related to the automatic ticketing system and not in response to the financial crisis?

It is our contention that the financial crisis is deep and continuing. We welcome any assurance that the Secretary of State can give about better financial management. Indeed, we would welcome an all-round improvement in management in LUL, but the problem remains: if the Government set unrealistic targets, London Underground will continue to lurch from crisis to crisis. The current round of cuts will, I predict, be self-defeating. Booking offices at more than 100 stations are to have severely restricted opening hours and real time closures. Some booking offices are to be closed altogether, and some stations to be entirely unstaffed. Does the Minister really not believe that these closures amount to a reduction in service, or that ridership will not be adversely affected?

Many people, especially women, are already deterred from travelling outside peak hours by the lack of staff on stations. These latest measures can only exacerbate their fears and contribute to yet further decreases in ridership—and to further problems for LUL's staff morale, to more violence against staff, to vandalism and to graffiti at stations. What does the Minister expect to happen to the crime figures?

As my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) pointed out, those wonderful experiments on the Northern line which have proved successful and which Ministers have frequently applauded are to end. It appears again that, although the Minister was not aware of it at Question Time, the additional staff are to be withdrawn from the Northern line from April and reductions in the numbers of revenue protection and ticket office staff will also be implemented.

Does the Minister expect the crime figures to rise? Does he deny that this measure too is related to the cash crisis? If, as I suspect, he shares our dismay at the thought of the underground becoming less safe, will he see that the staff cuts are reversed?

I could go on and on about the cuts, not least about the sad plight of LUL's award-winning cleaning and premises department, which was a success story—cleaner escalators, platforms and station premises, even with reduced staffing—yet the department is to be chopped. What price safety, when the King's Cross fire showed all too tragically the need for a strict cleaning regime?

Even all this is not the end of the story, however. Just before the debate began, I received a leaked copy of the passenger services directorate's proposed operating costs budget for 1991-92. It takes account of the so-called stage 2 cuts—the 1,000 jobs to which I have already referred—but it ominously looks forward to a further round of—stage 3—job losses totalling nearly 800 posts.

It cynically argues that the management expect there to be industrial action as a result of the current 1,000 job cuts, and that that will provide the opportunity to put in place "more radical working practice and employment changes arising from Level 3."

Those changes had already been rejected in 1989 by LUL workers, and it was agreed that they would not be undertaken. That is a cynical move.

The level 3 changes will result in the loss of 248 train staff, 458 station staff and 94 train maintenance staff—a total of 798 posts. Does the Minister believe that LUL management should hope for industrial action in order to force through more staff cuts? Is that the style of management of which the Minister approves?

The Select Committee's report must be seen as a dire warning of continuing financial crisis within LUL. It is all too evident that it cannot run a safe, efficient and passenger-friendly service without more Government financial support. It is patently clear that the Government's policy towards public transport in the City is a disaster. No number of promises for the future can make up for the fact that the day-to-day running of services falls far below the reasonable expectation of Londoners. The Government simply cannot blame that state of affairs on London Transport's poor financial management, although it is obvious that it was in such a state and needed to be tackled, the political responsibility for the mess clearly lies with the Secretary of State, who has set himself up as the strategic authority for transport in London.

I trust that the Minister will explain how LUL fortunes will be turned around to provide the high-quality services and safe and affordable public transport that Londoners demand.

6.40 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) has encouraged a hare that has been running around the Chamber tonight to run even faster with her allegation that a further 800 jobs are to be cut imminently. I repudiate that claim.

London Transport cannot complete its budget until my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has concluded the review of the external financing limit for 1991-92. However, the current budget, which has been drawn on a prudent basis, does not provide for a further

reduction of 800 jobs. That allegation is alarmist, unnecessary and without foundation in terms of its likely impact on London Underground. I am sure that budget options are under consideration by the middle management of London Transport, but I hope that the hon. Member for Deptford is not encouraging industrial action on London Transport.

Ms. Ruddock: No—the management are encouraging that.

Mr. Freeman: I am glad to hear that the hon. Lady is not giving such encouragement. I therefore hope that she will not give credence to leaked documents, which probably come from the unions involved, commenting upon options which have no foundation in reality.

Ms. Ruddock: In fairness, the Minister should know that the document to which I referred comes from Ian Athurton, the passenger services director, and it was he who referred to industrial action.

Mr. Freeman: I assure the hon. Lady and the House that there is no prospect of which I am aware of a further round of job reductions.

The hon. Member for Deptford referred to 1,000 jobs which might be affected—I stress "might", as we are still talking about proposals. I have already said on several occasions from the Dispatch Box that the job reductions relate primarily to the introduction of modern ticketing equipment and that they will not jeopardise the safe and efficient operation of the underground. I would share the hon. Lady's concern if any hon. Member provided examples of where that safe and efficient operation was jeopardised.

Mr. Cohen *rose*——

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman was denied the opportunity to speak because of the effluxion of time, but if he would like to come up and see me some time, I should be happy to spend half an hour with him.

Mr. Cohen: The Mae West Minister.

Mr. Freeman: I must get on, as I have only 16 minutes at my disposal.

I apologise to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall), the Chairman of the Select Committee, for not being in my place when he spoke. The Committee's report is most helpful and I hope that, in answering some of the points raised by the hon. Member for Deptford, I shall answer some of the points raised by the Committee.

The £55 million increase in grant that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has anounced is part of an overall increase which is higher than that, and includes additional provision for the Jubilee line and the east-west crossrail. That provision is ring-fenced in the estimates, but the £55 million increase is for LRT, as we do not deal directly with the underground. That grant is a once-and-for-all increase in the cash resources available. The underground is part of LRT, however, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has sought to address with that cash increase the problems, rightly referred to in the Select Committee report, caused by property shortfall and unavoidable increases in safety expenditure and so on.

The hon. Members for Deptford and for Shettleston asked about the budget for next year and we are at present considering what changes are needed to the external financing limit for 1991-92. I am unable to make any announcement on behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State tonight, but undoubtedly an announcement will be made shortly. We are realists, and we understand that, if there is a property shortfall, it reduces the resources available to LRT. My right hon. and learned Friend has already demonstrated that we appreciate the problems that London Underground faces by awarding the £55 million. We also increased the public service obligation grant to British Rail this year by £100 million.

The hon. Members for Deptford and Shettleston also asked about distinguishing between the existing underground system and new schemes undertaken by LRT. This year, investment in the existing systems on the underground is at a record level of £400 million. I am aware that London Underground would like more money: I shall say something about that later. In the next three years, the grant for LRT will be £2·4 billion, and roughly £1 billion will be allocated for new lines—the Jubilee line and the east-west crossrail—and £1·4 billion for the rest of the existing business.

Hon. Members will appreciate that, judged by any historical standards, the £1·4 billion represents a substantial investment programme. It will cover the refurbishment of the Central line at £700 million—new carriages will be in use by September next year and the resignalling should be completed within three years. The Angel station on the Northern line will receive £72 million for new work—the sums to be allocated are enormous. Circle line trains will also be refurbished. Earlier, I said that I expected those new trains to come into operation next year, but I was wrong: they will be in operation from this summer. I invite the hon. Member for Deptford to enjoy with me those pleasantly refurbished, graffiti-free trains.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) made a perceptive contribution and spoke about non-user benefits—I assume that that was the burden of his argument. He said that the underground would never be profitable in a commercial sense, and he is right. The new underground lines have been approved largely because of the decongestion benefits to central London. We apply that principle to light rail systems as well.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge asked about the future and to what extent London Underground Limited could generate sufficient cash to replace its existing assets without having to find the resources internally to build the new lines. I do not anticipate that LUL will ever be able to generate sufficient cash to build new lines, but in the years ahead it might be able to find some of that cash without radical fare increases. I know that LUL would like to be in that position.

During the summer, in the course of the public expenditure survey bidding round, my right hon. and learned Friend will consider proposals from LRT for additional investment. The Select Committee referred to that when it spoke of the investment programmes for the next three years. I confirm that my right hon. and learned Friend will consider any sensible proposition.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) asked who should take the blame for financial mismanagement. I do not want to get into a

[Mr. Freeman]

detailed attempt at passing the buck, but the hon. Gentleman may be aware that LRT has appointed a new financial director, Mr. Sheppeck and that LUL has also announced a new financial director, Mr. Hughes. I hope that they will be able to contribute to a better system of financial control. The hon. Gentleman should be aware, however, that operating any nationalised industry, which is subject to cash controls as a commercial business is extremely difficult whether under a Labour or a Conservative Government. The revenue may suddenly fall, operating costs may suddenly rise for various reasons, and the industry has either to go to the Treasury for additional funds or to cut its investment programme. That problem has been with us for years.

The problems of financial management, faced by both British Rail and LRT, are formidable. To blame them for getting the figures wrong is unfair and unreasonable. They have to operate under peculiar restraints. That is not to say that they should not be able to plan and control cash expenditure and to know the cash position. The Select Committee has done the House a service in pointing out the shortcomings in LRT.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey argued that LRT needed more money. In a timely intervention, my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) asked the hon. Member for Deptford what further resources a Labour Government would provide. He was put down and told that that was a silly question. My job is to defend not the operational record of BR or LRT but the Government's position on resources. We have doubled in real terms the resources available for LRT over the next three years.

Granted, there is a significant burden for the new operating lines—the Jubilee line and the east-west crossrail—but that burden falls on the taxpayer, because it is a non-repayable, non-interest-bearing grant. The money comes straight out of the Exchequer and goes straight to LRT. That is a creditable record, although we could do better, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will consider new investment schemes. In the next general election campaign, the hon. Lady will have to face up to what resources a Labour Administration would be prepared to put into London Transport.

Both my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) and the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) spoke about the Northern line. I always associate the hon. Member for Tooting with the problems of the Northern line, problems that we understand. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is getting up at 5 o'clock on Wednesday morning to travel on the Northern line with my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South so as to see the problems. I know that the Northern line is called the misery line, but we cannot sensibly afford the resources to refurbish both the Central line and the Northern line at the same time. The Central line refurbishment is costing £700 million. Refurbishment of the Northern line will follow.

Mr. Cox: I have heard all this before.

Mr. Freeman: When? Our constituents suffer from overcrowding—today, tonight, tomorrow morning. The Central line refurbishment is on schedule. A substantial sum is being spent on it; the new stock will come into service in September 1992 and the resignalling should be finished two to three years after that. We shall make a start on the Northern line as soon as resources permit. Refurbishment of Angel station, which is on the Northern line, is costing £72 million.

My hon. Friends the Members for Hendon, South and for Surbiton both spoke about buses. The Government are grateful to them for their support for the principle of deregulation. This afternoon, my right hon. and learned Friend published a consultation document on deregulation and privatisation of London buses. The document spells out the arguments for deregulation and tendering. I am sure that the House will return to the subject. Some 4 million passengers per day travel on London Buses. As has been said, that is the same number as travel on Network Southeast and London Underground combined—a substantial number. That patronage has not fallen.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said something about bus traffic being down by 30 per cent. If it is, it is not in London. There has been a fall in patronage in the provinces, but since 1979 the number of journeys on London Buses has remained unaltered at 1·2 billion per annum and the number of passenger kilometres has also remained unchanged, at between 4·3 billion and 4·4 billion per annum.

I am glad that patronage in London is broadly holding, but our proposals for deregulation are based on the principle that we can bring valuable benefits to Londoners by providing for more services to be offered with new technology, servicing different parts of the capital at different times, by commercial operators. We do not want to see the end of the traditional double-decker red bus, and that will not happen, but we want to permit new operators to come in and provide a service so as to get more people travelling by bus.

Some faint hearts have argued that deregulation will exacerbate the problem of congestion in Greater London, but the reverse is the case. Our aim is to reduce congestion in Greater London by persuading more people, of all ages and callings, to leave their motor cars at home, and to travel by bus. I am grateful for that welcome to the publication of the deregulation paper by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

I am also grateful for the recognition by the hon. Member for Tooting that crime statistics on the Northern line, and the southern section of it in particular, have improved, in that there has been less crime. The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) has asked me about crime statistics, and I will look at them. Crime statistics for London Underground as a whole have also improved, in the same way. The trend is encouraging. British Transport police are to be thanked and congratulated. In part, the improvement is due to the introduction of new technology such as cameras, panic buttons and mirrors, and the new technology which has allowed staff to be released from the mundane tasks of isssuing and collecting tickets.

The hon. Member for Tooting referred to the escalators at Balham. I am told that they were working this morning and that they have been back in service two weeks after our joint visit. I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman thinks that they are not working or that they have broken down. If they have, perhaps he will let me know.

Ms. Ruddock: The special measures for the southern section of the Northern line included a 100 per cent. increase in staffing levels for particularly vulnerable

stations. That 100 per cent. increase will be done away with from 1 April. That was the point of my question and of that asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that there is a relationship between the number of staff available and crime—that is true on British Rail and London Underground—although there is not an exact correlation between crime statistics and staff. At Question Time, I gave the hon. Member for Vauxhall an undertaking that I would pursue the point, because I share her concern about the fear felt by women travelling alone on public transport. This is not a party political matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton rightly drew attention to the GLC's low fares policy. The hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) is no longer here, but I thought that my hon. Friend was right. Irrespective of the permission which may or may not have been given for capital investment while the Labour GLC was in control of London Transport, by pursuing a low fares policy the GLC ensured that the resources needed for ploughing back as investment were not there. Whatever the rights and wrongs of 10 years ago, we have to address ourselves to the situation today.

The underground is overcrowded. To go back to a policy of reducing fares would be ridiculous. It would result in less resources and more overcrowding when what is needed is more investment. That investment, on the whole, can come only from the Government. We have already supported a significant underground building programme and I dare say that more projects are yet to come.

My hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton called for a strategy and, by implication, for a long-term co-ordinated strategy for London. Nothing about a co-ordinated or a long-term strategy is anathema to Conservatives. The hon. Member for Deptford smiles—perhaps she is surprised at that. Perhaps we have been hiding our light under a bushel all these years. Co-ordination must be at the heart of any sensible transport policy, and long-term thinking must be one of its essential features. Our policy should be seen to have both.

The Question necessary to dispose of the proceedings was deferred, pursuant to paragraph (4) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of Estimates) and the Resolution [1 March].

Northern Ireland (Appropriation)

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Perhaps it will be helpful if I make clear that the debate may cover all matters for which Northern Ireland Departments, as distinct from the Northern Ireland Office, is responsible. Police and security are the principal excluded subjects.

7 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Brian Mawhinney) I beg to move,

That the draft Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 12th February, be approved.

The draft order has two purposes. The first is to authorise expenditure of £104·8 million in the 1990-91 spring supplementary estimates. This will bring the total estimates provision for Northern Ireland departmental services to £4,418 million for this financial year. The second purpose is to authorise the vote on account of £1,941 million for 1991-92, to enable the services of Northern Ireland Departments to continue until the 1991-92 main estimates for Northern Ireland are brought before the House later this year.

Details of the sums sought are given in the estimates booklet and the statement of sums required on account which as usual, are available in the Vote Office. As you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, reminded the House, the estimates for the Northern Ireland Office, for law and order services, are not covered by the Order before the House today.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Does the Minister agree that, if law and order are not covered, the application of this expenditure is somewhat curtailed and we do not reap the benefits that we should reap?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point.

Before drawing attention to some of the main features of the estimates, I should like to set them in the context of Northern Ireland's recent economic performance. At national level, we are experiencing a temporary downturn in economic activity as we make the adjustment to a low-inflation, more highly competitive economy. The Northern Ireland economy can be expected to follow a similar path. We can see this in the increase in unemployment during the past three months. The January figure of 97,500, or 14 per cent. of the work force, is disappointingly high, but it is still 1,700 below the figure for the same time last year.

Another encouraging sign is that, in the year to September 1990, output in both the manufacturing and the production industries rose by 3 per cent. and the numbers in employment increased by 1,200. But we dare not be complacent. It is essential that we defeat inflation, in the interests of both the Northern Ireland economy and the United Kingdom as a whole. While interest rates are still higher than any of us would wish, I am encouraged by the recent sharp downturn in inflation and the prospect of further reductions in the coming months. Equally, it is important that local industry—employees as well as employers—recognise that prosperity and enduring employment depend on improving efficiency and competitiveness.

[Dr. Mawhinney]

I now turn to the estimates. As is customary on these occasions, I do not propose to refer to every vote where supplementary provision is being sought. I shall concentrate instead on the main items.

I shall start with the Department of Agriculture vote 1, which provides for Northern Ireland expenditure on national agriculture and fisheries support measures. An extra £1·3 million is required for payments under the hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme, and £1 million for residual payments under former capital grant schemes. These increases are offset by reduced requirements under other capital grant schemes, particularly the farm and conservation grant scheme, where uptake and investment levels are lower than expected. The result is a token increase of £1,000 in the vote.

In Department of Agriculture vote 2, covering local support measures, additional provision of £1·5 million is required, principally for disease eradication measures and for special temporary aid to the pig and poultry sectors. These increases are offset by additional receipts, mainly from timber sales, and by delays in the commencement of major fishery harbour development works. Again, this results in a token increase of £1,000 in the vote.

Turning to the Department of Economic Development, token supplementaries are sought for votes 1 and 2. In vote 1, the main increase is an additional £11·5 million for factory building, as a result of increased demand from companies for custom-built industrial premises. This reflects the Industrial Development Board's continuing success in attracting internationally mobile projects to Northern Ireland.

The Government will continue their efforts to encourage internationally competitive companies engaged in manufacturing and tradeable services to come to the Province, so as to create the conditions for growth in durable employment. My ministerial colleagues and I take every opportunity to promote Northern Ireland as a successful investment base and to challenge its negative image abroad. I know from my recent visits to the United States how essential it is to bring the positive attractions of Northern Ireland to the attention of potential investors, and I intend to continue to put this message across in the months ahead.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I hope that, when my hon. Friend addresses American audiences, he emphasises that Northern Ireland is a United Kingdom responsibility and that the observations of many Americans have come very close to interference.

Dr. Mawhinney: I certainly make it clear that Northern Ireland is an integral part of the United Kingdom.

In Department of Economic Development vote 2, additional funding of £6·2 million is sought for the local enterprise development unit. This will enable LEDU to meet current commitments for selective financial assistance and to continue the development of a network of local enterprise agencies. There are now a total of 27 such agencies operating in the Province, providing work space and business support to local entrepreneurs, who are currently providing some 2,000 jobs.

Also in this vote, an increase of £1·1 million is sought for the fair employment support scheme, owing to higher than expected uptake. This scheme offers private-sector employers practical and financial help to implement best practice in relation to fair employment. Since the scheme was launched in March 1988, about 1,150 firms have taken advantage of it. That is very encouraging and shows that employers are facing up to their responsibilities in this important area.

Elsewhere in this vote, an additional £920,000 is sought for the Northern Ireland tourist board for additional marketing activities, such as an 'Ulster-Canada Year' promotion, to promote Northern Ireland as a holiday destination. An extra £550,000 is also sought for capital grants to district councils to improve tourist facilities, such as visitor centres and picnic sites. The past few years have seen a welcome upturn in Northern Ireland's tourism, and these extra funds will allow us to build on our success in attracting a record 1·1 million visitors to Northern Ireland in 1989.

As I said at Question Time some weeeks ago, it would benefit Northern Ireland and its tourist industry and would greatly benefit right hon. and hon. Members if they were to visit the Province. They would learn what a beautiful place it is, and would have their understanding put in a much more sympathetic and developed content than is apparent in the contributions of at least some of them.

The Department of the Environment vote 1, seeks additional provision of £1·7 million for the maintenance of roads and street lighting. This is offset by reductions in other subheads and increased receipts from vehicle testing, leaving a token of £1,000.

An additional £700,000 is sought for the Department's vote 2. The main increase is £6·6 million for the Housing Executive, bringing the executive's gross expenditure for the year to £467 million. This additional requirement is offset by almost £6 million in loans not taken up by housing associations—reflecting a more difficult housing market.

The Department of the Environment vote 3 is also a token, because extra receipts, including those from water charges, offset the additional £2·9 million required for capital expenditure to improve water services. All told, an additional £96 million will be spent by the water service over the next three years to improve the already high quality of drinking water supplies in Northern Ireland, in line with European Community requirements. This is part of a major capital programme of £500 million, over the next decade or so, that will also improve facilities for treating sewage effluent, thereby protecting coastal waters. Northern Ireland's bathing waters are already among the cleanest in the United Kingdom. In 1990, all but one of the 16 identified bathing waters met the mandatory EC standards.

Department of the Environment vote 6 seeks an extra £250,000 to provide an additional 24 full-time firemen to be employed by the fire authority for Northern Ireland, bringing the total to 849.

I move on to the Department of Education. A net increase of £13·6 million is sought in vote 1. The main addition is £20·6 million for grants to the education and library boards. That is needed to cover pay awards and price increases amounting to about £14 million, and increased expenditure on mandatory student awards and on the youth training programme. A further £2·8 million is for capital grants. These increases are partly offset by reduced requirements elsewhere, especially a decrease of £4·6 million in employers' contributions to the teachers'

superannuation scheme, following a review of the scheme by the Government Actuary. I assure the House that the change will not affect the level of, or entitlement to, teachers' pensions, as will be apparent from the corresponding provision in vote 3 of the Department of Education.

The House will be interested to learn that an additional £360,000 is included in the vote for expenditure on grant-maintained integrated schools. The 1989 education reform order provided for the setting up of that type of school where parents wanted them. I am pleased to say that 10 proposals for grant-maintained integrated status have so far been approved. Between them, the schools have about 2,300 pupils on their rolls. The extra resources sought will ensure that these schools receive the same level of financial support as other schools of comparable size. In addition to the 10 proposals already approved, two are currently under consideration and further proposals are expected. That is further evidence of the growing demand from parents that their children should be educated alongside children of other denominations in schools that value both traditions equally.

In the Department's vote 2, a net increase of £1·9 million is sought for a range of services. The main increase of £2·3 million is for increased grants to the two universities in Northern Ireland. The increase has been recommended by the Universities Funding Council to cover expenditure on equipment and a computer network. Provision is also made in the vote for an initiative to improve access by disabled people to the arts.

For the Department of Health and Social Services, an additional £20 million is sought in vote 1. This includes £14·6 million for health and social services boards, mainly to cover increased pay costs and service development. An additional £7·1 million is required for the family practitioner service to meet extra expenditure arising from the new general practitioner contracts and increased drug costs. The new GP contracts, which were introduced from 1 April 1990, are raising standards of care by making services more responsive to the needs of the consumer and by placing greater emphasis on illness prevention. Information to date shows that GPs are supporting the initiative, especially in areas such as immunisation, vaccination and health promotion.

An additional £5 million is required in DHSS vote 3, including £2·4 million for health and personal social services. Of that sum, £1·7 million is for the independent living fund, reflecting increased demand. The aim of the fund is to give severely disabled people the help that they need to enable them to live independently in the community.

In vote 4, which covers social security, an additional £50 million is sought. This covers revised estimates of the numbers receiving a range of benefits, but chiefly a technical payment of over £40 million into the Northern Ireland national insurance fund, and expenditure on industrial injuries benefits, which is now a charge on the Consolidated Fund.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Can the Minister say anything about money that is available for new hospitals under the health estimates?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman will understand that we are dealing essentially with supplementary estimates. The funding to which he refers will be covered by the main estimates, with which we are not dealing this evening.

Finally, I draw attention to vote 3 of the Department of Finance and Personnel, where an additional £700,000 is sought for the community relations programme. Improving relations between the different parts of the Northern Ireland community remains one of the Government's highest priorities. We have developed a range of programmes over the past three years to promote cross-country contact and appreciation of cultural diversity. These include programmes by district councils to develop community relations work at local level and a cultural traditions programme that promotes appreciation of cultural diversity through the arts, the cultural institutions and the media, and through the Irish language.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): On that general point, and especially on the cultural traditions programme, does the Minister consider that it would be better for the programme to promote the traditions of both communities, unlike the conference organised next week, which will reflect the interests of one community only, judging by those who will participate in it?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman will recall that when he advanced that argument to me recently I said that it was a fair one that would be reflected to those who have responsibility for organising the programmes of the conferences. That includes next week's conference and any others which may follow it. He will agree that there was a degree of cross-community contributions to the two earlier conferences.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): Is the Minister prepared to say that unless on future occasions conferences clearly reflect both traditions, the Department will reconsider its funding of such projects?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman knows that the cultural traditions programme falls under the responsibility of the Council for Community Relations. As I said, a fair argument has been advanced by the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) which I shall reflect to those who have responsibility for organising the conference. Knowing them as I do, I suspect that the argument will be accepted as a helpful contribution and that they will take careful note of it.

Mr. Trimble: I thank the Minister for giving way to me for a second time. I take his point that the previous two conferences reflected both strands. They did so mainly because people from both communities were represented, partly through myself and my associates. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in the restructuring of the cultural traditions group people representing our outlook were excluded from the committee charged with organising the conference? Will he take steps to ensure that those who administer the fund will try to restore their committees to bodies that operate on a representative basis?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am happy to pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman and his contribution in the earlier part of the development of the programme. I am happy to acknowledge that it was of real significance. As I said, he has advanced a fair argument. I shall reflect the concerns

[Dr. Mawhinney]

that have been expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House to those who are responsible for organising the conferences.

The Government's financial support for community relations work has been increased from about £500,000 in 1986-87 to £4 million in this financial year. That covers projects supported by the central community relations unit and the Department of Education. I expect that that expenditure in 1991-92 will be higher still. I am convinced that, over time, the programme will be seen to have contributed significantly to greater mutual understanding and to creating a climate where dialogue, rather than violence, is accepted as the means of resolving conflict. I am sure that that objective is supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

In these opening remarks I have sought to draw the attention of the House to the main provisions of the order. In replying to the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, will respond to the contributions made by hon. Members. I commend the order to the House.

7.19 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I thank the Minister of State for taking us so meticulously through the order. I shall not follow the customary practice on such occasions by going through the order in a similarly detailed way. However, I shall raise some specific items and then move on to the general problem of the economy of the Province. Before doing so, I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the Minister who is to wind up the debate and to the House as I have to leave at 9.45 pm. I have meetings in Leicester early tomorrow morning about a fire, which some people may have seen reported in the press over the weekend, so I shall be absent when the Minister winds up the debate.

My first specific point concerns Government expenditure priorities. A few weeks ago, the Secretary of State announced at the Central Community Relations Unit conference on equality of opportunity that a new main priority for public expenditure was to be designated, targeting social need. Although that is commendable, will the Minister press the Secretary of State to make a much clearer statement on that proposal and its implications in terms of resources and how it will interlink with other programmes and policies?

Will the Government also make an early statement on their intentions regarding the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity? I am sure that the Government accept that the matter has been going on for far too long and is leading to great uncertainty. Will the Government make an early announcement as to whether they intend, as rumour suggests, to split electricity supply and generation in the Province? The Labour party's views are well known —that the privatisation of such a small energy producer is ridiculous in the circumstances. If the Government decide to split generation and supply, the result will be even more ridiculous.

Will the Government make a statement on the resignation last week of the chairman of Northern Ireland Electricity? I presume that his resignation was not simply the result of personal pique. I am sure that the House would be delighted if the Minister would say whether the chairman resigned because he disagreed with the thrust of the Government's proposals on privatisation.

What are the Government's proposals on the possible gas pipeline between Britain and Ireland——

Mr. Trimble: Northern Ireland.

Mr. Marshall: I wish that the hon. Gentleman would learn to listen and hear the end of the sentence. My use of the word "Ireland" in this context is clear.

Will the Minister comment on the possible gas pipeline between Britain and the island of Ireland and the possibility of a spur from that pipeline going to the Province? I realise that my question contains two hypothetical points. On a third hypothetical point, if a decision were taken to have such a spur to the north, could the gas supply be used for commercial purposes and not just for electricity generation at Kilroot?

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Surely the hon. Gentleman realises that, in seeking to have a gas pipeline to Northern Ireland, members of the Ulster Unionist party are concerned about the whole of the United Kingdom. If a pipeline came from south-west Scotland, it would benefit many more people who vote for the Labour party in that part of the United Kingdom. Furthermore, it would be much safer to send gas from Northern Ireland to the Republic. It would be less of a target for the IRA if it went from north to south rather than came from south to north.

Mr. Marshall: I do not wish to follow the hon. Gentleman's argument. I would have far more sympathy with his views if he had been among those who condemned Northern Ireland Electricity for importing South African coal into the Province, thus denying employment to miners in the Scottish coalfields.

A further question concerns compulsory competitive tendering. We all realise that there are clear political differences on that issue and fears about it in Northern Ireland. What is the Government's latest position on compulsory competitive tendering in relation to the health and education boards and the district councils?

The campaigns that the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) have been fighting on behalf of local hospitals have the Labour party's support.

The Minister said that there is now clear evidence that the Northern Ireland economy is in recession. Economic activity has continued to decline with little or no prospect of improvement in 1991. The signs have been emerging over several months—they have not appeared suddenly —and I am especially worried by the fact that, although there have been signs of a downturn in economic activity, only in recent weeks have we seen evidence of it in unemployment figures. In the coming months, unemployment could increase substantially. Despite the Minister's sanguine response, the problem will be overcome only by clear changes in the direction of Government economic policy, not just in the Province but in the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Ross: The hon. Gentleman has obviously not seen this evening's *Belfast Telegraph*, in which attention is drawn to the fact that the recession will probably not bite quite so deeply in Northern Ireland as in the rest of the United Kingdom, because the industries that were brought in and could move out again as soon as the recession hit

them were lost 10 years ago, so it looks as though we shall suffer more lightly than the rest of the United Kingdom this time.

Mr. Marshall: If the hon. Gentleman listened more carefully to my comments instead of being obsessed with his own thoughts and his need to comment, he would appreciate that I said that there had been evidence for several months that economic activity in the Province was declining, and there is no evidence that that trend will be reversed in the next few months.

If the hon. Gentleman is correct—I accept his figures—and Northern Ireland will not be so adversely affected as the rest of the United Kingdom, that may be a source of comfort to some, but it will not comfort the thousands of people who will lose their jobs as a result of the economic downturn in the Province. Although the hon. Gentleman offers some consolation, in the medium to long term it does not offer any comfort to the people of Northern Ireland. As I said before his intervention, the long-term economic future of the Province can be assured only by dramatic changes in the direction of Government policy.

All hon. Members from the Province should be worried about the threat that the single market after 1992 is likely to pose to the Northern Ireland economy. "The Regional Economic Review" published in February 1991 by Cambridge Economic Consultants gives horrendous figures. It predicts a loss of up to 40,000 jobs in Northern Ireland in the first 10 years of the single market. The review states:

"For the Northern Region, the North-West and Northern Ireland in the absence of any strengthening in regional policy, substantial falls in employment are projected."

As the House knows, the European Commission highlighted those manufacturing sectors in each member country that are likely to be vulnerable because of the single market. Unfortunately, some of them are major employers in the Province. They include clothing, carpets, glass, electrical machinery and aerospace products. The European Commission highlighted those sectors as being particularly vulnerable post-1922.

What has been the Government's response to the recession and what is their likely response to the difficulties that we may face in the Province post-1992? Last year, we had a debate about reform of the Industrial Development Board, which will be one of the Government's main vehicles to encourage inward investment and further investment in the Province. I criticised that reform to some extent, and I repeat my criticism. I described the reform as "too little, too late" and as "timid and half-hearted" because of the Government's resistance to market intervention even when the market failed.

I stand by that criticism. First, the proposals did not provide a comprehensive economic development strategy, which people in the Province—with the exception of the Government—generally agreed was necessary. Secondly, I welcomed the need to concentrate on investment other than capital—investment in training—but I said that it should not be an either/or situation. We must try to achieve a mix of different types of investment. Thirdly, I said that real jobs should remain a permanent feature of the measure of success of any policy. That certainly does not happen with the Government's policy.

I welcomed, and still welcome, parts of the training and employment strategy, but it needs strengthening in two ways. My first point applies not just to the Province but to the United Kingdom as a whole. There needs to be clearer recognition by companies of their responsibilities to provide training. Secondly, it is essential to seek the view of people other than just employers on improving the quality of training for young entrants in the labour market, on training for the unemployed and on retraining those already in employment. On that point, I differ from the Government. The Labour party believes that this strategy applies to trade unions, which should be automatically included, and to others with expertise—for example, the Fair Employment Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission and for those who work with the unemployed.

Although the Government wish to keep within the guidelines laid down by the European Commission, in practice they fail to keep within the spirit of the provision of European Community structural funds. I repeat a charge which I made before from the Dispatch Box: the Government still refuse to apply genuine additionality in the operation of structural funds in the Province.

It is instructive to compare expenditure in the Irish Republic and that in Northern Ireland. It is expected that, between 1989 and 1993, the republic will receive 3,672 million ecu, with only 793 million ecu going to Northern Ireland. Committee B of the British-Irish inter-parliamentary body stated:

"The average allocation of structural funds across objective 1 areas is 521 ecu per head. Northern Ireland will receive slightly below this average while Ireland will receive 1038 ecu per head . . . Per capita, citizens of Ireland receive about twice the amount received by citizens of Northern Ireland".

Rev. Ian Paisley: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman agrees, the percentage that given because Northern Ireland was an objective 1 area was increased by only about 8 per cent., just covering inflation, while the allocation was increased by more than 75 per cent. in the republic and by more than 100 per cent. in some parts of the objective 1 areas. We surely got a raw deal there. The Commissioner asked us why Northern Ireland Ministers did not submit proposals. That vital point must be ventilated in the House.

Mr. Marshall: I readily accept the hon. Gentleman's point, which reinforces my own.

The regional secretary of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union in the Province, Mr. John Freeman, said:

"It is becoming increasingly difficult to attribute the Republic's success in attracting structural funds to its low GDP. The Inter-Parliamentary Committee report"—

to which I referred—

"indicates that Portugal and Greece will only receive 687 and 672 ecus per head respectively. Yet these are undoubtedly the poorest countries within the Community. In the case of Northern Ireland, perhaps there is scope for looking at the quality of the projects put forward. Certainly, in the Republic, there is a much greater scale of consultation over projects . . . If Northern Ireland is to survive the intensely more competitive conditions post 1992, we require more than moral exhortations from Government to compete better, we need a complete re-examination of our relationship with Brussels and better bids for a bigger proportion of the structural funds".

The Opposition agree with those comments, but far more effort must be put into attracting increased levels of structural fund expenditure into the Province. What must be done to improve the long-term economic prospects in the Province?

[Mr. Marshall]

The Minister for Public Transport, who wound up the previous debate said that the Government were prepared to accept the need for a co-ordinated and comprehensive strategy. I remind the Government that such an economic strategy is also required if there is to be any long-term economic development in the Province. First, such a strategy must include a proper level of investment in high quality training and retraining and it must ensure that resources are targeted efficiently, and not just in terms of the industrial development board's dubious definition of competitiveness. We must ensure that real employment opportunities are created in all geographical areas of the Province.

Secondly, the strategy must ensure that the Province receives its proper share of the European Community's structural funds and that those funds are genuinely additional to existing levels of public expenditure. Thirdly, as part of a coherent and comprehensive strategy, there is a need to combine the functions of the IDB and the Local Enterprise Development Unit to provide a single, one-stop development agency.

Fourthly, as I said earlier, there is a clear need to impose a legal obligation on all employers to provide training. Unless there is such a co-ordinated, coherent policy, Northern Ireland will continue to lose out and could be further devastated by events after 1992.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will have noted that the Minister took only 18 minutes to open the debate. I shall make my contribution by not speaking at all. I wonder if it would meet with your wishes if I were to suggest that all right hon. and hon. Members tried to limit their speeches to 16 minutes, so that everyone who wished to speak could be called.

Mr. Marshall: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the Opposition so wished, they would have had the right to wind up the debate. On this occasion —as on previous occasions—we do not intend to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair will follow the conventions in these matters. I am equally grateful to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux). He will recognise that the Chair has no authority on such occasions to limit speeches, but I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will heed the wise advice, for which I am sure that we are grateful.

7.42 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I shall not make any promises about time, but I shall try to set a good example, as example is better than precept. It is all right for an hon. Member who is not going to speak to read us a homily on time, but we accept it in the spirit in which it was given. The debate can last until 11.30 pm, and I should think that we would want to take every moment of that precious time to debate the issues.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) for raising issues which are of great importance to Northern Ireland's economy. We have serious problems, and we must face up to them. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is now experiencing what we have been experiencing in Northern Ireland. In spite of all the eulogies paid to it, the Common Market will not solve our economic ills or bring us prosperity and employment.

I remember what the former leader of the Conservative party said when campaigning for us to join the Common Market. He said that we should have no more unemployment, that we should enter a vast market which was just waiting for the ability, talent and skills of the British people to take it over. We never had unemployment to the extent that we now have until we joined the Common Market.

The report to which the hon. Member for Leicester, South referred makes solemn reading for us all. If we lose 40,000 more jobs in 1992 and in the following years, the situation will be grave. The Common Market struck a tremendous blow to Ulster's agriculture-based economy. Intensive farming was reduced by almost two thirds because we could not buy animal feed at a competitive price. Therefore, the intensive farming sector was hammered.

Shipbuilding and man-made fibres also come under the axe as a result of the Common Market's policy. There was a time when Northern Ireland produced 30 per cent. of all the man-made fibres in the United Kingdom, but that industry has practically gone. We received a body blow when we joined the Common Market, and we shall continue to receive such blows.

It will be noted that the three Northern Irish Members of the European Parliament have campaigned strongly for our fair share of the structural funds, but we did not get our fair share. We were diddled out of everything, because the 8 per cent. only covers inflation, which takes us back to where we started. It is no use saying that the Community recognises us as an objective 1 area when it is of no benefit to us.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Leicester, South highlighted what the Republic has been receiving. I have been highlighting that for years and shall continue to do so. The time has come when Northern Ireland should at least get back what it puts in. It does not get back what it puts in per head of its citizens. That is an important point. I do not know why the Departments are not eager to have the co-operation of their Members of the European Parliament. I have been in Europe for 10 years, but I and my two colleagues have only once been brought to Stormont and consulted on one matter.

In those 10 years, the Departments have not been prepared to use the representatives from Northern Ireland. When we make our representations, we make them in a vacuum, because we have to find out what proposals are being suggested. I should have thought that the time had come when the Departments in Northern Ireland should make up their minds that they will get the money which is theirs by right.

I trust that there will be a Damascus road experience. We could call it a Brussels road experience, except that I do not like Brussels. The Minister needs to be converted. I welcome to the Dispatch Box his colleague, the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who represents agriculture. Northern Ireland's agricultural interests should never have been represented by a Member of the other place. Agriculture should be represented here, so that we can get at the Minister and the Minister can get at us; we can then have a fair exchange.

I do not go along with the spokesman of the Ulster Farmers Union, who said that it was all right for a

Member of the House of Lords to be responsible for agriculture. With all due respect to the upper House, I believe that the man who speaks for Northern Ireland's agricultural interests should be in this House, so that elected representatives can deal with these issues.

I am not raising matters tonight in order of priority; some of the most important matters will come later. I will take matters as they appear in the order. Agriculture is in a state of suspense, as I am sure the Minister recognises. We do not know what will happen. We had a visit from the Commissioner, but I do not know whether anybody was much wiser after he left Northern Ireland. One point that I do know—I will repeat what I have said before in the House—is that politics is being played with agriculture in Europe. When politics comes into it, we cannot expect a fair deal for the farming community—certainly not for the Ulster farming community.

We all hear about small farms. Small farmers in Northern Ireland said, "We are going to be all right." Small farms in Europe are not 50 acres, 60 acres or 70 acres. They are pocket farms, some of only five acres, which grow a few rubbishy tobacco weeds. They will be highly subsidised as a result of future changes. The money will go to them and not to people who make their sole living out of farming. We have a serious problem in Northern Ireland, because people are being forced to leave the land. When a nation's toilers on the soil are forced to leave, it is a bad omen. We must do something.

The Under-Secretary of State has come new to Northern Ireland, so he may not be conditioned by the general talk of the Northern Ireland Office, which, as we know, has a bad influence on Ministers. He has a fresh mind, and he will work with good staff in the Department of Agriculture. I had the privilege of being chairman of the agriculture committee, so I know the staff there.

I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will be a fighter for Northern Irish farming in Europe. We need a fighter. The Labour Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Mr. Silkin, was a fighter for the farmers. They called him the thug of Europe. The Minister needs to be a thug to deal with some of the thugs in farming with whom we have to deal in Europe. I will add nothing to my comments, because I am keeping my eye on the clock. I know that the Minister belongs to a denomination to which I do not belong, and that it believes in short sermons. My congregation believes in a proper sermon. A sermonette makes Christianettes, but a sermon makes good Christians. I am not in the business of making Christianettes.

We expect the Minister to tell us something about progress on the difficult problem of fallen stock. It is not a problem that is isolated in Northern Ireland because it extends across the United Kingdom. I am sure that the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), who is the sole Conservative Back Bencher here tonight, will also be interested in that problem.

I am sure that the Minister knows that we are approaching the time when the problem will reach its apex, so we need to hear something from the Minister. I am sure that my colleagues, on the Government Benches and on the Opposition Benches, are aware of the problem. I believe that I can speak even for those colleagues on the Opposition Benches who do not fly the same flag that I fly on 12 July. I trust that we shall have a positive response from the Minister tonight. If he cannot tell us that he has the full answer, he can encourage us by convincing us that he is going in the right direction.

We are all worried about why the good chairman of the electricity board resigned. We all wonder what is happening. He has always been a friend of Northern Ireland. He is a man in whom I have the utmost confidence, and I shall be glad to hear the Minister's response on that problem. Can the Minister give me some idea tonight about what will happen on Rathlin island? The chairman was a good supporter of the Rathlin islanders. He met us and helped us, and I trust that his passing does not mean that the Government will write an obituary on the prospect of getting light and heat to the people of Rathlin island.

It is no use having back-up health and social services if we do not have the foundations—the hospitals that are needed. If the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will have something to say about Moyle hospital. I want to record my support for the campaign which has been waged for that hospital in Larne, which has the support of all right-thinking people in the area. We thank the hon. Member for Leicester, South for putting his weight behind that campaign.

I want to raise a matter that affects my area and which also impinges on the area of the person who was forgotten —the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross). I am sure that the hon. Member for Leicester, South did not mean to leave him out, even though he has crossed swords with him quite often.

Mr. Jim Marshall: I apologise to the House for the omission.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I thank the hon. Gentleman. I am sure that his apology has been received in the good spirit in which it has been given.

Other areas are having new hospitals. Indeed, some areas are having two new hospitals. The area that I represent has been bereft of all investment in new hospitals. What have we? A building in the area was to have a facelift. The hospital was built in 1861. It would take some cosmetics to give it a facelift. Would anyone bother to give a facelift to a woman of 25?

Mr. Peter Robinson: Speak for the women of your own acquaintance.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am sure that the ladies of my own company would agree that if they started with the powder and paint after only 25 years, they would not do too well. Even a bachelor like my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) agrees with that. I see that the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley is in full agreement with that. In 1841——

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Sixty-one?

Rev. Ian Paisley: No 1841—1641 was when all the Protestants were murdered and put into the Bann. It must be on my hon. Friend's mind. I know a little about history.

The Minister should think of what the wise man, the noble Lord who was responsible in another place, but who lost his job, said about Coleraine hospital—that it was a "shambles". Yet it has been suggested that it should be given a facelift. Both Ballymoney hospital, which was opened in 1841, and the Coleraine hospital, which is part

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

of the same hospital area and was opened in 1861, were workhouses. They remain open as hospitals, with a lot of nissen huts around them. It is a disgrace. *[Interruption.]*

I see that the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) is getting a little impatient. He will just have to wait. He is not in the Newtownabbey council now. He is in the House of Commons and he will have to wait and remember that we are fighting in a life and death struggle to get proper hospitalisation for our people. Moyle council is a strange conglomerate, made up of independents, people who call themselves independent nationalists and others. They have all come together to say that we need this hospital, along with Ballymoney and Coleraine council. They all say that the time has come.

If I went through the history of what has happened, I am sure that the House would be amazed. There has been nothing but report after report and expenditure after expenditure on this hospital area. What has happened? Nothing. The final report, which I have here, has proved conclusively that the only viable way forward is a new building on a new site.

I must warn the Minister, because it worried me when he told our lobby that the new board would have to make a decision on this matter. The present board will be meeting at the end of the month to make a decision, and I trust that the Minister will tell the new board to carry out that decision. We do not want the matter to be reconsidered, and I do not believe that statutorily it should be. I believe that the law says that the board should make the decision. I know that the Minister can say, quite rightly that he cannot make a decision until he has had the board's decision—if I were in his place, I would say that. I accept that, but when he has the board's decision we want him to move as quickly as possible.

I remind the Minister that the Public Accounts Committee said that there was too great a delay in building hospitals. If he goes by the Committee's guidelines, they will forward the work. I shall not read the guidelines, because I do not want my colleague the hon. Member for Antrim, South to worry any more. He might have a heart attack, and then he would need hospitalisation.

If the Minister does not have this report, I shall gladly give him a free copy with my compliments, so that he can move forward as quickly as possible.

I am not doing too badly: 16 minutes is just up and I am coming near to the end of my speech.

Mr. Trimble: It has been over 20 minutes.

Rev. Ian Paisley: No, it has not been over 20. The hon. Gentleman is misreading the clock. His glasses are not clean.

There was a serious flood in the Ballycastle area. At first, when the Minister came to visit us, he told us that we would get nothing. That Minister is no longer with us. I am grateful that the Commissioner, Mr. MacSharry—I must give honour where honour is due—showed the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), Mr. Nicholson and my other two colleagues how we could get money. The Government took that route, and Ballycastle got the money.

I am not being churlish, but I noticed that the statement did not pay any tribute to what the MEP did. That went down the river. However, the Government paid tribute to themselves for getting the money. I do not care about compliments. I am happy as long as I get the money for people in the Ballycastle area.

I am glad that we got that money for those farmers, but all the other people who suffered got nothing—not a penny. The Government have written to tell me that they do not think that they will give any money. I have here a list of people who have lost. One man has lost £3,658·74; another has lost £3,891; another has lost £3,900; and a lady has lost £4,973. I could go right down this list. I have sent it to the Secretary of State, who has all the facts before him.

Those people have been told that they will not get one penny to pay for damage to their houses. Some of them were insured and the insurance companies are paying out, although they could have said that the flood was an act of God and that they would not pay. However, there will be a serious gap.

What has the Department of Health and Social Services done? The Department has already offered people on supplementary benefit a £500 loan, but it has told them that they will have to pay it back. These decent people have said that they are not in a position to pay anything, so they have not asked for a loan.

I went to one of the homes affected—I shall not mention any names—and asked whether anyone from the Northern Ireland Office had been to visit them. They answered, "Yes." I said, "What did they ask?" They told me that the Office had asked them to send a full list of all their losses. I asked whether the Office had made any promises about paying and was told, "No, not in so many words."

Will the Minister seek some payment for these people—especially those on supplementary benefit, who are unable to raise money to refurbish their houses—to carry them over and to bridge the gulf?

Rev. William McCrea: Will my hon. Friend refresh the Minister's memory? In recent times, there were floods in Omagh and Strabane, when people faced similar problems. Perhaps the Minister would give due consideration to repayments to those people too.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Yes, I urge the Minister to do so. I know that his colleagues will tell him that we are seriously worried about these matters.

I do not want to delay the House or to prevent other colleagues from speaking, although I doubt whether they will take up all the time that they have at their disposal. Nevertheless, we shall give them the opportunity to do so.

We have heard a little about culture tonight. We have also heard something about money. I should like to think that, when money is given, it would be for wholesome, clean and edifying culture. I am alarmed at what has happened recently in Newtownabbey, when a film was shown which is a blasphemous and scurrilous attack upon the purity and sinfulness of the son of God.

To depict Him in a sexual fantasy as he dies for our redemption on the cross is repugnant to all right-thinking people in our Province.

I am aghast that the Arts Council should stoop so low as to sponsor this film festival and put advertisements in the local paper seeking to involve people who were not involved. It was said that Calor Gas was one of its sponsors of this film and it had to place an advertisement saying that it had not sponsored the film at all. It was said

that the mayor of Newtonabbey council was to be the special guest. Anybody who knows Councillor Fraser Agnew knows that of all people he would not be at such a festival. Of course the council did not sponsor the film. Those people were used as a cloak to make it appear that everything was respectable. We tried to get in touch with the vice-chancellor of the university, but he was away and nobody was in charge.

Government money to promote community relations should be spent on wholesome things that edify the mind and do not cause moral and religious insults to large sectons of the community. I hope that I carry the Minister with me on that. When such things are done, we should know about them and know all the facts. There should be no cover-up, lying or cheating about the matter, as was done in this instance.

I hope that the Minister will look carefully at what is happening to disabled people in Housing Executive property. The disabled should have the facilities they need. I have some cases with the Housing Executive in which a firm promise was made that, because of disablement, a downstairs toilet and downstairs bedroom accommodation would be provided. The people were then told by the executive that it was short of money and that such facilities could not now be provided. The matter is now on the long finger. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I note that some other Northern Ireland Members agree with me.

Such a matter is trying and serious. It is a big enough disaster to have a handicapped child in the home. Nobody knows the pressures on a parent or on a family, and I speak from pastoral experience. People are promised that proper accommodation will bring about an easement and their hopes are built up, only to be shattered. The Minister should have a look at that with the Housing Executive. In its care of the disabled and in its help for those families with disablement in their midst, the executive should be an example to all housing authorities.

8.13 pm

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) spoke about Northern Ireland Electricity. The Minister suggested that it will be privatised by Order in Council rather than by a Bill. Such a change in energy supply is fundamental. It affects everyone in the Province, from the newly born to the most senior citizen. To suggest that it should be taken through the House by Order in Council, a procedure with which no Northern Ireland Member agrees and which means that we cannot have full debate or table amendments to alter the proposal in any way, is almost beyond belief.

Many things about electricity privatisation need to be debated. We need to decide whether to split generation and distribution. It is not good enough simply to suggest a change from a public monopoly to a private monopoly. I am shocked by the Minister's suggestion of an Order in Council.

It is serious that the chairman of Northern Ireland Electricity should have stepped down at this stage. One wonders about the reason for his decision. Will the Minister reconsider this matter, which is of fundamental importance to the people of Northern Ireland? The principle has never been debated and the matter should be encompassed in a Bill.

I wish to deal with a problem regarding British Airways. The tourist industry has become smaller and there are fewer flights. The recent difficulties of Air Europe have left people overseas unable to get home. British Airways has served Northern Ireland well. It has operated from there for many years, while other companies have come and gone. We have great sympathy for that airline. However, we are disappointed that British Airways is to cut jobs in Northern Ireland. We had hoped that cuts would take place at the centre rather than on the periphery and that costs would be cut at Heathrow or elsewhere on the mainland.

We have spoken to British Airways officials in Northern Ireland and have been reassured that there will be no change in the security operation there. Security will be as tight and as good as it has always been at Aldergrove international airport, which is in my constituency. Security at Aldergrove is second to none and is an example to airports in other parts of the world.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Although I agree with the thrust and tenor of the hon. Gentleman's speech, before he heaps too much praise on British Airways, does he agree that many of us who have been coming to the House for many years know that British Airways was doing next to nothing for travellers coming to London until British Midland came on the scene and made British Airways pull up its socks?

Mr. Forsythe: I understand the hon. Gentleman's argument, but I was making the point that as there has been press comment on the subject, it would be most unfortunate if the travelling public came to believe that there will be a fall in security standards among any of the operators whose aircraft leave from Belfast for other parts of the world. We should be reassured by British Airway's pledge that its security will be as good as it has ever been. I will not comment on the hon. Gentleman's other remark, but I support the concept of competition in the travel industry.

I recently asked in a parliamentary question how many estates in my constituency that had been completed for at least 12 months had roads or footpaths that remain unadopted. The Minister replied that four Northern Ireland Housing Executive developments fell into that category, as well as about 40 private developments.

Every building contractor must lodge a bond when he starts to develop an estate, and the Department of the Environment has the power to use that money to complete unadopted roads or footpaths at the developer's expense. I recently contacted the relevant Department about a small stretch of footpath on an estate in Ballyclare that has remained unadopted for 12 years, and was told that it would be dealt with, not this year, but in the next financial year—despite the fact that the DoE holds a bond for that work.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is a disgrace that people who move into an estate that continues to be developed for three years are expected to pay the full amount of the rates levied on their homes, when they can gain access to them only be wearing heavy, waterproof winter boots? Their carpeting and homes are continually made filthy as their children run in and out, because the roads and footpaths outside have not been made up, and do not have even a rough, basic foundation of tarmac. The Government and Northern

[Mr. Roy Beggs]

Ireland Ministers should take action to ensure that new home owners are not subjected to that nuisance for such a long period.

Mr. Forsythe: I cannot but agree with my hon. Friend. On certain estates, builders do not complete two or three houses for various reasons, and the plots concerned are turned into dumps, to which people will travel for miles to dispose of their rubbish. Because a developer has not completed an estate, and cannot be made to do so, those who already occupy properties on it find that the value of their homes is falling—even though the rating valuation office does not agree. I hope that the Minister will examine that aspect, too.

In another parliamentary question, I asked how many planning enforcements there have been in my constituency over the past few years. The Minister replied that there were two in 1987, four in 1988, and five in 1989. In 10 cases giving rise to problems of which I am aware, the Department is not enforcing planning conditions in five of them—and in the other five, there are difficulties because the Department is trying to do so. By a strange coincidence, most of the cases that the Department is trying to enforce involve individuals, whereas those that it seems incapable of enforcing involve large firms that are capable of taking on the Department, which is farcical. I understand that new proposals are contained in a planning order that will come before the House, but there is little point in introducing legislation if the Department will not enforce it.

It has been suggested that there will be administrative changes to the Royal Mail service in Northern Ireland, and that it will not be operated as independently as it is now. One can understand the Royal Mail wanting to make improvements, but I hope that those concerned will remember that Northern Ireland is unique in many ways and that it faces special difficulties that are not experienced in the rest of the United Kingdom. In those circumstances, it is essential that Northern Ireland retains local control of its postal services, while trying to effect general economies of the sort that the Royal Mail wants to see made.

As other hon. Members wish to speak, I shall end there.

8.27 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): It is appropriate that the first part of the order deals with agriculture, because agriculture forms Northern Ireland's economic and social backbone. Agriculture sustains not just wealth and job creation, but the fabric of our community. I was interested to hear the opening remarks of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), when he spoke of the crisis confronting Northern Ireland's farming community vis-a-vis the fortunes of other participants in the European Community's grant aid programme.

There is currently an income crisis in Northern Ireland's agricultural industry, brought about by a substantial increase in production costs at a time when net profits have been substantially reduced. That situation has been aided and abetted by the peripheral situation in which the industry finds itself in respect of its markets and imports.

The problems are so acute as to justify a departure from the Government's general strategy at Brussels. If Northern Ireland is to sustain the fabric of not only its agricultural industry but rural society, it is important that it should now be treated as a very special region. At a time when there is so much talk about rural regeneration it should be realised that a rural community cannot be regenerated if its livelihood is destroyed.

Much has been said about the produce of the land; let me say something about the produce of the sea. The fishing industry is especially important to my constituency and I am particularly interested in the harbour development in Ardglass and the hoped-for development in Kilkeel. I was surprised and disappointed to hear the Minister say that there had been a delay in the harbour works owing to a lack of uptake of the available resources. As he knows, Ardglass harbour has experienced no major capital improvement for many years. His predecessor approved expenditure of £1·4 million last year, but a continuing study has identified a larger figure—approximately £2 million. I should like the Government to provide that money as soon as possible.

Dr. Mawhinney: As the hon. Gentleman probably knows, it was necessary to re-examine the design of the sea wall. That is what caused the delay. He will be pleased to learn that the development is now at tender stage.

Mr. McGrady: That is welcome news, which will give heart to the fishermen of Ardglass. They were very nervous about the prospect of facing another winter in such bad conditions. Kilkeel has similar difficulties, and a programme is needed to safeguard the increased number of vessels that are berthing there.

The Department of Health and Social Security should look particularly at the problems faced by fishermen out of season, or in bad weather, when they cannot generate the income that is needed to sustain themselves and their families, and often cannot obtain sufficient benefit to top up that insufficient income. I know that the Department was considering their difficulties not so long ago, and I hope that its considerations will bear fruit soon.

I want to deal next with votes 1 and 2, in respect of the Department of Economic Development. I was encouraged to hear from the Minister that—against the tide, as it were—there have been many success stories in relation to industrial development; unfortunately, my constituency cannot boast a share in that alleged prosperity. As the records show, in three years the invitees of the Industrial Development Board made only 10 visits to the entire districts of Down, Banbridge—with the permission of the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble)—and Mourne. That does not constitute a fair or adequate attempt to distribute the wealth represented by inward investment to areas that have suffered such deprivations.

A terrible plight now afflicts the yarn spinners of South Down, especially those employed by Castlewellan Yarns and Killyleagh Yarns, which are experiencing a very difficult period. One of those firms proposes a virtual closedown in June 1991. Only a short time ago, the IDB proferred some £6 million for the complete rebuilding of a factory in Castlewellan, and the equipping of that factory with the most up-to-date machinery. The employees were told then, and have been told recently, that the order books were full; if that is true, why the rundowns and closures? The position merits investigation at the highest level.

Vote 2—and possibly vote 3; my copy of the document jumps from vote 2 to vote 4, and I assume that all the other

copies do the same—deals with tourism, potentially the second biggest industry in Northern Ireland and the provider of hope for the future. The indicative plan published recently by the Northern Ireland tourist board is imaginative, but requires urgent, indeed instant, implementation, backed up by a positive attitude—and funds—from the Department of Economic Development.

I have always been surprised by the failure of the board to draw on the enormous potential of the Mourne and St. Patrick's country area, which has such emotive associations not only for the North American continent —to which we look for tourist development—but for Europe, many of whose cities have direct ties with the area because of the founding fathers who did their missionary work there. That connection should be pursued: European tourism is every bit as good as, and perhaps more reliable than North American tourism. The tourist board should produce a comprehensive plan, akin to the plan that has existed for years for Fermanagh lakes and the north Antrim coast, to tap that hitherto untapped source.

We cannot, however, achieve anything in that regard without a positive attitude to the provision of low-cost accommodation. The Minister must reconsider the attitude of the planning departments in relation to areas of outstanding natural beauty, sites of special scientific interest and so forth. If he examines the topography of South Down, or consults a map, he will find that there is nowhere else where accommodation can be built; while the position is sensitive, that accommodation should and must be made available.

Rural planning—or, rather, rural regeneration—seems to be the flavour of the year. The interdepartmental committee, now headed by the Department of Agriculture, has a report ready, while the Housing Executive has a report prepared on the regeneration of housing in the countryside. All that will come to naught, however, if the planning departments have not the drive, energy and foresight to adopt a creative attitude. In our debate last year, I asked the Minister to examine the project for Seaconnell, which is in the North of the South Down area, and epitomises what can and should be done to regenerate the countryside.

I shall touch briefly on vote 1, on housing. From the report of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the statistics contained in it, it appeared that the new build programme is inadequate, irrespective of arguments to the contrary. New houses are being built where they are not needed, rather than where they are needed. Recent legislation on homelessness has created a further demand for resources by the Housing Executive which has not been met; certainly the Housing Executive has not been able to respond sympathetically to those who come to its offices complaining that they have no homes. Most are sent away without advice or sustenance.

I welcome the Housing Executive's fine new study on rural housing. It is only at the consultative stage. I hope that the Minister will encourage the Housing Executive quickly to come to terms with its report and prepare policy programmes for implementation.

I congratulate the hon. Members for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) on their campaigns in respect of the Larne and Coleraine hospitals. I attended a meeting at Downpatrick in 1966 that was chaired by the then health Minister, Bill Morgan. He promised a new hospital for Downpatrick. Perhaps, 30 years later, that will come to fruition. We are not asking for a multi-million pound hospital. I ask the Minister to ensure that the Department does not say that that is a board responsibility, while the board says that it is the Department's responsibility.

The standard of health in Northern Ireland is a ministerial and departmental responsibility. The boards do not have the money; they can obtain it only from the Department. I ask it to provide us with the £10 million to £14 million for the new hospital. It is only a small amount. The programme is already two thirds accomplished, with the completion of the geriatric unit and the maternity hospital. It would be a pity to spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar; £14 million is just that, if one considers the size of the Department of Health and Social Services budget.

We are faced with the threatened closure of many small rural schools in South Down. Unnecessary pressure is being exerted on schools such as Ballyclougan, a primary school in Saintfield. Both in the state and maintained sectors closures are threatened. I understand that the Southern Board has made comprehensive plans to close many rural schools in the Mourne mountains area of South Down. There is no point in a rural regeneration programme, under which all the Departments attempt to tackle rural degradation, unless the focal points of communities are retained—the school, the church, the village shop and the pub. Unless rural schools are retained, families will move away from the countryside and the efforts of all the other Departments will never bring them back.

It is inexplicable that the Department has no museums policy, other than that for the national museum. The argument is that because there is no museums policy, no budget is required. I ask the Minister to adopt a comprehensive policy for museums.

The Under-Secretary of State is now responsible for social security. It is difficult for families in need to satisfy the Department that they qualify for family credit. They have difficulty with the forms and with answering the many departmental questionnaires. I ask the Minister to draw on his professional experience as an accountant and himself to inquire how people in his Department can ask so many silly questions. How can he expect the people, in his Department who do not know the difference between capital and income, between expenditure and receipts to deal with these issues? They should try to get down to basics and provide aid for those who so obviously need it, by the very reason that they have applied for it.

8.44 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I intend to make only a few points arising out of the appropriation order so that other hon. Members can participate in the debate.

Much has been said about hospitals in other parts of Northern Ireland. I intend to refer to the hospitals in North Down. I repeat the demand that I have made many times before for a new hospital for the whole area of North Down, which includes not only the Bangor area but also Newtownards and the Ards peninsula. I am, however, a realist. It may be some time before that hospital is built. We may have to wait for the restoration of a devolved Parliament in Stormont before that decision is made. Pending the building of that hospital, plenty of money will need to be spent on the existing hospitals in Newtownards and Bangor.

[Mr. James Kilfedder]

The people of Bangor want their hospital to remain a general hospital. Some beds in Bangor hospital were closed recently by the Eastern health board. Those closures were described by the board as temporary, but I believe that it is part of a process that has been going for a considerable time. Bed closures result in a reduction in the number of doctors and nurses in a hospital. The board seems intent on running down Bangor hospital so that it is no longer viable as a general hospital but becomes merely a geriatric hospital. The people of Bangor, through me, protest at that possibility. My demand is that Bangor hospital should be brought up to standard as a modern general hospital which can provide medical services for nearly 100,000 people. The hospital serves a wide area and the number of people in that area who have reached retirement age continues to grow.

The North Down Volunteer Bureau is a limited company and a registered charity which provides volunteering opportunities for unemployed people and a range of community care services in the area. It is one of a number of groups which receive funds from the training and employment agency through the community volunteering scheme. It has recently been informed that the scheme's budget for 1991-92 for the whole of Northern Ireland has been reduced from £854,000 to £600,000. That considerable reduction in financial help will have an adverse effect on the scheme, which provides such a useful service to the entire community in Northern Ireland.

The community volunteering scheme provides volunteering opportunities for unemployed men and women between the ages of 18 and 64. It enrols suitable candidates to work for the good of the community. It restores self-confidence and a sense of achievement to unemployed people who are accepted by the scheme. It provides valuable training and supervision. It enables young people to decide whether they wish to pursue a career in social work. Above all, the scheme fosters community spirit and strengthens communities.

The trained volunteers make home and hospital visits and provide transport and other practical help, wherever possible, for senior citizens and for chronically ill and mentally and physically handicapped persons. In addition, they are involved in working with children and providing support for one-parent families. It is a worthwhile charitable organisation. The decision to reduce the funding available to it means, in the case of the North Down Volunteer Bureau, a reduction from £57,000 to £24,000 in the coming financial year. That hefty reduction in funding will have major repercussions on the community care work of that charitable organisation. I urge the Minister to review that decision, so that its valuable work can continue.

I can vouch for the needs of the elderly, who are trying to survive on a pension which does not adequately cover food, clothing and heating costs. They deserve to be able to live out their retirement years in dignity and comfort. The Government do not appreciate that senior citizens in Northern Ireland experience difficulty because the cost of living in the Province is far higher than in the rest of the United Kingdom. Electricity costs are much higher, and some pensioners' homes are heated only by electricity. During the extremely cold period, I visited pensioners who were burning only one bar of an electric fire because they could not afford to burn two. Inadequate heating of their homes, and of their bedrooms in particular, is not good for their health. I urge the Government to consider their plight.

I urge the Government to ensure also that all pensioners are provided with concessionary television licences. The present anomalies are a denial of natural justice and are ridiculous in their application. All pensioners living alone or with other pensioners should be eligible for a concessionary television licence.

I tabled a parliamentary question urging the Government to establish an independent environmental protection agency in Northern Ireland, as recommended by the Select Committee on the Environment in its excellent report on Northern Ireland. Such an agency is urgently needed in the Province, where there have been many instances of environmental damage. It is vital to contend with the all too powerful influence of developers and speculators, who are interested only in fat profits and have no sympathy for the environment.

I have advocated many times a change in the law to enable an objector to a planning application to pursue an appeal to the planning appeals commission. The law favours the developer or speculator, who can take his application to apeal if it is refused. Many times, local residents have satisfied the planning department that an application would be detrimental to their area, but subsequently it has been allowed on appeal by the planning appeals commission.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kilfedder: The hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity to speak shortly. I am trying to allow other hon. Members the chance to speak.

Confidence in the planning process must be restored. That will be achieved only by ensuring that the Department of the Environment is seen as capable of defending the public interest and safeguarding the environment. The Department may have to employ more people in its planning office. The planning office in Downpatrick has more work than its officials can contend with.

Bregenz house continues to be built on Bangor sea front without full planning permission. That is offensive to those who respect the laws and expect others to respect them. Why has no stop notice been issued? Will one be issued shortly? The Minister responsible for the planning section of the Department of the Environment arranged for one of his officials to discuss the matter with me, and I met him on Friday afternoon with representatives of other aspects of life in Bangor. I urge the Minister, who is seized of the planning application for Bregenz house—it is no longer a matter for Downpatrick planning office, but for the Minister—to meet some of the people of Bangor, who are anxious that the structure should be removed. That was set out clearly in a petition that I presented to the House on behalf of more than 5,500 people. Thousands more people would have signed it but for the fact that it had to be rushed in before planning permission was granted.

I congratulate members of the Dundonald Green Belt Association for their energetic work in safeguarding the environment. They deserve the congratulations and commendation of the people of Dundonald and elsewhere. They made representations to the Minister, who met some of them in January. Sadly, however, they have seen the

radical alteration of the Dundonald area, where green hills, fields trees and hedges are being replaced by more and more houses densely packed into a number of developments.

I join the Dundonald Green Belt Association in recommending to the Government the suspension of the proposed 1993 Belfast urban area plan land release, and a review of the necessity of releasing the full acreage. Some of the land earmarked for housing under the urban plan should be returned to the green belt area. Something must be done to preserve the rural aspect of Dundonald. It is imperative that a local area plan be produced for Dundonald, which is a distinct entity.

The Minister stated that a local plan was never envisaged by the Department of the Environment,

"as it is considered that the village and its environment are adequately covered in the Belfast urban area plan 2001."

But that is not true. No attempt has been made to plan for the expanding population of the area or for new and larger schools and proper recreation facilities. Plans must be prepared urgently. I am thinking in particular of the people of Ballybeen, who lack the facilities which would make that large housing estate more agreeable and acceptable to its inhabitants. More must be done for the young people of the area, who need such facilities.

Tullycarnet housing estate is another large housing estate which lacks soul. The Government must spend money on it to bring it up to standard and to ensure that its people have proper facilities and that its young people have recreational facilities which will keep them usefully employed and out of the hands of the police. I urge the Government carefully to consider Tullycarnet and Ballybeen to see what can be done.

8.58 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I welcome the extra provision in vote 1 to the Department of the Environment for the road casualty reduction unit.

Since 1980, there have been 328 accidents on the Larne-Belfast road. One hundred and thirty-five people have been seriously injured and 20 people have lost their lives. Eighteen of those 20 deaths have occurred since 1985. A nephew of mine was one of those killed, and I have known many of the others personally, so I know the sorrow and loss of such a tragedy to the families involved.

The Larne-Belfast road serves the port of Larne, which is now the second busiest port in the United Kingdom and the busiest port in Northern Ireland. Between 8,000 and 14,000 vehicles use the road every day, yet 15 km remains single carriageway and only 5·5 km is dual carriageway. The Department of the Environment may argue that the dual carriageway is where the flow of traffic is heaviest, which may be true, but 14,000 vehicles must come from somewhere to reach the small piece of dual carriageway. Most get there after 15 km of inadequate single carriageway.

The road has not undergone any substantial reconstruction since the 1960s, when the number of passenger cars using the port was fewer than 100,000 a year. Now, the number of passenger cars travelling to and from the port stands at 350,000 a year. More than 800 cars and vans use the road to the port every day, as do an enormous number of articulated lorries, coaches and buses —about a further 350,000 a year. In the summer months, the level of passenger vehicles using the road to the harbour increases further. Car or van-accompanied travel continues to increase. It is predicted that the number of articulated vehicles will increase. More than 95 per cent. of Northern Ireland tourist car and passenger traffic travels by Larne, and therefore must use the Larne-Belfast road, which has been so neglected.

Larne harbour is an extremely modern ferry terminal, with shops, buffet lounges, commercial driver lounges, foreign currency exchanges, car hire facilities and a tourist information desk. We have everything that the visitor could want, except good roads to and from the port.

Larne Harbour Ltd. has ample land for further development. We all welcome the recent announcement that about 70 acres at Redlands will be further developed for warehousing, distribution, commercial and service facilities, and possibly a hotel development. A large area of land is leased to Larne Harbour at the harbour. One has no disagreement with that whatever—it is accepted—but before that land is transferred outright by the Industrial Development Board to Larne Harbour, the IDB should seek from Larne Harbour the equivalent in land to the value of that valuable site at the Redlands estate.

Although the company may plan to encourage further development of that site, the restrictions which it may impose on developers will be less attractive than the conditions that the IDB may offer developers. It is important that we see that development, and even more important that we see continued progress and development of the Larne-Belfast road.

We must bear in mind the growing numbers of visitors to the area. Last year, the port handled 1·6 million passengers, most of whom used the Larne-Belfast road. But the lack of development and of improvement of the road has definitely contributed to many serious accidents and to some of the deaths. Recently, a young woman—an only child and a constituent of mine—was killed on the road when flooding from nearby fields on the single carriageway resulted in her crashing into oncoming traffic. That might not have happened had the road been dual carriageway.

Many of the accidents on the road involve articulated lorries. It makes no difference whether drivers on the road are local, and know it, or are strangers. The road is not safe, and it will not be safe or able to cope with the increasing volume of traffic until there is major reconstruction and upgrading.

I hope that the Minister can tell the House tonight that never again will the road service of the DOE and policemen from Ballyclare have to sandbag the roadway to prevent water from flooding on to it off the fields. I hope that the report paid for by Larne borough council and by local industry recommending upgrading of the road will be taken seriously.

We heard earlier about the imbalance of funding as between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. Because of the additional money available to the republic, it has planned all sorts of grandiose road schemes for routes from Dublin towards Northern Ireland and to the republic's ports. We in Northern Ireland, however, cannot obtain the financial support from the Northern Ireland Office, the Government or from Europe to ensure that the Larne-Belfast road is fit to cope with the growing volume of traffic on it. I hope that the Minister will have some good news to give us.

Under DHSS vote 1, table 3, I am sure that the Minister will have noted the considerable increase in funding that will be needed to complete Antrim hospital. Last year it

[Mr. Roy Beggs]

seemed that about £30 million would be needed; now it appears that £50 million will be needed. In Larne, we have an acute hospital that meets our needs. It is well staffed. Regional specialties are available for those who need them in Belfast, but 95 per cent. of patients receive the services they require in our local hospital. Proposals to transfer acute services from Moyle hospital have been rejected by elected representatives, by GPs and by the vast majority of people served by that hospital. The proposed scheme for the future of Moyle hospital is not accepted by the people it serves.

We feel that the consultation to date has been a total charade. The wishes of the local people have been ignored at the expense of the opinions of unelected persons serving on the boards, mainly ministerial nominees or perhaps consultants who have a special interest in the new Antrim hospital, because they perceive that it will offer them greater career opportunities. Those people are supporting and promoting Antrim hospital at the expense of Moyle hospital in Larne.

If a proper study was carried out and services between the northern and eastern boards were rationalised, savings in public expenditure would accrue and there could be a genuine reconsideration of the proposals for the future of Moyle hospital. I appeal to the Minister to support the retention of acute services at Moyle hospital until a full, impartial options appraisal is instituted by the Northern Health and Social Services Board and the Northern Ireland Office. We have made strenuous efforts to produce a convincing report, but we are not satisfied that it has been given proper consideration.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) and others have expressed concern about future employment opportunities in Northern Ireland. If one adds to the threat of a decline in job prospects the high birth rate in Northern Ireland, one sees that the situation can only get worse. The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) referred to the difficulties experienced by a yarn-spinning company in his constituency. Such problems occur because there is no proper integrated plan that involves the spinning, weaving, finishing and manufacturing of textiles in Northern Ireland—if there was, it might help.

There are many other issues that I want to address—for example, the quibble that has arisen about Department of Economic Development, vote 5. What advice has the Minister had from his consultants on the privatisation of Northern Ireland's electricity board? When are we going to know whether there will be any advantage from a privatised, profit-motivated electricity monopoly over the present, public-owned monopoly of electricity generation? Can the Minister tell us whether his consultants have advised him on the future of gas generation in Northern Ireland?

We have waited a long time to hear news of the interconnector. We are still waiting for an announcement on phase 2 at Kilroot. Not only are domestic consumers in Northern Ireland purchasing the most expensive electricity in the United Kingdom, but our industry is being decimated by the high costs that it must pay. It is vital that some action is taken. Sadly, many sites that would be suitable for hydro-electric generation, although perhaps only small amounts of it, have not been exploited. I hope that the Minister will encourage those who can do so to obtain a fair price for hydro-generated electricity and recoup the high capital cost of installing hydro-generators.

In the funds voted for education in vote 1, there is no provision for nursery education. It is deplorable that we have such a low level of provision of nursery schools in Northern Ireland as a whole. A gesture was made many years ago, but nothing has happened since then. However, if primary schools were permitted to use empty classrooms, the problem could be met to some extent.

Will the Minister bring us up to date on the position on subsidence from the salt mines in the Carrickfergus area, which is dealt with in vote 5? When is it likely that the roads that have had to be partially closed or whose use has been restricted because of subsidence will open again?

Although I could say more, I am conscious that many other hon. Members hope to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, so I shall end there.

9.16 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) twitted me about the problem of fallen stock. It is not a subject that is frequently raised in Wolverhampton, although as a farmer I understand a little about it. There are other problems frequently on the minds of people in Wolverhampton who, for 25 years, received a prolonged university course in the advantages of parliamentary sovereignty and the importance of retaining the integrity of the United Kingdom. People in Wolverhampton know that Northern Ireland is a constitutional slum and that poor Northern Ireland still retains the debris of previous mistakes.

On page 11 of the order, we see that £123,000 is being paid every year towards the maintenance of the Northern Ireland Assembly. It is not possible for the English colonial masters and their loyal subordinates in the Northern Ireland Office to recognise that they have made a mistake, and so it is that each decade brings a new initiative from the Northern Ireland Office and those who temporarily happen to be in nominal control of it, aimed at bringing the benefits of legislative devolution to Northern Ireland.

At the beginning of the 1970s, Stormont was abolished. There was an attempt at rolling devolution by Lord Prior, as he has now become, which gave rise to the Assembly on which we still spend £123,000 a year. Now we have the third initiative for the 1990s—the so-called Brooke initiative. All of them failed or will fail. All attempt that which is impossible. Now, as the corpse of the Brooke initiative occasionally kicks in its death throes, the various parties to the death walk around it, each hoping to be able to blame another for the death. Sadly, the poor thing was always likely to die, and it is difficult to see who can be justly blamed for its death—other than perhaps its father, the present Secretary of State, who has been so unwise as to give his name to it.

As one listens to this debate, it becomes more and more obvious that the brave attempt of the Northern Ireland Office—admittedly, much stimulated by American influence—to bring legislative devolution to Northern Ireland has failed. Is it not now clear that it would be in the interests of Northern Ireland to move towards a system in

which the Province received some of the benefits of Westminster government that the rest of the United Kingdom enjoys?

I remember an occasion which would not have occurred but for the expenditure on the Northern Ireland Assembly. The right to silence in Northern Ireland was being reduced, and in some circumstances obliterated, by Order in Council. Some people say that the constitutional nationalists approve of the Order in Council procedure. I do not understand that. I remember the anger that I and my kinsman the late Ian Gow felt on the night to which I refer. That procedure was a gross affront to the civil liberties of the people of Northern Ireland, particularly those who might be accused of so-called nationalist crimes —security crimes. The rights of those people were being taken away.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Can the hon. Gentleman explain why someone might be accused because he was a nationalist?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I must remind the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) that we are not dealing with Northern Ireland Office matters. It seems to me that the hon. Gentleman's remarks relate to the Northern Ireland Office, as distinct from Northern Ireland Departments.

Mr. Budgen: With great respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government persist in the Order in Council procedure because it is believed that we are about to have a new attempt at devolved government in Northern Ireland. The procedure is justified as being a temporary strategem. It has been demonstrated beyond peradventure that legislative devolution has failed. I therefore contend that it is unfair to Northern Ireland to persist in this highly defective system of altering people's rights by order in council.

With reference to the point made by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), I perhaps expressed myself badly. No doubt, from time to time, charges relating to security crimes are based on bad evidence. People who are charged are entitled to proper safeguards. The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh ought to have had an opportunity to argue against the special provisions by which the right to silence of people in Northern Ireland was reduced, but he was denied that right by the Order in Council procedure. That is a scandal and a disgrace.

In a debate such as this, many hon. Members speak about matters which in England would be the concern of local authorities—museums, housing and planning problems, and so on. In England, all such matters are dealt with in the first instance at local government level. It is surely a scandal that this so-called interim arrangement, which has gone on since the abolition of the Northern Ireland Parliament at the beginning of the 1970s, should be persisted in.

It is said that we now have the good fortune to have highly political leadership in the Conservative party. I hope that, rather than looking for future allies in the centre of the political spectrum, and rather than flirting with the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and his two outriders from London, the Government will accept our suggestions for measures to improve the government of Northern Ireland, which will be recognised justifiably as improvements and may attract the support of our old friends and allies in the Ulster Unionist party along with others, perhaps, in other parties within the Unionist family. That is the course towards which honour, intellect and interest should drive the Conservative party in the next few months.

9.25 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): We are debating supplementary estimates, but we must consider public expenditure as a whole in Northern Ireland. The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) struck a chord with me when he talked about the way in which Northern Ireland is administered and the lack of consultation that ensues.

I am pleased that the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), the Under-Secretary of State, is in his place on the Government Front Bench. He has done reasonably well so far with consultation. He has still, of course, to produce results on many of the issues on which he has consulted. I acknowledge, however, that he was not long in his comparatively new responsibilities for health in Northern Ireland before we had new twin theatres at the South Tyrone hospital in Dungannon. There are many in South and East Tyrone, right through into the Mid-Ulster area, who appreciate the speed with which the Minister brought that project to fruition. There had been many delays before the hon. Gentleman's appointment.

The Minister has many other difficult issues to resolve. I had hoped to see nurses' regrading dealt with in the supplementary estimates. The Minister knows that I have communicated with him on the matter and that I am not satisfied with his interpretation of it. The Government said when the regrading process was undertaken that they would underwrite the cost. They underwrote the cost of phase 1, but they have not provided the money for the subsequent three appeal phases.

We have heard about the ball being bounced back and forth between the Department and the boards, but the boards are extensions of the Department. Board officers had knowledge of and responsibility for the regrading. There is therefore direct responsibility in the Department to underwrite the decisions that were made. Unfortunately, it has failed to do so. In the area that comes within the southern board, there is a shortfall of about £700,000. In the western board area, it is about £300,000. I do not have the figures for the other two boards, but I imagine that they are sizeable.

The Minister must decide whether there is to be a reduction in services to the consumer so that the proper commitment to the nursing profession is met within existing resources. Alternatively, he must recognise the Department's responsibility, as devolved through to the boards, to fund fully the initial payments for upgrading and the subsequent financial requirements following the appeals.

The way in which the boards, which will operate until the end of this month, are replaced by boards that will be even more tightly aligned with the Department—their members will not include elected members of local government—worries many of us. We regard it as a diminution of the democratic process. The Minister has an opportunity to do something about it, but he must act urgently and tell us when the health and social services councils will be set up. They should already be in place, as should the boards. I have been speaking to chief executives

[Mr. Ken Maginnis]

and officers of the various boards. They do not yet know who their new member will be, just a fortnight before they are meant to be in operation. There has been no handover.

Only in the past day or two have district councils been asked to consider nominating members from the district councils to the health and social services councils. Instead of a cohesive, continuous process, the system by which our health services are administered is broken off, there is a gap, and then it is picked up again. It should not happen in that way.

Other problems concern the cost of medicines and drugs, which is increasing more rapidly than inflation. Although the boards are funded according to the level of inflation, the funding is inadequate to meet the cost that they must bear for drugs and medicines, which is rising by somewhere between 14 and 16 per cent.

The boards must deal with other factors, not least uncertainty about the price of fuel oils for heating hospitals, which will require careful consideration by the Department if the boards' budgets are not to break down half or two thirds of the way through the financial year.

I concur with much of what the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) said about the environment. It appears to many of us that there is—dare I say it—chaos in various divisions within the Department of the Environment. The elected representatives, especially those who sit on district councils, are frustrated when, month after month, planners who come to our meetings heed not a word of the advice from those of us who are familiar with our areas and the problems.

I have tried not to be parochial so far, but my constituency has an aging population. What happens to a husband and wife who have worked all their lives on a small farm and reared a family, whose members have perhaps decided not to continue farming? Often, if they want to sell their property, they cannot persuade the planners that they are entitled to a rood on which to build a retirement bungalow. They are encouraged to leave their farms and to move to an adjacent town or further afield. It is wrong that people should be taken out of the community in their old age. I hope that the Minister responsible will soften his hard attitude towards planning. There are also difficulties when a member of a family wishes to continue farming and to build himself a modern home on the farm and allow his parents to continue to live in the existing homestead.

There is little understanding of the difficulties of a rural community. There may not be great wealth there, but, in our uncertain society, there is an opportunity to live a calm, peaceful and satisfying life. Having grown up in the country, having gone to a county primary school as a child and having taught as a principal in a small country school for many years, I regret the demise of our rural communities. The breakdown in communities, the closure of schools and churches and the disappearance of those small communities contribute to the unrest in Northern Ireland. If people are taken out of the country and put into a town where they have little in common with those already living there, their way of life, breaks down. All to often, over the past 20 years, children from those homes have become unstable and involved in anti-social activities. Something should be done.

I should like to deal with another matter, involving the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Agriculture, which must fall within the Under-Secretary's responsibilities—disposal of hazardous waste. We have talked to the hon. Gentleman about the disposal of fallen and diseased animals and I hope that he can tell us that some progress has been made. His Department has been working hard although, sadly, it is too late. Unfortunately, the Department of the Environment gave the impression at an early stage that there were innumerable sites where fallen animals could be disposed of. That information was inaccurate, and it took district councils some time to convince the Department how serious the problem was.

However, the issue is wider than that. The problem of the disposal of hazardous waste concerns all of industry and includes the disposal of clinical waste from hospitals. Far too many hospitals are—to coin a phrase—flying on a wing and a prayer with regard to their incineration capabilities. If we tighten the requirement to provide safe incineration of clinical waste—as I hope we shall—the facilities of many hospitals will be found wanting. I believe that the Departments have been far too slow to provoke full public debate on the issue. Unless we have that public debate, there will be a lot of fearmongering. I do not want to denigrate Greenpeace as I agree with much of what it does, but there are times when it is wholly irresponsible and there is already far too much scaremongering.

The NIMBY syndrome—"not in my backyard"—pervades the community when we talk about the incineration of toxic and hazardous waste. It is incumbent on the Department of Economic Development, on the Department of Health and Social Services and on other Departments to provoke constructive debate, so that we shall not face yet another crisis in five or 10 years. I look forward to funding for proper research and for the dissemination of information about that problem.

There are other issues with which I wished to deal, but I shall refer briefly to just one that especially disturbs me —the use of angel dust in cattle feed. The Departments must provide resources to deal with that. I am sad that the European Community dictated that hormones should not be permitted as growth promoters in cattle. The Americans, who are much more fastidious than the Europeans, still use hormones. The outcome of the ban on hormones in the European Community has been an escalation in the use of angel dust. I hope that the Minister will deal with that issue.

9.43 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): By now, it is no doubt clear to the Minister that many problems press on the minds of hon. Members from Northern Ireland. The Minister is responsible for agriculture in the Province, so I am sure that he will realise that I come from a large agricultural constituency. I am sure that he will agree that the agricultural community has faced many challenges in recent years, especially with the advent of the quota system in milk and other products.

Many farmers in Northern Ireland still feel aggrieved that quotas have ensured the decline of the family farm. In Northern Ireland, the family farm was the backbone of our Ulster society, but many small farms are no longer financially viable. Can the Minister give any hope to the hard-pressed farming community? Will the farmer with

fewer than 40 cows receive any relaxation in the quota system to enable the farm unit to become viable? Neither I nor any other hon. Member in Northern Ireland can stand idly by and watch the decay in and the destruction of our vital farming in Northern Ireland, robbing the community of the lifeline of former prosperity.

I could understand the decay if the farming community wished to stand still and thus to stagnate, but that is not the case. The farming community is willing to play an active part in the future prosperity of the Province, as it has done in the past. What hope can the Minister offer the farming community that negotiations in Europe will secure a firm future for farming in Northern Ireland? A real dilemma surrounds agriculture, and some assurance and encouragement must be forthcoming from the Government.

My hon . Friend the Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and other hon. Members have mentioned the problem of fallen and diseased animals. Can the Minister tell us what steps have been decided on by the Department? Week after week since the problem began, I have been inundated with calls from worried farmers, many of whom are at their wits' end, as I have mentioned to the Minister personally. Positive news from the Minister today would be most warmly welcomed.

This may be an appropriate time to ask the Minister if he will make representations to the Minister with responsibility for the environment to take steps to permit farmers' sons and daughters to stay in the countryside. Surely it is time for more sympathetic planning decisions on dwelling in the countryside. Great frustration and anger are felt by many who have lived in the countryside and who have contributed all their lives to the well-being of the countryside, only to find themselves and their families parcelled up by some civil servant and hounded out of the countryside and into the towns.

Before moving on to deal with some of the other Departments, I wish to make my voice heard on the problem of angel dust. We must have proper fines and proper action must be taken by the courts to ensure that those involved in such despicable practices do not gain financially compared with the rest of the farming community who desire to play their part properly. We must bear in mind the health and welfare of the people of the nation.

With regard to the Department of the Environment, can the Minister tell the House what progress is being made on the Omagh bypass? Phase 1 has been completed, but it is essential for phases 2 and 3 to get under way urgently.

The next matter directly affects the constituency of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross). I, too, represent a constituency which includes part of the Magherafelt district council area. The hon. Member for Londonderry, East will be concerned about the Magherafelt bypass. I recently received a letter from the Minister about the bypass and it was not helpful. The letter explained that the Government did not intend to construct such a bypass at present, but that any relevant survey in the Magherafelt town area would surely show an urgent need for such a bypass.

Can the Minister inform the House about the date of completion of the Castledawson bypass? Its construction has a follow-on effect in my constituency for vehicles on their way to the M2 from Moneymore and Cookstown and thus on industrial development. Is the construction of the Castledawson bypass on course and what is the expected completion date?

Is the Minister aware of the frustration experienced by Strabane district council because its efforts for economic development have—I quote from the clerk of the council—been "thwarted by poor state of the roads f[illegible] Strabane to Omagh."

Surely an area of deprivation like Mid-Ulster deserves a better slice of the cake to ensure that local industrialists are able to compete in the wider challenge of the European market post-1992?

Staying with the Department of the Environment, will the Minister give the completion date of the Cookstown bypass? Bearing in mind the serious nature of affairs in Cookstown, due to security checkpoints there, every assistance must be given to alleviate a problem which is doubtless hindering the industrial development of the area. Cookstown has the second highest unemployment rate in the United Kingdom. Therefore, it is imperative that the Cookstown bypass is put on course.

Phase 1 from the Moneymore road to the Old Coagh road has commenced and has been carried out under a minor works programme, costing less than £200,000. The eastern distributor A29, which is so vital to the industrial development of the Cookstown area, would cost about £1·5 million. Bearing in mind the fact that industrial sites are on the opposite side of the town, the eastern distributor is a must. Will the Minister ensure that we have good news about that for the people of the Cookstown area?

Staying with the vote for the Department of the Environment, will the Minister announce plans to permit local councillors to have a greater say in planning decisions? Does he understand the anger and frustration when so many Government officials only sparsely fulfil their obligations to consult district councils and, having done so, pay little attention to the representations made by local councillors about issues which are vital for their constituents? Does not the Department realise that elected representatives who live in the community, have a genuine desire to protect it? It is not merely officials who have a desire to protect the community.

The present position as regards the famous quotation, "location, siting and design" is totally unacceptable. It is used by officials in the Department to cover a multitude of sins. If a civil servant is, for some reason, unwilling to grant approval, the cloak of "location, siting and design" is usually the fancy term used in the refusal.

Is the Minister aware of the concern expressed by many councillors at a recent conference in Omagh, County Tyrone, about planning the countryside? What is the official reaction of the Department to the representations made at that conference?

Staying with the Department of the Environment, and the Minister of State who opened the debate, I must tell the House that he has twice given wrong information about community relations at the Dispatch Box. He said that it was a unanimous decision of Magherafelt district council that a community relations officer would be employed. I listened on one of those occasions when he was speaking about Belfast city council and deriding it for not appointing a community relations officer.

The Minister derided in the House the Unionist councillors in Belfast for not appointing that officer. After that, I read an interesting article, which said that Conservatives on North Down council did not take up the

[Rev. William McCrea]

Minister's offer either and voted against such an appointment. Perhaps the Minister will confirm that. It would surely be wrong for a Minister to deride Ulster Unionists and Democratic Unionist councillors for not taking up his offer if members of his own party did not do so.

The Minister gave wrong information. I and my colleagues on Magherafelt council did not vote for this position to be filled. It is disgraceful that I should be expected to vote along with Sinn Fein for a so-called community relations officer. The following week, those same councillors would not condemn the IRA bombing of the local labour exchange and the local UDR centre, which finally killed a man of 86 years of age. It is utter hypocrisy to suggest that we should vote in favour of a community relations officer who is seconded by Sinn Fein when that organisation has never taken a stand against the bombings and the killings in our community. I am glad to be able to put the record right because on two occasions the House was told that Magherafelt council, of which I am a member, voted unanimously in support of such an officer.

I shall now turn to economic development. As I have said, I have the honour to represent a constituency with a large agricultural community. However, it is a sad fact that there is a lack of industrial investment in Mid-Ulster. Few industrialists have been encouraged to come to my constituency. I listened with interest to the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady), and I understand how he feels.

One of our problems in encouraging people to base industry in my constituency is the great lack of roads. We urgently need a proper roads network to encourage investment to this area of high unemployment. I have constantly brought to the attention of the House places such as Castlederg, a small town that has suffered more from terrorist activity than any other town of its size in the Province. What measures are in the Government's programme to bring real hope to those in Castlederg who have braved terrorism of the most vile nature?

Recent job losses in Sion Mills are causing great anxiety and exceptional and additional Government measures are necessary if the area is to be made prosperous. I listened with interest to the information that Northern Ireland would not suffer as much as the rest of the United Kingdom in terms of job losses and industrial depression. That will give no comfort to my constituency, although it may do to those who know little of unemployment. Those who live in an area that has suffered grievously from unemployment for I do not know how long feel that it has been left to decay, while many others have received substantial financial support.

Recently, the Government undertook an in-depth study of Castlederg, which was much appreciated. However, steps must be taken urgently to stop the decay. Now that the investigation has been completed, will the Minister say——

It being Ten o'clock, Mr. SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings.*

ESTIMATES

[1st ALLOTTED DAY] [2nd part]

MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to paragraph (5) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of Estimates), to put the deferred Question on Supplementary Estimates 1990-91 (Class VII Vote 3).*

CLASS VII, VOTE 3

Resolved,

That a further sum, not exceeding £124,318,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray charges that will come in the course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1991 for expenditure by the Department of Transport on support to nationalised transport industries and to ports; rebate of fuel duty to bus operators; and costs of drivers' testing and training.

MR. SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Questions which he was directed to put, pursuant to paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 53 (Questions on voting of Estimates), and the Order (1 March).*

ESTIMATES, 1990-91 (NAVY) VOTE A

Resolved,

That during the year ending on 31st March 1991 a revised number not exceeding 66,800 all ranks be maintained for Naval Service.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

ESTIMATES, 1991-92 (NAVY) VOTE A

Resolved,

That during the year ending on 31st March 1992 a number not exceeding 66,550 all ranks be maintained for Naval Service.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

ESTIMATES, 1991-92 (ARMY) VOTE A

Resolved,

That during the year ending on 31st March 1992 a number not exceeding 171,060 all ranks be maintained for Army Service, a number not exceeding 4,955 for the Home Service Force, a number not exceeding 117,000, for the Individual Reserves, a number not exceeding 85,500 for the Territorial Army and a number not exceeding 6,970 for the Ulster Defence Regiment.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

ESTIMATES, 1991-92 (AIR) VOTE A

Resolved,

That during the year ending on 31st March 1992 a number not exceeding 92,520 all ranks be maintained for the Air Force Service, a number not exceeding 18,250 for the Royal Air Force Reserve, and a number not exceeding 2,800 for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

ESTIMATES, EXCESSES, 1989-90

Resolved,

That a sum, not exceeding £145,902,122·00 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to make good excesses of certain grants for Defence and Civil Services for the year ending 31st March 1990, as set out in House of Commons Paper No. 168.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 1990-91

Resolved,

That a further supplementary sum, not exceeding £1,544,032,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray charges for Defence and Civil Services which will come in the course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1991, as set out in House of Commons Papers Nos. 170 and 232.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

ESTIMATES, 1991-92 (VOTE ON ACCOUNT)

Resolved,

That a further sum not exceeding £520,002,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund, on account, for or towards defraying the charges for civil services for the year ending on 31st March 1992, as set out in House of Commons Paper No. 171.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

CONSOLIDATED FUND (No. 2) BILL

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the foregoing three resolutions by the Chairman of Ways and Means, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. David Mellor, Mr. Francis Maude, Mrs. Gillian Shephard and Mr. John Maples.

Mr. Francis Maude accordingly presented a Bill to apply certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund to the service of the years ending on 31st March 1991 and 1992; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 79].

Northern Ireland (Appropriation)

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. W. McCrea) to continue his speech, I may tell the House that five other hon. Members wish to participate. The debate can continue until 11.30 pm, so if they each speak for about 10 minutes, they will all be called, and there will still be time for wind-up speeches from both Front Benches. I hope that those time limits will be broadly borne in mind.

Rev. Ian Paisley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will the two minutes taken by the business at 10 o'clock be added to our debate?

Mr. Speaker: The answer is in the affirmative.

10.3 pm

Rev. William McCrea: Can the Minister say what steps will be taken to action some of the proposals in the Castlederg programme, to stave off the decay that is affecting that area? My constituents are desirous to assist themselves, but the Government must offer added incentives.

Has the Minister heard of the Gibson plan for Mid-Tyrone, named after my friend and colleague Councillor Oliver Gibson, who had the vision and the initiative to compile a comprehensive scheme that identifies many of the needs in the area? I shall be obliged if the Minister will discuss it with the local council in the near future.

Given the existence of the beautiful Gortin glens and the Ulster-American folk park at Omagh, the Government should initiate a worldwide drive to help tourism in the area. We in Mid-Ulster have a willing work force, but it needs encouraging. Will the Government encourage with grant aid multinational firms to that area of high unemployment?

I pay tribute to the local industry that has mushroomed over the past few years; many concerns, however, have been strangled by high interest rates and inflation. Will the Minister encourage the Chancellor of the Exchequer to assist industry by introducing lower interest rates in the Budget?

How can Northern Ireland industry compete with that of other EC countries, given the exorbitant electricity costs that we must endure? We deplore the additional costs that have been forced on the Province. What action will the Minister take to remove this intolerable burden from my constituents?

What will the Minister do about the impending payoffs at Tyrone and Fermanagh hospital, which has been at the forefront of mental health care in the Province for many years and is now a vital employer in the Omagh area? Is he aware of the alarm and disquiet that is felt in that area? The nursing staff are gravely worried about the future of mental health care; their opinions must be taken into account. The senior officers have drawn up a hospital plan, but I should be deeply obliged to the Minister if he forwarded to me the detailed plan for community mental health care. Many of the changes are based on the development of community-based care: surely it is entirely unacceptable to wreck hospital care facilities without possessing detailed knowledge of community-based care.

[Rev. William McCrea]

The community is also concerned about the lack of home helps for the elderly who are forced to live in that community. Like other hon. Members, I wish to know when the Minister expects work to begin on the new Coleraine hospital. Has he read the comprehensive submission from those who are campaigning to save the Moyle hospital, for which many hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed their support?

There is much concern in my constituency about the question mark over the future of one of our local schools, Tullyhogue primary school. The school is an essential part of the local community, and I ask the Minister and the Department of Education to ensure that it is saved.

10.7 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): In the interests of brevity, Mr. Speaker, I shall try to abide by your directive.

The macro element of the debate seems to have been largely ignored in favour of the micro element. That may be a result of the Ribble Valley by-election, which has tended to focus all our attention on the more parochial issues. I shall follow suit; I will merely ask the questions, and request consideration of them.

First, the north of Ireland badly needs a noise pollution protection scheme. According to what I can glean from parliamentary questions and answers, there is no clearly defined arrangement to protect people's health in that regard, as there is in other parts of the United Kingdom. The figures interest me; there is, of course, a constituency element in my interest.

In England, a noise problem caused by a traffic scheme qualifies for legislation at 68 decibels; a noise problem caused by a military installation qualifies at 70 decibels. In Northern Ireland, the helicopter noise scheme run by the Minister of Defence qualifies at 72 decibels. In Canal street in Newry, in my constituency—one of the main streets, but a very narrow street—Newry and Mourne council has measured the noise level at between 74 and 77 decibels. Despite all my efforts, however, I have been unable to persuade the Department of the Environment to re-route the traffic from that street to a new bypass and an alternative route into Newry.

In the interests of health alone, I suggest that the Minister, who is responsible for the health of all of us in Northern Ireland, should join me in trying to persuade the Department of the Environment and those in charge of road traffic to abolish noise pollution in that street. Noise pollution is as dangerous as any other form of pollution.

As for the grants department of the Housing Executive for the southern area, there has been a problem in the Newry office, which is being resolved. The problem was caused not by those who have applied for Housing Executive grants but by the Housing Executive itself. The last people to suffer should be the people who live in the Newry and South Armagh areas. However, due to irregularities in that office, they have to wait an inordinate length of time. Only two or three grants are issued each month. That is unfair, and patently unjust, and it must be dealt with quickly. I have dealings with another grants office and have compared the speed with which grants are processed. One of the reasons for the slowness in processing grants is due to Housing Executive's problems.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) referred to those with disabilities, and to the difficulty that they face if they want improvements to their homes. I agree with the hon. Gentleman. We all come up against that problem. Part of it relates to an insufficient number of occupational therapists to make the assessments. I have written to the Minister about the issue.

Mr. William Ross: Does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that, even if we had enough occupational therapists, we do not have sufficient money to carry out the work that needs to be done after assessments have been made?

Mr. Mallon: That is a valid point, but money will certainly not be spent without an occupational therapist's report. Most areas want the number of occupational therapists to be increased, in the interests of the disabled.

I appreciate how valuable the small rural school is, having been taught in one, and having worked in another. The rural schools acts as a cohesive element in village communities. In rural areas, as Northern Ireland is, schools are small units. Both board and departmental decisions should bear that in mind. The Southern education and library board has decided to withdraw all school transport from children not of compulsory school age, who therefore have to leave school at about 2 pm.

One can imagine the effect of that on many schools struggling to retain their numbers and to remain open. Schools which have amalgamated have been hit the hardest. There have been closures due to insufficient numbers of teachers being available to supervise children; they also have to fulfil the new curriculum requirements. School transport is expensive, but it plays a vital part in keeping schools open.

A matter which concerns the Minister's Department recently came to my notice. I wrote to the Minister, but unfortunately the matter was referred to a departmental head, so I take this opportunity to draw it to the hon. Gentleman's attention. Severe disablement allowance will not be paid to 23 disabled people who attend school in the Republic because of the requirement that they must be resident in the north of Ireland for 10 consecutive days. Those young people, who suffer from profound deafness, attend St. Joseph's school for the the deaf in Cabra. When they become 16, they will not be able to avail themselves of that allowance; yet the area boards are paying for their education in the Republic. It is handier for them to travel there because of the direct train service. Such a circumstance was not foreseen when the legislation was passed, but it seems cruel that, because those terribly disabled people are furthering their education outside the jurisdiction, they are denied severe disablement allowance. I ask the Minister to consider that.

I am concerned that community care grants are not being paid to some people for travelling to hospital. They have been told that they will not be paid retrospectively. When the small children of some of my constituents fell ill, their parents, who lived a considerable distance from the Crown buildings, were not able to avail themselves of those grants, because the office refused to pay them retrospectively. In some circumstances, it is surely impossible for parents to complete a form and all the formalities before visiting their child. That is a further anomaly that I ask the Minister to consider carefully.

10.16 pm

Mr. A. Cecil Walker (Belfast, North): I should like to take up some aspects of planning as they affect Northern Ireland.

Planners, who are not elected, have enormous powers to alter a community, without being responsible to anyone in that community or to the wishes of the community in general. They operate under regulations that are so restricted that moral, spiritual and social matters cannot readily be taken into consideration.

The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) said that local councillors play only an advisory role and in practice have a limited influence on decisions, and that, whereas the applicant has power to appeal against a planner's decision, no such right is available to objectors.

Planning permission was given to infill a quarry situated on the main trunk road to Belfast airport. Despite many objections, the application was granted. As a result, overloaded lorries, transporting hundreds of tonnes of clay, have deposited a deadly and dangerous film of slime on that main thoroughfare, I have received an avalanche of correspondence from constituents and others who use the road, complaining bitterly of the road surface and the state of their vehicles. Many people, including senior citizens, use the road to gain access to the countryside, but as it is impossible to walk on the footpaths because of the mud, they are forced to use the road, thereby increasing the risk to their lives and to motorists who may have to brake in treacherous conditions to avoid them.

In addition, ratepayers must pay the Department of the Environment regularly to employ cleaning services. Despite all that expense, it is impossible to keep the road in an acceptable condition.

I voice the concern of the residents of Balmoral avenue, who are incensed about a decision to designate that formerly highly desirable residential avenue as a main trunk route. Surely some other means should have been found for diverting traffic across this section of the city. Residents who must pay the exceptionally high rates levied on this prime area should not have to contend with this imposition on their right to live in some peace and tranquillity.

Another worrying factor in present planning procedures concerns off-licences and liquor stores. These businesses can be set up without planning permission. That is causing great consternation among those concerned with the problems relating to the consumption of alcohol. Many of these establishments have been opened adjacent to church premises and other community projects. The conflicts of interest can easily be imagined, particularly when intoxicated lager louts who have been drinking in the proximity of their source of alcohol come into contact with more socially motivated people who have been attending church and community activities.

Of equal concern in this undemocratic planning process is the problem created by the leasing of church buildings. Decisions are taken without reference to local opinion. Although in general the feeling is that listing buildings is a sound principle, in inner-city areas buildings of little architectural merit sometimes cannot be altered without infringing regulations. In one case, there is a need to dispose of a building no longer needed by the Church, but because of listing it is unsaleable, and unless it is sold, it will be destroyed by vandals.

In yet another area of the inner city, a Church building has been virtually walled in on one side by a prestige development. Such dilemmas posed by regulations over which no one appears to have any control are seriously inhibiting the mission of inner-city churches. The Minister should look seriously at that and take the matter up with the various church organisations with a view to redressing this seemingly bureaucratic procedure.

Page 5, vote 1, deals with education. I am deeply worried about the introduction of formal tests for eight-year-olds, despite recommendations from the Northern Ireland School Examinations and Assessment Council. The attainment testing of eight-year-olds could have serious psychological consequences on them. It is beyond comprehension that children at the tender age of eight could be forcibly reminded of the fact that they are below average. The reforms which the Minister seems intent on imposing on the educational establishment will have an adverse effect on our teachers. As the chairman of the Irish National Teachers Organisation stated at a recent conference:

> "It seems to have been a case of an English solution to an English problem which mysteriously got posted to Northern Ireland."

The view of most, if not all, of the teaching organisations is that whatever the need for such a system on the mainland, there is no case or demand for it in Northern Ireland.

In relation to page 5, vote 3, I express concern about the privatisation of domestic services in north and west Belfast. I am referring in particular to the tender by Grosvenor Cleaning Services. There are major doubts over the technical credibility of the company. It appears that no indication has been given of how the Grosvenor bid relates to comparator figures. There is concern that office cleaning comparators may have been used on what is essentially a social or health care contract.

There is also concern about the health and safety standards in the contract, as there is a potential legal liability to the Eastern health and social services board if this inadequate proposal leads to injury to board employees, contractors' employees or the general public. There are sufficient grounds to justify the rejection of the Grosvenor bid on the grounds of technical credibility.

In the *Official Report* of Standing Committee A for 19 November 1987 we read as follows:

> "Of course it is true that on numerous occasions I have said that authorities are not obliged to accept the lowest tender. If there are reasons to do with a particular contract such as the quality of the specification or the services that are directly related to the subject matter of that contract, authorities are entitled to take these matters into account and not for that type of reason accept that tender."

I should like to take up again the problems of glass-fronted room heaters. The elderly cannot cope with these appliances, and there have been problems associated with fumes which are causing serious asthmatic problems. There are now alternative forms of heating which are more appropriate for the elderly—economy 7, for instance. Will the Housing Executive consider that alternative for people for whom solid fuel systems have run their course and replacements have become necessary?

I should like to mention elderly people who were originally transferred from inner-city areas to the highly elevated suburbs of Belfast, particularly north Belfast, because of redevelopment in their inner-city areas. After 30 years, they have grown elderly and cannot cope with the

[Mr. A. Cecil Walker]

conditions in those areas. I contend that, in such circumstances, they should be moved back whence they came to take advantage of the more centralised shopping facilities and flat living conditions. The elevated sites should be allocated to young families and more able-bodied people, who can more easily cope with that mode of living.

10.26 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): In reply to an intervention by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), the Minister said that there was nothing in these estimates for hospital building which, he said, was covered in the main estimates. I was surprised to hear that, because I notice that the order supplies supplementary cash and provides money for next year, to the tune of £426·5 million, for the Department of Health and Social Services. I should be astonished if there was nothing in that sum for hospital building—I am sure that there is.

That brings me immediately to the new hospital in Coleraine. With a little gentle urging from me, the Minister was kind enough to drop in and see a deputation about that hospital. I think that he found the people in it a most efficient and able group who presented their case admirably. The Minister knows perfectly well that the need for that hospital has long been acknowledged; it was one of the framework hospitals for acute services in Northern Ireland. The debate as to whether it should be green field or rebuild has been finally laid to rest by the option of appraisal. In any case, the hospital is needed.

We are told that at one stage there was cash for part of the rebuild, but we know what Government cash is like —"Now you see it, now you don't." If the money was not spent on rebuild, it must have been spent on something else, so relief expenditure for other items should be available in some form. I hope that the Minister will listen to good advice, elect to rebuild, and let us get on with it. There is no need for delay. I offer him the following good advice from a letter written by an excellent source 117 years ago:

"Don't throw good money after bad, build new; if you build, build wisely; of course you have a new building to suit its purpose, at moderate outlay. If you add and repair an old building not even originally constructed to suit their purpose, and certain to be deficient in the most essential requisites of health and comfort—you have at the end of all your additions and re-constructions a bad building, at immoderate outlay".

The Minister will be delighted to know that that letter was written by one Florence Nightingale, who certainly knew what things were about. It was written on 29 January 1874 to the honorary secretary of the Belfast nurses home, but I could not have put the case better in relation to Coleraine hospital. I hope that the Minister will follow the good advice of the matron of modern nursing practice.

Reference has also been made to hazardous waste. The Minister will be aware of the furore in my part of the world about the Du Pont proposal to build a toxic waste incinerator, or more accurately a hazardous waste incinerator. Some documents state that the Du Pont site produces 700 tonnes of toxic and hazardous waste per year, while others put it at 75,000 tonnes. The incinerator is an attractive proposal for the company because it means that it would not have to transport any of its waste off site while all its competitors in the island of Ireland would have to transport their waste to that site, thus adding to their costs. The incinerator is a good commercial enterprise for Du Pont, which would have a monopoly of the disposal of such waste—there is nothing similar in the rest of Ireland. Under European Community regulations it would also be mighty difficult to get that waste out of the island to burn it anywhere else.

Although there might be other ways in which to deal with toxic and hazardous waste, the normal practice is to burn it at specific temperatures. If we are to have such an incinerator anywhere in Ireland, the worse possible place is the upwind side of the island. The prevailing winds are generally west, south-west or south. They rarely blow from the north or the east. Given the problems and attendant hazards which arose from the incorrect burning of waste in the Irish Republic, if we are to have such an incinerator anywhere on the island it should be erected on the east coast so that any toxic fumes produced would at least be blown out to sea.

I do not want the Minister to forget about the alarm generated a few years ago, when it was thought that a toxic cloud had been produced at the Du Pont works and was floating towards Londonderry. We were all thankful to discover that that report stretched the truth, but mistakes can happen and their consequences should be limited. To achieve that, it would be best to locate any incinerator where any possible fumes would be blown out to sea rather than across land.

I believe that LEDU, the Local Enterprise Development Unit, and the IDB, the Industrial Development Board, are supposed to bring manufacturing industry to Northern Ireland. LEDU primarily deals with the native-born people and I am concerned about its activities. I repeat the concern that I expressed last year. I have been less than satisfied with the help that LEDU has given in a number of cases. An applicant for a grant for the production of high-quality concrete props was turned down for the second time after being encouraged by LEDU to apply and incurring considerable costs in producing a plan. A saw mill was also refused a grant, on the grounds of a shortage of timber, although that small-scale operation had sufficient timber to carry on. I also recall a long delay before a fellow finally got a grant for tools to write inscriptions for tombstones. Although he made his living in that way, it was years before the grant was paid. That seems a bit daft to me.

The problem may have been that people were already doing those things, and one might inquire whether it is wise to encourage applicants in such trades. However, LEDU fulfils a useful function in some sectors. It can give help and support at the lowest level where someone comes up with another way of doing something simple. It can also provide help and support in the final stages when a firm produces a plan, all neatly typed, with everything covered. LEDU then often pays the grant because all the preliminary work has been done.

Unfortunately, there is a great hole between those two ends of the spectrum. It occurs when an individual is doing something that is new. I will cite two cases. One is that of a sock manufacturer, who found that the machines which were supposed to be simple to operate were not all that simple, but when he went back to LEDU for a bit more help, which would have saved the firm, it was not given and the firm went down the bunghole.

The second case was more serious, and I have mentioned it in the House before. A constituent of mine came up with a method of jointing metal tubing—a

process with wide applications, especially in plumbing where lead in water is a problem. The concept is new, it works, and I believe that his products will come on to the market fairly soon. The case has caused me some heartache and pain as the impression given to the inventor by the LEDU leaflet was not fulfilled in practice, leading to a long and bitter exchange between him and that body.

LEDU was not willing to grant further funding, because it was not prepared to let the inventor stay in control of the project. He was not prepared to accept that, and he was never satisfied that LEDU was directing him to the people who could give him the help that he needed with some of the difficult technical aspects of the project. He believes that, on one occasion, LEDU undermined his bargaining strength, and that it never set out a clear plan for how best to carry the project to fruition.

I could take up the rest of the time allotted to this debate with the detail of that case, but I will not. Nevertheless, I hope that the Minister will look again not only at that case but at certain implications of it. I may well return to the matter in more detail another time. It is necessary to find a solution acceptable to all, because this is something that will be useful and could pay rich dividends.

Beyond that case, we must find a more satisfactory way to deal with the individual who comes up with a completely new invention or industrial application. We need to find a better way to fund research and development, right through from inception to arrival at the marketplace. That is especially true of patent costs, which are high. Often the backyard worker does not have that sort of cash. The Government should look carefully at setting up a fund to try to carry these projects through because they often involve people with little experience of the commercial world.

We should finance our native inventors. That is a far better way to spend money than throwing millions at de Lorean and the like. Millions were invested in textiles in the 1960s, but that industry melted away when the going got rough. Millions were spent trying to build aircraft at Aldergrove. If £1 million per year were spent on encouraging our native inventors, and if the Government were prepared to lose many of the projects, because many will go under, that would be a better way to go about things. Some of the projects will succeed, and those which succeed will pay rich dividends.

I suggest that the Minister talks to some of those who have been frustrated by the activities of LEDU. He will then understand the anger that they feel and perhaps reach a clearer understanding of what I am saying and try to make that organisation better.

Appropriation (Northern Ireland)

10.44 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the others who have occupied the Chair this evening have been fortunate indeed. For almost four hours, Northern Ireland Members—people from both traditions in the Province—have spoken without any division or argument among themselves.

The only note of controversy injected into the debate came from an Englishman. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen)—misery-guts that he is—took the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to task for having the audacity to attempt to resolve problems in the Province. The hon. Gentleman told us that the initiative had failed—indeed, that it had been pronounced dead from the very beginning. He came to the House, complete with his funeral garb, to deliver an oration at the funeral of what he called the Brooke initiative.

The members of my party certainly do not want that initiative to fail. We recognise the very real need for progress towards the creation of structures in Northern Ireland. It was this House and the party of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West which took the Stormont Parliament from us. It is their fault that we do not have a local body with legislative powers. If some of them had been able to look into the future, they might not have been so quick to put their hands to the destruction of Stormont.

However, the hon. Gentleman was right about at least one thing. He recognises that the way in which Northern Ireland business is dealt with in the House is far from satisfactory. It should not be necessary to bring day-to-day, bread-and-butter issues here. However, I make no apology for raising in this debate issues that some hon. Members may consider trivial.

I want to start on a note of thanks to the Government. The last time I took part in an appropriation debate I raised a matter of concern to not only myself but the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder). I permitted the hon. Gentleman to intervene when, during my speech, I referred to Merton park, for which he and I, as Members of Parliament, share responsibility. Unfortunately, he did not return the favour this evening. He and I recognised the inadequacy of the way in which Merton park was being dealt with. The Minister undertook to look into the matter, and I was given the opportunity to speak to a number of officials. I am glad to say that it has been decided that there should be a fully integrated scheme, which will greatly enhance the lives of the people of Merton park. I trust that the Minister and his officials will ensure that good ideas will be translated into action and that the necessary finance will be available.

I realise that, because of the time restriction, I shall be able only to put down some markers. I hope that the Minister of State will draw to the attention of his ministerial colleague who is responsible for the Northern Ireland Department of the Environment the crisis in relation to grants for the repair and improvement of houses. The system is now so bogged down that only people with financial difficulties get any money out of the scheme, and they have to wait a considerable time for grants to come through. The Minister is guilty of very false logic and very false economy. The rate of unfitness of property will increase considerably before very long. The housing stock is not being repaired and improved sufficiently. It is a major problem, and I urge that funds are freed for such an important purpose.

There has already been reference to planning issues. The hon. Member for North Down rightly talked about the difficulties that objectors have if a planning department recommends approval of the application. There is no automatic appeal for objectors. The hon. Gentleman will recognise—he was the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly—that the environment committee was able to wring out of the then Minister a concession that if two thirds of the members of a district council expressed serious concerns, there could be an article 22 inquiry. The hon. Gentleman and I recognised that the concession did not go far enough. That is a process that operates as a result of the grace and favour of the Department, but perhaps it has established itself to some degree in custom and practice. Many of us would like it to be established in planning law. A planning order is coming before the House, and I hope that the Minister will incorporate such a provision within it.

I think that the Minister should go even further because the two thirds restriction is unnecessary. A majority in a district council would be satisfactory. Planning is one area in which there has been great contention between the political parties within district councils. In some instances that is right, but the Minister should not be concerned if the district council is merely referring the matter to an appeal tribunal.

There are serious difficulties with enforcement because the Department is so slow to act. The most outrageous scheme can be pursued for a long time without the necessary action being taken, and this is causing great annoyance. Steps must be taken to accelerate the enforcement procedures. I recognise that there are legal difficulties, but the Department must be capable of finding means of ensuring that enforcement procedures operate much more speedily.

During most appropriation order debates over the past three or four years I have referred to ex-post-facto applications. In most instances they are made by those who decide to build now and apply later. The applications are increasing in number and because of the slowness of enforcement procedures there is no official response for a long time. I have suggested that the Minister incorporates a penalty clause in the new planning order that is to come before the House which requires someone who builds without planning permission to pay 10 times the penalty that is normally imposed in Northern Ireland. The Minister has not, unfortunately, taken up the suggestion. In a recent schedule that came before a district council in the area which I represent, 25 per cent. of the applications were ex post facto. That shows how planning laws are being flouted.

As for roads, I thank the Government for the progress that has been made with the construction of the dual carriageway between Supermac and the Upper Newtownards road. I am glad that it was decided at the Belfast urban area plan hearings that the Castlereagh roundabout should have not a flyover but an upgraded traffic light system. That system has been put into operation and it seems to be working successfully, as are the traffic lights at the Castledona junction. Those schemes were urged on the Government by the local council and

they were reluctant to implement them. The schemes were implemented, however, and they have proved to be successful.

I ask the Minister to consider the serious traffic problem at Ryan park, just up from the Castlereagh roundabout. I suspect that, before too long, I shall have to inform the House of a fatality there. The traffic moves quickly and young children have to cross the road to get to buses. There have been several near-misses. The Department has been pressed consistently on that matter, but, as yet, has taken no satisfactory steps to avoid the problem. I urge the Minister to consider this matter before a fatality occurs.

I turn to the education vote and transport to schools. In my constituency, there was a primary school at Clarawood. It was very much the centre of the area. All the life on the estate revolved round the school. It was used in the evenings for community purposes. All the young people in the area went to the school. The Government, as part of their rationalisation programme, decided to scrap it. They said that they could not allow a school with such low attendance to continue.

The children were forced to go to Orangefield primary school, some two miles away by road; but it was not two miles away if one had to cross a muddy field. The Belfast education and library board has decided that, whether the rain comes down in torrents or whether there is snow on the ground, the young children have to go across the field because it will not provide them with the transport to go by road.

Mothers with young children of four or more are forced to wade across the field in the worst of weather. They must even cross a river which has a plank across it. The Belfast education and library board believes that that is a fit route by which parents can take their children. That is unsatisfactory. This step was taken only to provide financial savings. As the board took the local school from the area, it has a responsibility to provide children with the kind of minibus used by many other schools in the area which probably have less need. I urge the Minister to use his influence with the board to deal with this matter.

The Government's record on allocating funds to district councils for sport and leisure services is abysmal. They have cut so much that district councils looking for the normal grant aid for leisure provision now get nothing. The councils' capital programmes have come to a halt, unless they are prepared to put all the burden on the local rates.

The cuts in community services are beginning. Local communities suffer because the Government want their finances to look better, and do not mind local government finances looking worse. The Government are quite happy about the rates going up and the blame falling on local councillors. They do not want to take the blame, although the responsibility has been theirs for a long time. I urge them to put funds into the education budget so that the programme of capital expenditure on leisure centres and other educational provisions and important community work can recommence in the Province.

11.53 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I appreciate that time is now rather limited, so I will keep to the period suggested. For that reason, I will have to be brief in some of my comments.

From the debate a few weeks ago on the draft Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland Consequential Amendments) Order 1990, the Minister will remember that I made some comments about Spelga hospital in Banbridge. He will appreciate the considerable concern in the local community about the threatened closure of that hospital before proper refurbishment of the main Banbridge hospital is carried out. I hope that there will be a speedy resolution of the uncertainty, and that the matter will be resolved appropriately. The concern about Banbridge hospital is heightened by the fact that there is no casualty unit there at present, because of a lack of senior staff. I hope that something can be done about that.

I want to mention some Department of the Environment matters concerning planning. I am sure that the Minister knows that Craigavon district is unique in Northern Ireland, as the only area for which there is no statutory development plan. Well over 20 years ago, there was a non-statutory plan, but it has long since been superseded by the failure of the Craigavon new city concept. Planning in the area is carried out on an unsatisfactory basis.

I realise that there has been a recent study on the Craigavon central area and that there is talk about having studies on the Portadown and Lurgan town centres, but is that the right way to proceed? Should we not be thinking in terms of producing a proper development plan for the whole of Craigavon, rather than building up a patchwork for the central area, for Portadown and for Lurgan?

Two specific matters are causing concern in the area. Under the central area plan, it has been proposed that there be a link between the M1 and the centre. As the Minister may be aware, that link would run over land that was originally vested in the mid-1960s for the new city. A number of years later, when that project was not carried through successfully, the land was surplus, and it was disposed of to the original owners. They were encouraged to invest considerable sums in bringing the area back under control and to put other investments into the area. They are now threatened with that area being re-vested. I want that matter to be looked at carefully. The concept of a link is good, but we want it to be routed so that it does not involve the re-vesting of surplus land, which has been disposed of.

I raised the matter of the blight in the centre of Lurgan in the appropriation debate last May. I understand that that stems from a throughpass proposal which was part of the original new city proposals. The throughpass was planned to go from Arthur street to Malcolm road. As a result, part of the centre of Lurgan has been blighted for over a decade. Some work has been done by housing associations to try to recover the area.

Is the throughpass proposal really necessary? Like most of our Ulster towns, Lurgan has a broad central street running through it. There are occasional traffic problems, but they are no greater than in any other substantial town in rush hour. I should like people to study closely whether the throughpass proposal is necessary. If the proposal were

[Mr. David Trimble]

finally to be dropped—it has effectively been dropped for 20 years, because nothing has been done to implement it—the blight would be removed. A considerable area in the centre of the town could be redeveloped, which would be for the town's benefit.

I want to raise a matter that may seem small, but which is important to the people concerned. During the very cold winter weather, I became conscious of the plight of people affected by Housing Executive renovation schemes. They had been rehoused temporarily in caravans during the cold weather. There was obvious inconvenience, and additional costs were incurred.

I discover that there is provision under legislation for the executive to make payments to compensate people who have been displaced temporarily. The payments are made on a standard basis without any regard to the costs incurred, yet the Department has the power to make regulations and I understand that that power has not been exercised. Can that be looked at? Can the regulations make provision for the special additional costs incurred everywhere during the recent very cold spell?

I had hoped to deal with two substantial points at some length. One relates to a matter that is the responsibility of the Department of Economic Development and of the Industrial Development Board. Last week, I dropped a note to the relevant Minister telling him that I propose to raise the matter in this debate. I am sure that it is not a lack of interest in the subject that has caused him not to be here this evening. The difficulty was caused by an imaginative proposal which was started a number of years ago by the Northern Ireland Aeronautics Technical Training Aviation company—which is a mouthful, so I shall hereinafter call it NIATTA.

The proposal emerged in the late 1980s. It is a good proposal and tends to build upon skills that exist within Northern Ireland, both in terms of aeronautics and engineering. The proposal identifies a need for aeronautical training for engineering and servicing aircraft. Essentially, the proposal comprises two phases. The first is to train engineers, who may be used to service aircraft in Northern Ireland or elsewhere, which is important skills training, would build upon existing skills in Northern Ireland and would equip people for useful employment there or elsewhere.

The second stage of the development would comprise the establishment of a substantial servicing operation locally, which would be viable if the necessary investment were made and could provide up to 1,000 highly skilled jobs.

Since its inception, the progress of the proposal has been a sorry tale. Way back in June 1988, there was a meeting, as a result of which the secretary to the then Minister responsible for the Department of Economic Development replied to NIATTA saying:

"if you are willing to set up a commercial aircraft servicing and training company as a prerequisite to the actual aircraft servicing phase of the business the Department would consider grant aiding the training of employees".

In August 1988, it was stated that the grant aid would be on the same training basis as on the mainland. However, in November that year, the proposal from the Department of Economic Development—as it was then—was to reduce the grant to less than 40 per cent. of the equivalent on the mainland. Despite that, a detailed business plan was submitted to the Industrial Development Board. Unfortunately, it has not responded effectively to the proposal. In March 1990, it requested additional information, which was provided on two subsequent occasions—in June and October 1990—giving detailed cash flow projections for the first phase of the development, not merely for one but for three years.

Unfortunately, there has not been a positive response from the IDB, which keeps saying that it needs to have a detailed business plan for the second phase. In the nature of the business, that is unrealistic. The first phase concerns training of engineers who are working on servicing, but the second phase of establishing a servicing operation in Northern Ireland would require detailed knowledge of what hangars and runway facilities were available, what level of training would be achieved, what qualifications would be achieved and what relationships there would be with particular companies. That is an unrealistic request.

However, sufficient information is available to enable a decision to be taken on the first phase. Regrettably, the IDB is not responding to that proposal, which would be extremely valuable. It is an imaginative proposal, but it seems that the IDB is too earthbound in its attitude to the matter to be able to respond to it.

I am sorry that the Minister is not available to reply to my remarks, but I hope that these comments will be carried to him, so that he can come back to me.

The other matter of substance, which I touched upon in an intervention on the Minister at the beginning of the debate, concerns the way in which the cultural traditions programme has been developed. I must explain the arguments that I mentioned indirectly then.

As part of the cultural traditions programme, there have been a series of conferences—the third will take place later this month. There are a total of nine major participants in terms of speakers and chairmen of working groups. When one examines the nine, one finds that, using the criteria spelled out in the current employment legislation to determine the ethnic origins of persons involved, five seem to be of Irish origin—using the term in its widest sense. Four of them can be identified, using the criteria in the legislation, as nationalist or belonging to the nationalist community. The fifth is perhaps not, but he is a civil servant, and I expect that his politics will not enter into the matter.

Consequently, we find that four of the five Irish participants at the conference on cultural traditions can be attributed to one community group, and that there is no one who can be regarded as representing the Ulster British tradition, at a conference which is supposed to deal with the traditions of both communities. I told the Minister that this was inadequate, and he acknowledged that that was a fair argument. The cultural traditions group may make the defence that it had invited a person to represent the Ulster-British viewpoint because an officer of my party, one of the honorary secretaries, was invited. That is no excuse.

Mr. Mallon: He was in Dublin.

Mr. Trimble: The conference has not yet taken place. The group knew that he could not attend because the Saturday of the conference coincides with the annual general meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council. All officers of the council are elected annually, so that officer could not possibly have attended. It is not as if the cultural traditions

group did not know that, because I had exactly the same problem last year when I could not attend the conference because of the annual general meeting. The group knew that, so I am not prepared to accept its excuse.

Mr. Beggs: Who is the chairman?

Mr. Trimble: I shall come to that.

The background to this matter is that the cultural traditions group was formed a couple of years ago and the then chairman, hon. Members will be amused to hear, was a man whom I regarded with considerable suspicion; I told him so, so I am not saying anything behind his back. I doubted his attitude to the matter, but at least he recognised the need to include representatives of both communities. Consequently, he approached me in my capacity as chairman of the Ulster Society, because, outside the loyal orders and political parties, that society is the only body in Northern Ireland which is committed to promoting the Ulster-British culture and heritage.

He invited me to join the conference committee, which I did, and we made a contribution to that first conference. Because of my involvement in a by-election last year, I was not able to undertake the same role in the second conference. The commitment from our society came from its secretary, Gordon Lucy. As a result, there was an input to the second conference.

For the third conference, my colleague was ignored. Gordon received no notification of any meetings of the conference committee. There was complete silence, and then we find the present conference arranged with an unbalanced membership. That is particularly annoying, because the theme of the conference is European issues, and the deputy chairman of my society is uniquely fitted to deal with that subject, because he is a recognised authority on the ethnic and cultural disputes in Europe. As my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) has said, there has been a change in the chairmanship; I am afraid that the present chairman, Dr. Maurice Hayes, does not seem to display the same sensitivity as his predecessor. I hope that that will be examined.

Finally, I should like to deal with a couple of brief matters. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) spoke about the way in which Northern Ireland matters are handled in the House as a constitutional slum. A happening this evening reminds me that there is some truth in that. In conducting its affairs, the Northern Ireland Office tends to arrange for things to happen across the water in Belfast, and does not always arrange for people over here to know.

Earlier this evening, I received a telephone call from the BBC in Belfast asking whether I could comment on a draft Order in Council which, apparently, was published today in Belfast. Other hon. Members may have received a similar request. Of course, it is not available in London, and one cannot comment on it. Hon. Members who attend to their duties in the House find themselves at a disadvantage about what is happening on the ground in Northern Ireland, and that is unsatisfactory.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West went on to criticise the provision in the appropriation order relating to the Northern Ireland Assembly. I am afraid that I do not share his criticism. I am glad to see that there is some expenditure to keep some aspects of the Assembly going because there is a need for a regional administration or government, call it what we will.

Hon. Members spoke about the problems that we face vis-a-vis Europe and the concepts of additionality. Dealing with regional and structural funds in the absence of a regional administration makes things worse. The European Commission and its civil servants go to other major European countries to discuss the operation of regional policy. When they go to Bavaria and want to know how regional policy should apply to that area, they can speak to the Government of the Bavarian Land, who will give a view. Unfortunately, when the Commission comes to talk to people in the United Kingdom and goes to Scotland and speaks to the Scottish Office, it does not get a Scottish answer: it gets a Treasury answer. If it speaks to the Northern Ireland Office, it does not get a Northern Ireland answer but a Treasury answer. The problem of additionality rests primarily with the Treasury.

We in Northern Ireland in particular feel the absence of a regional administration, but that problem is not confined to us, and it should also be tackled. I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if my final comments have strayed from the subject of the order, but I will now conclude my remarks.

11.9 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Northern Ireland (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): This has been an interesting and wide-ranging debate—perhaps more wide-ranging from one direction than the order warranted. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) follows one of his predecessors as a Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton in having a special place in Northern Ireland's history.

The debate was conducted with great courtesy, with all the speakers from the Province exhibiting great oratorical skill. They served their constituents with distinction, and spoke with care and in great detail. I shall try to cover as many points as possible in the time available to me.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall), who kindly gave notice that he could not be present for the end of the debate, expressed concern about the Province's economic situation and its possible impact on employment levels. As my hon. Friend the Minister of State said in his excellent opening remarks, the upturn in unemployment in recent months is extremely disappointing, but it must be seen in the context of the sustained period of employment growth that Northern Ireland enjoyed over the past four and a half years, when unemployment fell by almost 28,000.

The recent upward movement in Northern Ireland's unemployment level is less marked, proportionately, than in Great Britain, and we hope that it will be short-lived. It would be silly of anyone, including me, to make any predictions, but much of the employment downturn has been in sectors such as distribution, hotels and catering, which are particularly sensitive to changes in demand—and I suspect that they will recover quickly when demand picks up.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South drew attention to the Cambridge university report. I regret that its predictions were at the pessimistic end of the forecasting spectrum, but the Government recognise that the completion of the single market entails both challenges and opportunities. It is for individual firms to respond to them, and the Government's strategy is aimed at

[Mr. Jeremy Hanley]

encouraging local companies to improve their competitiveness and to take full advantage of the opportunities on offer.

The time ahead will not be easy, but Northern Ireland companies are well suited to meet those challenges and to exploit those opportunities. The hon. Member for Leicester, South spoke of targeting social need—something in which I have a particular interest, as have my colleagues. In allocating public expenditure resources nationally, we have consistently recognised the greater needs of Northern Ireland. That is reflected in the higher levels of public expenditure per head of population.

The targeting of social need priority seeks significantly to accelerate improvement of the social and economic conditions in the most disadvantaged areas and of the people of Northern Ireland. The thrust of priority is to address need, which is defined as deprivation or disadvantage, as identified by objective criteria, wherever it may exist in the community, and to apply any action even-handedly to all who fall within the objectively defined categories.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South mentioned the provision of a natural gas pipeline between Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain. The technical and economic feasibility of using gas for power generation is being assessed, several possible routes for a pipeline from Great Britain are being examined, and seabed surveys have been completed. The crucial issue will be the price of gas delivered to the power stations by comparison with existing fuels.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity and the resignation of its chairman. My hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), the other Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, has already paid a well-earned tribute to Dr. Schierbeek's sterling service in his capacity as a board member of NIE, as deputy chairman and, for the past five years, as chairman. I, too, wish him well in the future. Following his resignation, there was speculation about the Government's proposals for the privatisation; any comment would, I think, be best reserved until the publication of the White Paper later this month. There will then be ample opportunity for all the various interests to make their views known.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South also mentioned training and employment. He asked why the Government did not consult interested parties, other than employers. The Training and Employment Agency has an advisory board, whose members have been chosen because of the contribution that they can make to the agency's activities. They include representatives from industry and commerce, but also from education and, indeed, from trade unions and community organisations. I believe that the board will act as an important catalyst in forging effective partnerships between the agency and the business community.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) raised a number of important points, one of which concerned Rathlin island. I assure him that NIE and the Department of Economic Development are considering the possibility of providing a mains electricity supply for the island, and that the departure of the good Dr. Schierbeek will not alter that. Various types of installation have been identified, but a preliminary application for grant has already been made to the European Community under the Valoren scheme which, if successful, could partly finance the project. I certainly hope that progress will be made.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the agricultural difficulties arising from the EC proposals. I acknowledge that those difficulties exist. The Commission's initial proposals—and the MacSharry leaks before them—met with considerable opposition; the only subject of universal agreement seemed to be the need for reform of the CAP. Budgetary constraints, however, are likely to force the Commission to present stringent price proposals in 1991. The United Kingdom welcomes reform of the CAP, but any measures that are taken must not discriminate against the larger efficient farms in the United Kingdom. Even the small farms in Northern Ireland seem to be regarded as large compared with many in Europe—a point made by the hon. Member for Antrim, North with telling passion. Certainly the farms in Northern Ireland, however small, are efficient by many European standards.

I believe that the CAP should indeed be a common agricultural policy, and that the harm should not affect any particular area. I intend to fight fully for the interests of Northern Ireland agriculture; on my first day in the job I said that I would be its champion, and since then I have discovered that it is not only a battle worth fighting, but a battle for people who are worth supporting. Agriculture is an important part of Northern Ireland's economy.

Like many other hon. Members, the hon. Member for Antrim, North mentioned fallen animals. Regrettably, progress has been painfully slow and extremely delicate; almost every day I have had to struggle with the issues, and my officials—especially the permanent secretary—have tried very hard to get all the interested parties together to find a solution. We need co-operation from all those involved in Northern Ireland agriculture—not only the food producers and the by-product manufacturers but the feed compounders, the renderers and, indeed, local authorities. The district councils have an extremely important part to play. The Department of Agriculture, however, has a catalyst role, and also a veterinary role.

I hesitate to say this, but I know that hon. Members want to know the most up-to-date position. I am close to announcing that a solution has been found, but I warn hon. Members in all parts of the House that at least twice during the last two months I have been close to announcing a solution. Therefore, I hope that my wishes will not be dashed at the last hurdle, as they were on those occasions. I hope to make an announcement next week. I am grateful for the patience and the good advice I have received from hon. Members during the last three months. I believe that a solution is likely to be announced next week. I shall write to all hon. Members immediately that happens.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North referred to flooding. I am grateful to him for what he said. I recognise fully the difficulties faced by those who are not farmers but also suffered from the flooding. The farming community's gratitude for the assistance that it received, after the initial difficulties, from the ADOP funds was heartwarming.

The Government have made it clear that they do not normally compensate for insurable losses, or losses which arise from weather abnormalities, but an exception was made in the case of North Antrim flooding due to the extreme severity and the permanent nature of the damage.

I am pleased, therefore, that we were able to offer some assistance to those farmers. Nevertheless that does not alter the general principle. Naturally I understand the issue raised by the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), but that must fall within the normal pattern.

Mr. William Ross: The principle that the Minister has applied to the North Antrim floods must surely apply to the October 1987 floods as well.

Mr. Hanley: I recognise that, as the hon. Gentleman does, but it was well before my time as a Minister. Serious floods have occurred on many occasions, but the damage is not always so permanent as it was in the glens on that evil night. I maintain that the compensation that we have offered is as far as we can take it at this stage.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North intervened in the speech of my hon. Friend the Minister of State to ask about capital expenditure for hospitals. This year we allocated £44 million for capital expenditure on hospitals, thus ensuring that the momentum is maintained. That is an 18 per cent. increase on the previous year. Major projects are under way in the Province, which should be very proud of its capital expenditure successes in this financial year. When completed, the new hospital at Antrim will cost £35 million. Regional cardiac services at the Royal Victoria hospital are being expanded. A new 120-bed geriatric unit at Gransha in Londonderry has recently been opened. Construction work is starting on a new 72-bed unit at Whiteabbey hospital. A new linear accelerator has been announced, as well as a new headquarters for the blood transfusion service. Many people over here wonder how Northern Ireland gets away with it.

Many hon. Members referred to Coleraine hospital. I was very pleased to meet members of the action committee, albeit briefly and I look forward to meeting them again in the near future. I spent four hours last Friday carrying out research into various issues put to me by the Northern health board. I also visited the Antrim site. I was most impressed by that hospital. I shall be visiting Coleraine in the near future. A local newspaper said that I planned to visit the Coleraine site for four hours. To stand in a green field, even as a Minister with responsibility for agriculture, for four hours might test my patience. What I meant was that I should be concentrating on the issue for at least four hours last Friday. I shall be visiting the site and taking representations from all parties in the near future.

It is understandable that hon. Members should want to spell out the needs of hospitals in their own areas, but the Government have to consider the overall needs and the best means of addressing them. We have rules on major capital expenditure which require detailed investment appraisals of all the costs and benefits of the feasible options. I am pleased that the Northern board recently completed an appraisal of the Coleraine hospital and recommended a new-build hospital on a green-field site. The board is consulting local interests. I assure the hon. Member for Antrim, North and other hon. Members that my decision will be taken as expeditiously as possible. I will write to the hon. Gentleman about the matters that he raised on other hospitals, including the Moyle and Downpatrick. I am dealing with the concerns that have been expressed.

The hon. member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) said that Northern Ireland Electricity should not be privatised by Order in Council. There are many other issues to be considered, but essentially this is a transferred matter under the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973. There will therefore be extremely full consultation when the White Paper is published.

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) mentioned rural development, for which I was recently given ministerial responsibility. He suggested that the Minister responsible should visit the Seeconnell site. I visited the area three months ago, and I found it an inspirational example of community development. Such a bottom-up approach, with the initiative coming from local people to try to keep the area based on agriculture and its young people on the land, is exactly what we are looking for. I was therefore pleased to be able to give them some money from the 1·4 mecu that we received from the European Community for pilot projects, of which Seeconnell was one. The £20,000 that it received will help with its feasibility study.

The hon. Member for South Down mentioned reductions in farm incomes in Northern Ireland. I can only agree with him and regret those reductions. There has been some good news, but last year was bad. The Government recognise the importance of agriculture to the Northern Ireland economy, and it will be one of the factors that we take into account when taking a robust stance in Europe.

The hon. Member for South Down mentioned many other issues, such as the activity of the Industrial Development Board and the Local Enterprise Development Unit in the Down district council area. The story is excellent, and I shall write to the hon. Gentleman. The IDB has 12 customer companies in the Down district area employing 1,200 people. There are two industrial estates—one is full and the other is filling up. LEDU has 83 client companies in the Down district area. The IDB arranged nine inward visits to the Down area.

I shall write to the hon. Member for South Down about the troubles with the spinning industry, but he will recognise that one of the major customers in Brazil has collapsed, which is one reason why workers have been laid off.

I thoroughly agree with the comments of the hon. Member for South Down about family credit forms. I welcome his suggestions and will bring them to the attention of those concerned to promote increased take up of family benefit and other benefits. The forms are full of gobbledegook and are difficult to complete. Even a chartered accountant would experience difficulty with some of them.

The hon. Member for North Down (Mr.Kilfedder) mentioned Bregenz house, of which I saw the details the other day, and I know that the hon. Gentleman presented a petition to the House which is being considered by the Department.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North will return from fighting for Ulster in the far east on Thursday. I look forward to giving him details of all the various roads that were mentioned in tonight's debate.

Health councils, which were mentioned by the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis), will be set up as soon as possible. District councils are being asked to nominate members in the next

[Mr. Hanley]

three weeks and we are advertising in newspapers for the other members. I agree that the subject of waste disposal is absolutely vital.

The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) said that farm incomes are low. The rural development programme has been based on an inter-departmental committee. We recognise that planning issues are extremely important, and I plan to have a meeting with my fellow Under-Secretary of State to discuss them. The other answers to his questions will be forthcoming *[Interruption.]* The message says that I may have the extra two minutes, thanks to the hon. Member for Antrim, North.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) said that noise was a form of pollution and I thoroughly agree with him. I shall make sure that in conjunction with my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, we shall look at that matter afresh. I shall certainly look into the disablement allowance case when I have *Hansard* to hand.

The hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) talked about competitive tendering standards. Although I cannot comment on the specific tender, I can say that quality of service is the overriding concern in every contract. All work undertaken in bringing forward this initiative has fully taken standards into account. I shall deal with educational assessment in writing.

I have dealt with most of the matters raised by the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross). The issues raised by the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) will be dealt with by my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North. In response to the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), I know that my hon. Friend well knows Craigavon's particular problems and circumstances, as do I. I have visited it regularly and I know that my hon. Friend will respond.

In the time available, I have tried to answer as many of the points raised in the debate as I can. I will arrange for written replies to be sent on the outstanding points. I know that Northern Ireland Members in particular welcome the opportunities provided by appropriation debates to raise issues which concern them and their constituents. They would not expect me, therefore, to be able to cover everything in response. This evening is for them, and they have, understandably, focused on some of the problems facing Northern Ireland.

In the nearly four months that I have been a Northern Ireland Minister, I have also come to recognise the positive side to life in Northern Ireland, which is often overlooked. I have been struck by the friendliness and enthusiasm of the people, by their determination to overcome setbacks and difficulties, and by their hopes for the future. I have even enjoyed the company, advice and good will of hon. Members on both sides of the House, who have greatly helped me to carry out my job and welcome my tasks. I am also impressed by the exciting developments in the pipeline in the Province——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business).*

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 12th February, be approved.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

TRAFFIC AREAS (REORGANISATION)

That the Traffic Areas (Reorganisation) Order 1991, dated 12th February 1991, a copy of which was laid before this House on 12th February, be approved.

REDUNDANCY PAYMENTS

That the draft Redundancy Payments (Local Government) (Modification) (Amendment) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 19th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

CONTRACT AWARDS (COMPLIANCE WITH COMMUNITY PROCEDURES)

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8162/90, and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by H.M. Treasury on 26th February relating to compliance with the Community rules on procedures for the award of supplies, works and certain services contracts by operators in the energy, telecommunications, transport and water sectors; and supports the Government's intention to press for an effective means of encouraging compliance by providing appropriate remedies for suppliers and contractors harmed by a breach of those rules and which places appropriate responsibility on member states.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Scottish Regiments

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

11.32 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The Ministry of Defence is properly reviewing the structure, personnel and assets of the three armed services in the light of envisaged defence needs, following the ending of the cold war and the reunification of Germany.

This evening I wish to draw attention to the concern in Scotland about the speculation which has been rife over the future of Scotland's regiments and military bases. In an early-day motion I drew attention to the fact that, in the 300 years since the Act of Union, Scotland has contributed massively towards the British armed forces. Scottish regiments have a record of being in the thick of battle in defence of our British national interests. I also drew attention to the fact that the vast majority of Scots have welcomed the many military bases located in Scotland.

The points that I wish to make this evening are political, economic and strategic. The Ministry of Defence should reject the current conventional wisdom that the United Kingdom no longer needs to maintain a viable, European theatre, credible, conventional and nuclear deterrent capability. The idea is that somehow there is a peace dividend that will produce massive cuts in the defence budget and substantial reductions in manpower and equipment. The conventional wisdom was wrong about the Falklands and out-of-theatre naval operations. Thanks to the existence of the through-deck cruiser, now known as the mini-aircraft carrier, and the Harrier aircraft, linked to the skill and courage of our professional military, the politicians' chestnuts were pulled out of the fire and the Falklands were retaken.

Conventional wisdom was also wrong about the middle east, and was again spectacularly wrong about Iraq and the Gulf. Does anyone seriously believe that the United Nations will not look again to the United States and Britain for military support to prevent further military aggression; or that in this dangerous and unstable world, we shall not again be forced to act militarily to defend our national interests; or that a nuclear-capable and politically unstable Soviet Union may not be more dangerous than a stable cold-war Soviet Union? Can we ever be sure that the Soviet military, which has transferred more tanks than the British Army possesses to the Soviet navy in an attempt to circumvent conventional arms treaties, may not be tempted to indulge in risking military adventures against democratic neighbouring states or former COMECON states, even if only to divert attention from its domestic problems?

Events in the Gulf have clearly shown that our Community partners cannot be guaranteed to make common cause against a dictator, even when the dictator, as in the Gulf, is threatening vital European interests. At first, Germany was against the United Nations moves, while France and Italy, at the beginning, can best be described as having dithered and wobbled. Belgium's refusal to co-operate and supply ammunition demonstrated that common weapons and ammunition are of value only when they are available. Belgium's refusal was a poor reward for our having freed that country twice this century, and it contrasted badly with the ready United States assistance given to the United Kingdom during the Falklands war.

I believe that there is sufficient evidence to show that, instead of making defence cuts, we should invest in new technology and smart weapons. We cannot ignore the low casualties and the importance of aerial supremacy, linked to control of the sea lanes, which produced a massive military victory in the Gulf.

There are sound military and British reasons for changing "Options for Change" to "Options for Improvement and Capability". Such a policy would call for modern, flexible, out-of-theatre rapid deployment forces, with a European conventional and nuclear capability. There are also sound strategic and economic reasons, as well as military reasons, for maintaining Scotland's military bases and regiments. General Schwarzkopf is reported to have told the Jocks that the Gulf war could not have been successfully concluded without them. The Prime Minister said in Scotland last week that the Jocks were in the Gulf because they were the best troops to do the job.

One lesson of the Gulf is that modern, highly trained professional soldiers can be in battle in battalions made up from a number of different regiments. I hope, however, that that important experience will not lead Ministers into making the mistake of believing that regimental loyalties and traditions are no longer important in battle conditions. First, commanders must have troops from different regiments under their command. Consequently, in peace time, recruitment and retention are essential ingredients if adequate wartime numbers of professional and trained troops are to be available. In that respect, Scotland's regiments have a contribution to make as their record of recruitment and retention is of the best. If one excludes periods such as last year, when recruitment was frozen the Scottish regiments have always been able to find enough recruits of the right quality. If mixed battalions are to be used, it is better to reinforce success and to keep the regiments with the best records of recruitment and retention.

There is an old military axiom, "back success", and that axiom will apply even if the cavalry of the future operates helicopters instead of tanks or if the mechanised mobile infantry go into battle in helicopters instead of armoured personnel carriers.

My message is simple—back success. Cap badges and traditions, coupled with local community support, will be even more important in the future. If we keep Scotland's regiments, we shall keep Britain's ability to respond to unplanned-for military needs. My hon. Friend the Minister has a good Scottish name and it will not be lost on him that the very existence of the unique Scottish regiments will contribute greatly to maintaining the Union. That Union is constantly under threat from narrow nationalist and socialist nationalist political activists—some in this House. For that reason alone, we should not abandon the regiments, and we should have no truck with the conventional thinking, that claims that we no longer need the regiments in a modern professional Army.

I cannot envisage a British Army without the highland and lowland regiments. I cannot imagine circumstances when there would be no Black Watch, Gordons, Royal Scots, Argylls or King's Own Scottish Borderers—the list

[Mr. Bill Walker]

of regiments is endless. Their absence would be unthinkable, as it would mean no Union, no Britain, no future for us from north of the border in the House.

The Royal Air Force bases in Scotland made a great contribution to the Gulf air force. Leuchars, Lossiemouth and Kinloss all made their respective contributions with the Tornado, Jaguar, Nimrod and Buccaneer. The various helicopter and RAF regiment units also played a distinguished part in the Gulf war and less well-known bases contributed specialist contingents to the Gulf.

I trust that the lessons of the success of all three versions of the Tornado aircraft will not be lost on the Government. Although all the aircraft and crews made their own unique contributions, the Tornado made a particular one. Aerial supremacy was achieved first by the low-level sorties of the GR1. That supremacy was maintained by a mix of low and medium-level attacks against airfields and radar sites.

The Tornado crews vindicated the need for low-level practice missions throughout Scotland's glens. Many such exercises take place in glens in my constituency, but my hon. Friend the Minister will be aware that I have never criticised the need for low flying.

We owe a massive debt to the RAF air crews. I remind my hon. Friend that RAF pilots who are able to execute battle sorties cannot be produced at the drop of a hat. It is important to remember that a pool of experienced, combat-capable pilots and air crews are essential for more than just low-level flying.

In that respect, search-and-rescue crews must also be available and capable of operating behind enemy lines. Privatised search and rescue crews would not and could not be available for such tasks. There may be short-term financial arguments in favour of such privatisation, but there are even more compelling strategic reasons for maintaining an RAF and Royal Navy search-and-rescue capability. Is it not about time that the Wessex flight at Leuchars was re-equipped with the all-weather Sea Kings?

I should also mention the contribution made by the royal naval helicopter workshop in my constituency. The Almondbank workshop may not be well known outside the Royal Navy or Perthshire, but it has a work force of highly skilled and highly motivated people who made an important contribution to Royal Navy helicopter serviceability and availability.

I should also mention the Royal Marine base at Cawdor. The home of 45 Royal Marine Commando is also an important base in Tayside, and the people of Angus welcome the continuing existence of the base.

My hon. Friend the Minister will not be surprised to hear me speak next of Rosyth naval base. The leaks about the future of that base were at best disturbing and at worst a kick in the teeth for the crews of the minehunter flotilla that performed so magnificently in the Gulf. It is no secret that the Rosyth mine-hunters were the only effective mine-hunters in the Gulf. Without them, the United Nations coalition naval force would not have been able to operate in the northern Gulf, and that would have had profound consequences on the conduct of the campaign.

I trust that my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Ministry of Defence will accept that we in Scotland do not believe that it is sensible—militarily, politically or economically—to contemplate closing the base. Instead, Ministers should be arguing the strategic importance of location, the economic importance to central Scotland and the political contribution to maintaining the union through the continuing operation of the base.

I understand that different studies have shown that savings can be made simply by a reallocation of responsibilities and a reduction in staffing levels, leading to as big a saving as would be achieved by putting the base into care and maintenance. During this short debate, I do not have the time to deal in depth with the huge pile of facts which show that the Government would be unwise to contemplate closing Rosyth.

This is an argument not between the Labour and Scottish National party Members of Parliament and a Tory Government, but between the political logic of recognising the contribution made by the Scots to the maintenance of the union through Scotland's regiments and military bases. It is politically unwise to ask the Scots, who represent 9 per cent. of the population, to accept the presence of nuclear-capable submarines in the Clyde and the Forth and also to accept the loss of regiments and bases, when their contribution both in personnel and bases has always been well in excess of the 9 per cent. That fact was recognised by the Prime Minister on his recent visit to Scotland.

Let me make my position crystal clear. I accept that there must be change, that modern, smart weapons are expensive, that we may require smaller, more technically capable armed forces, and that highly complex weapons platforms, be they ships, tanks or aircraft—fixed wing or rotary wing—will probably call for a radical change of procurement policy and maintenance. This in turn will call for greater specialisation, both in bases and the rationalisation of suppliers. In many instances, there will be no opportunity to obtain competitive tenders and Rosyth, for example, could become a minehunter and fishery protection specialist base with another base, say, specialising in aircraft carriers and another in nuclear submarines.

I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will see that I expect them to reject the original "Options For Change" and instead to argue for a military capability based on recent, real, hot war experience—not on political or military theory, but on the realities and logistics of moving, deploying, supplying and, in the end, of fighting a war with smart weapons and the latest technology. Scotland has a contribution to make. We want to make that contribution both in the regular forces and in the territorial reserves and the auxiliary forces. At a later date, I hope to be able to enlarge on that. We shall fight to retain our regiments and bases. There are no soft options, and the Scottish Conservative party, of which I am a vice-chairman, is determined to maintain the unique Scottish contribution to the armed forces, because we recognise its value to the Union and to Scotland's economy.

11.49 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I warmly support what my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) has said. It is an interesting coincidence that, in the 1960s, I initiated an Adjournment debate with a view to saving the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. We won that battle, and I hope that we are setting out to ensure that the remaining Scottish regiments retain their full

position. My family has a long relationship with the highland regiments—a relationship stretching over many generations. Tonight, I speak for all the Scottish regiments, including the King's Own Scottish Borderers—my constituency regiment.

When the "Options for Change" were announced, I urged caution. Later, I asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to pause while the international situation was so involved and so uncertain. It seemed to be quite the wrong time to proceed with a major reorganisation of our services. Certainly, we want to see some peace dividend, but we must proceed carefully. I think that all Members of Parliament want to have some influence on the "Options for Change". We know that work is going on apace, and we are very concerned about it. Positions are being taken up, and before we know what is happening, announcements will be made and the machinery will swing into motion.

We have seven battalions in Scotland, plus, of course, the Scots Guards. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North said, they are the best recruited in the Army. The Scottish regiments have a particular family tradition. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will recall the sad event at Brize Norton on Friday to honour the three young Jocks brought home from the Gulf—three soldiers who had very close family connections with the Queen's Own Highlanders, one of the most distinguished regiments.

I hope that my hon. Friend will bear in mind the training situation in Scotland. We have only Glen Corse. If we lose it, we shall be left with Ouston, near Newcastle. It is very important that Scottish recruits should be able to go to a training depot in Scotland.

I agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North said about Royal Air Force and Royal Navy facilities in Scotland—with particular emphasis on Rosyth. We often hear that 15 to 20 battalions may have to go. Is it to be a question of equal misery, or are certain regiments to be chosen, and the situation to be worked out on the basis of merit and recruiting standards? We could probably get rid of 15 battalions without losing a cap badge. Sadly, that may mean losing some of the Gurkhas and the second battalion of the Guards Brigade. In that situation, we should not be far from achieving the reduction that seems to be required.

But it would be a sad reward for magnificent service in the Gulf if our soldiers were to come home and find that some of their regiments were to be disbanded or amalgamated. There would be serious political and military consequences. We should not underestimate the effect in Scotland of a drastic reduction. It would have a serious impact on morale and on the effectiveness of our services. I ask my hon. Friend to proceed with the greatest caution and the maximum consultation.

11.53 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on securing this debate and on raising this issue. I welcome the opportunity to reassert the continuing importance of Scotland to the operational effectiveness and support of the armed forces. The Scottish people have a long association with our armed forces—a tradition of which they have every right to be proud. I should like first to outline the range of defence activities undertaken by the three services in Scotland. I shall then, insofar as it is possible at this stage of our work on "Options for Change", say something about the future, which is, of course, the principal concern in this debate.

Recent events in the Gulf are still very much in our minds. Scotland has made a significant contribution to the international community's campaign to liberate Kuwait. I hope that there will be time, later in my speech, to describe something of the scale, breadth and quality of the effort devoted by service and civilian personnel both to meeting operational emergencies such as the Gulf conflict and to discharging a wide range of peacetime tasks.

Starting, as is traditional, with the Royal Navy, at the Clyde submarine base at Faslane, the contribution of the work force towards ensuring that we have been able to maintain at least one of our Polaris submarines on patrol since 1969 cannot be overestimated. It is a task that it will continue to fulfil when Trident replaces Polaris in the mid-1990s. The work force also provides invaluable support to a number of nuclear and conventionally powered submarines which operate from the Clyde base. The building work that has been going on at both Coulport and Faslane comprises one of the largest construction projects in western Europe, which must have brought inestimable benefit to that part of Scotland.

On the east coast, Rosyth naval base currently serves as the home port for a squadron of destroyers as well as for most of the Navy's minor war vessel flotilla, which carry out a myriad tasks, including mine counter-measures and fisheries protection.

Aside from the two naval bases and the royal dockyard at Rosyth, Scotland also supports the Navy by providing bases for the Marines and the Reserves, armaments, stores and fuel depots, training and research establishments and the naval air station at HMS Gannet. Scotland therefore makes a full and varied contribution to all aspects of naval operations.

As for the Army, Scottish regiments are among the oldest in the United Kingdom. Two good examples of the strength and length of this tradition are the Scots Guards, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) referred, which can trace its history back to 1642, and the Royal Scots, the First of Foot, originally raised in 1633, which is the senior British infantry regiment. Scottish regiments have distinguished themselves in battle time and again for over 300 years, from Waterloo and the Crimea—where the Sutherland Highlanders formed the thin red line—to the major campaigns of both world wars.

All Scottish regiments have elements on operational tours at the moment. Indeed, 72 per cent. of the Scottish divisions' manpower is currently on operations. For example, the 1st Battalion the Gordon Highlanders returned from Ulster last December and is at present the spearhead battalion, which means that it is on reduced notice for worldwide deployment. Both the 1st Battalion the Royal Highland Fusiliers and the 1st Battalion the Queen's Own Highlanders are on their second operational tour in Ulster in under 12 months.

The Royal Air Force is strongly represented in Scotland, with four main bases. It was no surprise to me that my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North made reference to that. With its two squadrons of Tornado F3 aircraft, RAF Leuchars has long played an important role in the air defence of the United Kingdom. Since the 1970s, RAF Kinloss has been home to three squadrons of

[Mr. Archie Hamilton]

Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft, carrying out anti-submarine and anti-surface shipping roles. RAF Lossiemouth has two squadrons of Buccaneer maritime strike attack aircraft and the Shackleton airborne early warning squadron. Lastly, RAF Buchan, in conjunction with the facilities at Benbecula and Saxa Vord, provides ground-based air defence radar coverage for Scotland and the area to the north of the United Kingdom mainland.

As for the future, I am of course aware of the strength of feeling attaching to the options for change work announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last July. I recall that when it was necessary in 1968 to announce a reorganisation of the structure of the Army, the reaction of Scottish Members showed clearly that Scotland is fiercely jealous of its regiments, and rightly so. I assure the House that Scottish regiments will get the same fairness and impartiality of treatment that will be given to all units in the British Army when we plan for change.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told the House during the Gulf debate on 21 January, we are continuing to study the broad proposals for change with our allies. In view of the collapse of communism in eastern Europe and the end of the cold war, it remains our intention to move towards the new force structures by the mid-1990s. However, we are not yet in a position to take final decisions on the size and shape of the armed forces. I wish to make it clear that, contrary to recent speculation in the press and elsewhere, no decisions have yet been taken regarding Scottish regiments, or indeed any other regiments.

Of course, we are still examining the scope for rationalisation, especially in the support area—for example, a study is under way into the possible closure of Rosyth naval base, but I must emphasise that here again no decision has been taken. The whole range of fleet support activities is being examined as part of the restructuring of the Royal Navy under "Options for Change". There should be no doubt that we need to achieve substantial savings in support costs if we are to sustain appropriate force levels. The present round of studies should be completed shortly, and their recommendations will obviously need to be considered carefully before any decision is made.

Initial work showed that the closure of Rosyth naval base might contribute significantly to the support savings for which we are looking under options. Further work into the implications of closure was therefore commissioned to provide some of the evidence needed for an informed decision. In reaching a decision, we shall wish to consider all relevant factors, including the post-options force levels, the MOD's financial position, strategic and operational requirements and the implications for employment, the local economy and naval and civilian personnel.

Final decisions on options for change will depend on many factors, including lessons learned in the Gulf, discussions with our NATO allies and developments in our relationship with the Soviet Union. I am sure that the House will understand that we need to draw the correct lessons from the Gulf conflict, assess the risks remaining elsewhere in the world and plan carefully for cautious and measured change.

I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the significant contribution which Scotland has made to the successful participation by our forces in the international community's campaign to liberate Kuwait.

The five Royal Navy mine counter-measures vessels, HMS Hurworth, Cattistock, Atherstone, Dulverton and Ledbury, which have played a leading role in countering the mining threat to allied ships in the northern Gulf, are all based at Rosyth. Their success is in no small part due to those at the base who helped in preparing the ships for this difficult and dangerous task in a very short time. The naval supply and transport office at Rosyth, the armament depots at Crombie and Beith and the NATO armaments depot at Glen Douglas have all given superb support to forces in the Gulf through the efficient provision of armaments, food, fuel and general naval stores.

Scottish regiments were well represented in the Gulf, although I have seen some rather exaggerated estimates in early-day motions and in the press. They provided Challenger tanks and M109 guns for 7th Armoured Brigade, Warrior armoured infantry fighting vehicles for 4th Brigade and manpower for special tasks such as casualty evacuation, handling of prisoners of war and reinforcement of field hospitals. We estimate that about 9 per cent. of the total of Regular Army soldiers who served in the Gulf were from Scottish regiments. Of course, not everyone serving in a Scottish regiment is necessarily Scottish, and the figure of 9 per cent. does not take account of the fact that many other personnel of Scottish origin will also have served in the Gulf in units with no specific ties to Scotland such as the Royal Engineers or the Royal Corps of Transport.

I emphasise that the strong representation from Scotland was purely coincidental——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at two minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 12 March 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

NEW WRIT

For Neath, in the room of Donald Richard Coleman, Esquire, CBE, deceased.—*[Mr. Foster.]*

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON UNDERGROUND (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Read a Second time, and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Standard Spending Assessment

2. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what effect he calculated the standard spending assessment for 1991-92 will have on the education service.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Education's share of the 1991-92 grant settlement is 16 per cent. higher than this year's settlement. That will allow any well-managed local education authority to make good progress in implementing the reforms and providing a better quality of education for our children.

Mr. McCartney: Is not it the case that the so-called 16 per cent. increase is a 16 per cent. increase on the reduced budget of the previous year? Local authorities are forced to make cuts because of the standard spending assessment. Will the Secretary of State assure local authorities that there will be no need to sack teachers because of local authority expenditure cuts? Will he come to my constituency and see the effect of local authority expenditure cuts brought about by his Department's policies?

Mr. Clarke: The answer is no, on all points. Education spending is now 40 per cent. per pupil higher than it was 10 years ago, over and above inflation. The increase in the standard spending assessment is a very real increase compared with last year's, which itself was an increase on the previous year. Authorities such as Wigan borough council had a 19 per cent. increase in their total standard spending assessment, but Wigan is a consistently wasteful and overspending authority. I very much hope that when it gets within reach of setting a serious budget it will not cut its education provision, which is so essential.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that even the 16 per cent. increase in the money allocated to authorities such as Lancashire county council will not improve the education of children in Lancashire? The authority employs administrators and teachers according to a 50:50 ratio. The people of Lancashire demonstrated clearly what they think of the chairman of the education service by giving her only just over 4,000 votes at the recent by-election.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend, but Lancashire does not top the league in terms of the relationship between administration and classroom spending. At least one local education authority employs more people in its central services than in all its classrooms put together. There is a huge discrepancy. If councils such as Lancashire have to make economies in certain areas, that is one which they should consider.

Research Funding

3. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the funding of research in universities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howarth): Public spending on university research through the Universities Funding Council and the research councils is expected to be some £1·1 billion next year. The Government will continue to pursue their policy of greater selectivity in the use of these substantial sums, with a clearer definition of the responsibilities of the institutions and the research councils.

Mr. Kirkwood: Has the Minister had the opportunity to study the recently published evidence of the Philadelphia-based Institute for Scientific Information which came to the conclusion that British science has been in serious decline for the past 10 years, and particularly since 1986? Does he agree that it is essential for our future competitiveness that adequate resources should be devoted to scientific research and development? Will he have urgent talks with the Universities Funding Council to ensure that in the 1990s we do not experience a decline similar to that in the 1980s?

Mr. Howarth: There is no decline in British science, the quality of which is superb. World-class, leading-edge science is being carried out in our research institutions. The achievements and quality of British scientists are second to none. If the hon. Gentleman were to visit, for example, the animal genome research project in Edinburgh, surface sciences in Manchester or molecular sciences in Oxford, he would find science of outstanding world-class quality being carried out. I have seen the reports to which he refers, but that is a flimsy and precarious base from which to generalise about the condition of British science. The number of citations is an arbitrary index, and some pretty cranky science is cited in it. That does not mean that it is a worthwhile measure of the quality of British science.

Mr. Batiste: Does my hon. Friend agree that the basic difference between research and development in Britain and in Japan and Germany is the higher contribution from private industry in those countries? Should not we work harder to bring universities and local industries closer

together so that the treasure trove of knowledge in our higher education institutions can be exploited to the benefit of their local communities?

Mr. Howarth: I very much agree with my hon. Friend, but there were dramatic increases in industry's spending on research throughout the 1980s. The development of science parks promises an improved closer relationship between industry and science. The Government were right to withdraw from public funding of near-market research. It is extremely important that industry has a strong research and development base, but so long as industrialists thought that they could leave it to the taxpayer and the Government to buy the research that they should have been carrying out, they underinvested. That is the basis for a stronger research performance by industry to complement the research that is properly publicly funded.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Is not it a disgrace that the Government are increasing the Science and Engineering Research Council budget by under 3 per cent., which is less than half of even their own estimate of inflation for next year? What estimate has the Minister made of the effects of that on university research, especially in view of the research council's statement that, in supporting projects, it cannot afford to take full account of the costs of nationally agreed pay settlements for academic and support staff? Will not that deliberate Government underfunding mean devastating cuts in work that is vital to the future of British science?

Mr. Howarth: The Government have increased the science budget by 23 per cent. over and above general inflation since 1979. Two years ago, there was an 8 per cent. real-terms increase. In a difficult economic context, we have managed to hold steady the underlying level of the science budget. It is for scientists, the scientific communities, the research councils and those whom they fund to determine their proper priorities within the substantial sums made available to them.

School Allocations

4. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the impact of the Greenwich judgment on local education authorities' school allocation policies; what plans he has to introduce legislation to reverse the judgment; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Michael Fallon): My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State received representations from hon. Members, local authorities and from the London Boroughs Association following the court ruling last spring. The judgment's full effects will bear on admissions in September this year. In the light of evidence at that stage, we shall consider whether any action is necessary.

Mr. Sims: How much more evidence does my hon. Friend need of the problems that the judgment is causing local education authorities and the concern that it is causing parents? Does he accept that what is needed is not a great change in the law but simply to restore it to what everybody thought it was before the Greenwich judgment? If he is having difficulty in drafting the legislation or finding Government time, will he facilitate the passage of my private Member's Bill, the Second Reading of which will be considered on Friday week?

Mr. Fallon: I recognise my hon. Friend's interest in the matter and I am aware of the Bill that he is promoting. This summer's admissions will be the first to which the Greenwich judgment will apply. It would not be right to reach a conclusive view until those decisions are taken this summer.

Education Funding

5. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met representatives of local education authorities to discuss the funding of education.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Funding issues are discussed in many of the meetings that I and my ministerial colleagues have with representatives of local education authorities.

Mr. O'Hara: Will the Secretary of State confirm that if local authorities had restricted their spending on schools to the sums proposed by central Government in their standard spending assessments there would have had to be substantial cuts in spending on schools? Does he further agree that such local authority discretion is important because the government of education must involve a partnership between central and local government and that any moves to bypass the local education authorities simply to rescue the poll tax would be misguided in the extreme?

Mr. Clarke: Some local education authorities spend less than the Government's standard spending assessment and, so far as I am aware, deliver a good quality service and do not achieve lower standards than education authorities in other parts of the country. The present position is that education is a local government responsibility. As the hon. Gentleman says, that undoubtedly means that authorities have their discretion to set their own priorities and to decide where to spend more money and where to spend less. I very much regret that some authorities take quixotic and occasionally damaging decisions when exercising that discretion, but that is not my responsibility. The SSA allows any local authority to deliver a good quality service.

Mr. Pawsey: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that in 1991-92 funding for education will increase by 16 per cent. to £17 billion? Will he further confirm that it would be of enormous benefit to children if local education authorities would direct some of the funds that they use for central administration to the classrooms and the schools?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend that the 16 per cent. of which he reminds us must be set against inflation, which is forecast to drop as low as 6 per cent. in the same year, so it represents a massive injection in terms of Government assessment of education spending. If, due to past expenditure, drawing on reserves, or past misjudgments, some local authorities are having to consider retrenching in some areas, I believe, like my hon. Friend, that such an authority should look first at its central administration costs and not start by making cuts in the classroom.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The Secretary of State will be aware that in many parts of the country, including my own, there are real difficulties in delivering the national curriculum in school buildings that are old and are now inadequate for the purpose for which they were designed. The Government have postponed the 1981 regulations on achieving new standards for school buildings, but when does the right hon. and learned Gentleman expect to complete the review that we are told is being conducted on that aspect? Will he pledge to the House that that review will not involve cuts in the standards that our children can expect?

Mr. Clarke: We have increased the capital allocations for next year by 11 per cent. I agree that that is a justifiable increase because we still have many Victorian buildings, especially in rural areas such as the hon. Gentleman represents, and also many 1960s system-built buildings which are no longer adequate for their purpose. The regulations to which the hon. Gentleman referred apply to all new buildings and have done so for many years. The part that is still postponed relates to comparatively small features of schools and will, of course, be part of the review that we are currently undertaking.

Mr. John Browne: During my right hon. and learned Friend's discussions, did anything take place that might encourage local authorities to cut adult education or is adult education something which the Government believe should be pursued?

Mr. Clarke: I believe that there is a continuing and important role for adult education, which should be part of the provision of any well-managed local authority. Where there are cuts in adult education, that can only be because the local education authority has got itself into a financial mess or is choosing to spend the money on some other part of the service.

Mr. Fatchett: We know that the Secretary of State for the Environment wants to transfer the funding of education to central Government, but a recent interview in *The Guardian* showed that the Secretary of State for Education and Science wished to keep education as a local service. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that that is still his view and that he still wants education to be funded by a mixture of local and central funding, or will he be rolled over in the poll tax review so as to cut poll tax bills?

Mr. Clarke: I have yet to read any newspaper account of the discussions that my colleagues and I are having that has been at all accurate. Day after day, I read with amazement of the stances that we are supposed to be taking. My own remarks in *The Guardian* and elsewhere have always been designed to be Delphic in their content and I shall continue to ensure that that is the case. From time to time, however, I suffer the fate of the Oracle in that my remarks are misunderstood.

Seven-year-olds (Reporting)

6. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on reporting by schools to parents of seven-year-olds.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on reporting by schools to parents of seven-year-olds.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Tim Eggar): Under regulations made last year, all parents of seven-year-olds will this summer receive a written report giving them the results of testing in mathematics, science and English, along with commentary on their child's performance in other subjects.

Mr. Sayeed: I welcome that announcement and ask the Minister for two pledges. First, will the time that teachers have to take in the preparation and administration of tests be dramatically reduced and, secondly, will schools be required to publish the results of tests for seven-year-olds?

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend raises two important points. We have reduced significantly the amount of time that the application of the test will take this summer. We shall be monitoring carefully how well it goes in schools and we shall not hesitate to make further changes should they prove appropriate. As for publishing the results of the tests for seven-year-olds, it will not be compulsory this summer, but we hope that all schools will in practice publish the results.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my hon. Friend for that interesting reply. Does he agree that parents are the primary educators of children and that such school reports are essential if they are to help at home with school work —building on the foundations that children get at school —during school holidays and in the evenings?

Mr. Eggar: I agree strongly with my hon. Friend. It is important that schools, as a matter of policy, involve parents in the education of their children. That is why we are advocating that annual reports should include a section making recommendations to parents about what they might wish to help their children with out of school. In addition, we hope that all schools for all children of all ages will have an active homework policy which involves parents.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome the concept of assessment and the encouragement of the development of gifts, but what steps is the Department taking to make sure that children of seven will not be labelled failures by parents or others?

Mr. Eggar: It is important to stress that the tests for seven-year-olds are designed to assess how well children have done, to identify their strengths and their weaknesses and to enable parents and schools to work out how they can assist the children and further improve their performance.

Ms. Harman: Is the Minister aware that some seven-year-olds will not be tested, because they will not be getting any education? I refer to those in hospital in London. Is he aware of the threat to the education service in hospitals because the large teaching hospitals draw children from many education authorities in London and the surrounding areas but the small local education authorities in London cannot provide education for children not only from their own areas but from surrounding areas? Will the Department make sure that

local education authorities are required to provide that education and that the Department will recoup the cost from the other boroughs as and when it is able to do so?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Lady identifies a difficult area. We are in touch with the local authorities and hospitals concerned. We are working hard to try to ensure that we maintain the appropriate level and type of education in hospitals.

Rural Schools

8. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will increase capital allowances for equipment for schools in rural areas.

Mr. Fallon: The 15 per cent. increase in annual guidelines for schools' capital from April should enable LEAs to spend more on equipment for schools in rural areas, as they wish.

Mr. Steen: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is no point in having a new curriculum, good though it is, without the resources to make it implementable? Is he aware that in areas such as Devon extremely low capital authorisation prevents the re-equipping of schools, and credit approvals are so inadequate that new computers, books and other equipment have to be provided by parents raising the money rather than by the local education authorities raising the funds?

Mr. Fallon: Devon received an allocation of about £7·7 million for the forthcoming year. Included in its bid was only £1·4 million for improvement and replacement work, including equipment, most of which it received. I appreciate my hon. Friend's concern, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I recently met a delegation of colleagues from Devon to discuss the allocation further.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in the light of the meetings to which he has just referred between the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the local education authority from county hall in Devon, the capital funding for schools in rural areas should properly take account of a degree of rural deprivation? It is sometimes difficult for children in rural areas to get transport to libraries and other facilities that they need. New spending assessment rules should perhaps take that into account. In that context, does my right hon. Friend welcome the rebuilding of Horrabridge county primary school, for which we are turning the first turf on Friday?

Mr. Fallon: I certainly welcome the project to which my hon. Friend refers. When we republish the criteria for next year, we shall consider my hon. Friend's other point about rural areas.

School Repairs

10. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on the cost of school repairs.

Mr. Fallon: Provision to meet the recurrent cost of school repairs is included in the total standard spending settlement, which in 1991-92 allows for local authorities in England to spend some £17·5 billion on education. It is for each local authority to decide how much to spend on repairing school buildings from the recurrent resources available to it.

Mr. Vaz: Is the Minister aware of the serious crisis affecting schools in Leicestershire due to the lack of school repairs? Does he realise that schools in my constituency have had to wait a collective total of one and a half centuries for repairs to be initiated? Will he visit schools such as Abbey primary school where 75 children have to share one lavatory? Would the Minister like to share one lavatory with 75 of his colleagues at the Department of Education and Science? Will he visit such schools or provide the local authority with the resources that it needs to initiate repairs?

Mr. Fallon: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's concern about schools in Leicestershire—so much so that I have agreed to meet him next week to discuss the matter further. Leicestershire received an allocation of £6·9 million this year, which was over half its bid, for schools alone. That is certainly above average for England.

Mr. Haselhurst: Would not it be possible to achieve a more flexible and perhaps more cost-effective approach to school repairs by allowing schools to have more control over their budgets?

Mr. Fallon: Yes, my hon. Friend puts his finger on the heart of the matter. The more money that is delegated to schools level, the more it can be protected from the politicians and bureaucrats at county hall and spent on those items that the headmaster and governors regard as essential.

Mr. Straw: Is the Under-Secretary of State aware that the Secretary of State is seeking to justify the gross and excessive financial inducements being offered to grant-maintained schools by way of additions for repairs and other matters by the allegation that they are necessary due to what he describes as past neglect by local education authorities? Is the Under-Secretary of State further aware that the Secretary of State has been unable to place in the Library of the House any evidence whatever of such past neglect? Is not that allegation without foundation doubly shameful, given that the clear responsibility for the neglect of school buildings across the country is not the fault of the local authorities but that of central Government who, over the past 10 years, have denied local authorities the money to repair their schools?

Mr. Fallon: If grant-maintained schools had felt properly looked after by their councils, they would not have chosen to be grant maintained. Through direct grants, we are able to spend more on such schools than their councils have spent over the years. Extra spending on schools should be welcomed and not complained about.

Mr. Conway: Is it my hon. Friend's experience that schools that have complete control of their budgets have a more flexible and successful repairs policy compared with schools that still see a huge slice of their possible repairs budget retained by the local education authority for its own bureaucratic purposes?

Mr. Fallon: That is exactly why we aim shortly to propose a new requirement as to the maximum amount

that a local education authority can hold back at the centre. It is to ensure that more resources are delegated to school level where they can best be allocated.

Nursery Places

11. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the change in the demand for nursery places in the United Kingdom in recent years.

Mr. Eggar: It is for local authorities to assess changes in the requirements of the under-fives and how these might best be met within available resources. The numbers of these children attending school full or part time has grown markedly over the period of the present Government and our expenditure plans allow for this welcome trend to continue.

Mr. Bennett: Can the Minister confirm that the Secretary of State for Education and Science has now denounced the promise made by the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) in 1972 that as a nation we should try to provide universal nursery education for all children whose parents want it? Given that most of our European Community partners allow their children to get off to a good start with nursery education, and given the Prime Minister's commitment to putting education first, is not it high time that we provided places for all children aged between three and five whose parents want them to attend nursery schools?

Mr. Eggar: What I can confirm is that 150,000 more children now have nursery education than 10 years ago; there has been a 50 per cent. real increase in expenditure on nursery classes and nursery children; and next year the Government are allowing an extra £140 million to be spent on nursery education. That is the record. If the hon. Gentleman wants to find a local authority which is offering places for all three and four-year olds, I suggest that he visits Wandsworth.

Mr. Thornton: While welcoming my hon. Friend's statement concerning increased expenditure on nursery education, does he agree that it is absolutely essential that, in that expansion, due regard is paid to the necessity of having a curriculum appropriate to the needs of the under-fives, and not merely some extension of the primary curriculum? All the evidence suggests that that is the best way to get the maximum benefit out of nursery provision and the head start that children need before going into full-time primary education.

Mr. Eggar: I know that my hon. Friend and the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts has studied the issue carefully. That is why my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) produced her report on quality in nursery education, which has been widely welcomed.

Ms. Armstrong: I am sure that those parents who are worried about authorities cutting nursery education will be most concerned at the Minister's response. When will the Government ensure that local authorities have the resources to increase nursery education? Will he further recognise that no Labour-controlled authority is in the bottom half of those authorities delivering nursery education, and that if children live in a Labour-controlled borough they have twice the opportunity for nursery education than in any Tory borough?

Mr. Eggar: What the hon. Lady failed to point out was that the Government have made £140 million extra available for nursery education next year, whereas her hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) promised the princely sum of £100 million—£40 million less than we are to make available. With regard to the performance of Labour-controlled authorities, it is interesting that school leavers in 20 of the 25 education authorities that spent most on nursery education achieved lower than average results in GCSEs. There is a message there.

Civil Scientific Research

12. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of gross domestic product the Government spend on civil scientific research; and what are the comparable figures in Japan and the United States of America.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In 1988 the United Kingdom Government spent 0·55 per cent. of gross domestic product on civil scientific research. The corresponding figures for Japan and the USA were 0·45 and 0·39 per cent.

Dr. Twinn: Does my hon. Friend agree that those real increases in spending on scientific research are matters for praise and not the criticism that we hear from the Opposition Benches? Does he agree that, by any measurable criteria, scientific output in this country, as a result of that increased spending, is a matter for considerable satisfaction?

Mr. Howarth: I thank my hon. Friend. Certainly, the 23 per cent. increase in real terms in the science budget that the Government have achieved is evidence of the high priority that we give to basic and strategic science. I also agree that it is important not to concentrate exclusively on inputs. We are just as concerned with output, where our scientists excel. For example, if one considers papers published in the main scientific journals one sees that, between 1981 and 1986, the United Kingdom share of world output remained constant at 8·3 per cent., while that of Germany declined from 6·3 to 5·9 per cent. and France's output fell from 5·1 to 4·8 per cent. By that measure, the United Kingdom remains second only to the United States of America.

Mr. Cousins: Does the Minister recognise that the problem of research funded by the British Government is that it is not inspired by any industrial strategy and is not worked out in collaboration with industry? Does not industry spend far too little of its own resources in support of civil research? Why do not the Government address these problems? Or is the thought of a weekend with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry too much for these people?

Mr. Howarth: The Labour party is itchy-fingered, as always. It wants a political strategy for science. It wants bureaucratic, political determination of the way in which resources devoted to science are spent. The Labour party's science strategy would be every bit as disastrous as its industrial strategy.

Sir Ian Lloyd: My hon. Friend will know that I want a scientific strategy, not a political strategy, for science. May I ask him whether, in drafting his reply and including the figures that he has given, his officials advised him on the analysis of this matter in the definitions of research and development in the House of Lords report on science and technology? As it happens, I was looking at that report this morning. Is he aware that those figures, together with figures in the 1988 analysis of scientific research in Germany, plus OECD and "Eurostat" figures, fail to support the view that, in this field, we are doing better than Japan?

Mr. Howarth: The whole House has enormous respect for my hon. Friend's knowledge and expertise in this area and for his very serious dedication to supporting British science. His attitude contrasts with the rather frivolous attitude of the Opposition, which persists in rubbishing British science. On the statistics furnished by the OECD, it is correct to say that we are spending a larger proportion of GDP on civil science than are Germany and Japan. One can certainly look at definitions, but the important point is that the British Government are fully committed to the provision of responsible and proper support for British science, which is of an excellent standard.

Dr. Bray: Is the Minister aware that in the United States a great deal of basic research is financed from the defence budget, and that Japanese industry spends twice as much on research and development as British industry? A more relevant comparison would be with France and Germany, where Government spending, in GDP terms, is 30 per cent. higher than in the United Kingdom. Has the Minister digested the House of Lords report, to which the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) referred? That report points out that the United Kingdom is the only industrial country in which total expenditure on research and development, as a percentage of GDP, actually fell between 1981 and 1988, largely as a result of the reduction in Government expenditure.

Mr. Howarth: The Government's expenditure on science, as a proportion of GDP, did not fall between 1979 and the present year. It is very easy to be selective with statistics, but I am not sure that doing so gets us very far. I agree that the Japanese spend proportionately much more on research and development. We ought to emulate them, and that is what Government policy encourages.

I do not agree with the implication behind the hon. Gentleman's question. It is not true to say that leading-edge science can derive tremendous benefit from proportionately high expenditure on defence. It seems to me that defence benefits from civil science much more than civil science benefits from defence. The Germans have been reducing the proportion of GDP that is spent on science.

Mr. Butler: Is my hon. Friend yet in a position to say whether the Advisory Board for the Research Councils has released a small amount of GDP to keep open the nuclear structure facility at Daresbury?

Mr. Howarth: I appreciate my hon. Friend's commitment to keeping open the nuclear structure facility at Daresbury and his concern for the welfare of his constituents there. No one could have fought more effectively on their behalf than he. The decision on the allocation of public funding for science must be made by scientists themselves. No further decisions on that matter have yet been announced, but such decisions will be made by the scientific community, rather than by the Government.

Standard Spending Assessments

13. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken to ensure that standard spending assessment levels will enable local education authorities to meet their obligations under the Education Reform Act 1988.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Standard spending assessments for next year have been set at a level which will enable any well-managed local education authority to meet all its obligations under the Act.

The impact of the Act was one of the factors that the Government took into account in deciding to increase the education standard spending assessments for 1991-92 by 16 per cent. over this year's settlement. In addition, £270 million within the 1991-92 programme of grants for education support and training is targeted on getting the reforms successfully into place.

Mr. Bradley: Following that incredibly complacent answer, will the Secretary of State give Manchester schools a further guarantee that they can spend all the money that they require for books and equipment from their standard spending assessment, so that all the science and technology demands of the national curriculum can be met?

Mr. Clarke: The answer that the hon. Gentleman has described as complacent referred to a standard spending assessment more than 10 per cent. above next year's likely level of inflation, as well as specific grant of £270 million, which includes provision for extra books and information technology. Even Manchester borough council should be capable of delivering a well-run service, and living up to the requirements of the education reforms, within such sums.

Dr. Hampson: Local authorities and bodies such as the Association of Metropolitan Authorities claim that transferring education expenditure to central Government represents a denial of democracy and would create a vast army of bureaucracy. Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind that, until 1958, there were Exchequer percentage grants limited to education?

Mr. Clarke: I shall certainly remind the bodies that my hon. Friend has mentioned of that fact. I shall also bear in mind that, throughout most of today's Question Time, hon. Members on both sides of the House have been protesting about decisions made by their local education authorities in the name of—among other things—local democracy.

Mr. Straw: Would not the Secretary of State have a rather more accurate view of the reality of spending in schools if he had been able to visit a single local authority school during his first three months in office? How can he come out with such bogus figures, when at least one third of all spending on books and equipment comes not from central Government but from parents?

If the figures are as good as the Secretary of State suggests, why is one Conservative authority after another now facing serious cuts in its education budget? Kent faces a cut of £1·9 million, and its entire careers service is being

axed; Hampshire faces a cut of nearly £7 million, with a cut of £1 million in school cleaning and meals services, and 30,000 people will be deprived of adult education.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is clearly in considerable difficulties when he reduces exchanges about school resources to arguments about when I first visited a local authority-maintained school. I was appointed shortly before the Christmas holidays, but my familiarity with schools is as good as the hon. Gentleman's, and my familiarity with the increased spending for which we are providing next year is much better than his. He sees no distinction between increased efficiency and the removal of costs. Next year's 16 per cent. increase will allow any well-run authority, whatever its political persuasion, to provide our children with good-quality education.

English Literature

14. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding the standards set in examinations in English literature; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have not received any representations about the standards set in GCSE or A-level examinations in English literature.

Mr. Nicholson: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take note of the concern felt by the Oxford University English faculty, which claims that students are being exiled from their cultural heritage, that English literature is being marginalised in some schools and that there is a trendy fashion for appearing to raise standards by making exams easier? Does he accept that Conservative Members would not agree to a process of educational apartheid, putting the fortunate few who come from well-educated backgrounds in touch with literature but leaving the vast majority ignorant of their cultural heritage?

Mr. Clarke: I feel as strongly as my hon. Friend that we should ensure that pupils are not cut off from access to the complete corpus of English literature, both traditional and contemporary. Those who are implementing the reforms and conducting today's examinations do not intend to do that. It is not always fair to compare the pupils who took O-levels in both English literature and English language with those who are now taking only English language exams at GCSE. The School Examinations and Assessment Council and the examining bodies are, however, laying down syllabuses that require a wide range of reading and knowledge of English literature, including Shakespeare. I shall do all that I can to ensure that that continues.

School Repairs

15. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what funds have been allocated to local education authorities to meet the costs of repair and maintenance to the fabric of primary and secondary schools in 1991-92.

Mr. Fallon: Over £650 million has been allowed for the recurrent costs of school repairs and maintenance in setting 1991-92 education standard spending. Local education authorities are free to decide how much to spend on the repair and maintenance of schools from whatever overall recurrent and capital resources are available to them.

Dr. Howells: Are the Minister and his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State proud of the fact that many of our kids—not necessarily those of Cabinet Ministers, by the way—are being educated in schools that are ramshackle and shabby and which mark us down as having one of the most philistine Administrations in the past 50 years? What will he do to make the education of our children a priority and to put them in the buildings that they deserve?

Mr. Fallon: We have increased schools capital by some 15 per cent. to some £472 million from this April. As my right hon. and learned Friend has already told the House, there is a 16 per cent. increase in the education standard spending assessment for current expenditure.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall have further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Marshall: During his busy day will my right hon. Friend consider Lambeth council's decision to impose a community charge which is more than four times as high as that imposed in neighbouring Wandsworth? Is he aware that in Merton where there was a change of control last year community charge payers will pay 50 per cent. more this year than last, while the Leader of the Opposition can look forward to a 10 per cent. reduction in his community charge? Does not this show that Conservative councils give value for money and that Labour councils squander it?

The Prime Minister: It is what one has come to expect from Lambeth council and from a number of other councils. One might call it Labour local government in action—if they are not on strike at present.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister still take satisfaction from the leading part that he played in introducing the poll tax?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we are reviewing the community charge. He will be interested to know that we are making good progress and are on track for the announcement.

Mr. Kinnock: Why is the Prime Minister so coy about his poll tax past? Is he not the man who said just last Friday

"I think I'm clear in my own mind which way we're going on the poll tax"?

Can he tell us today: does he want the floor tax or the roof tax, the bed-and-breakfast tax or the bedroom tax, the capital value tax or the extension tax? Does he want one tax or two? Surely he can tell us what he wants.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will find out the answers to those questions before too long, and

when he does he will perhaps, having introduced a roof tax some months ago, tell us what will be the average rate bill under his tax—even in his constituency—how much people in the midlands and the south will have to pay extra under his proposals and how many people will be eligible for rebates under his tax. None of those questions can he answer.

Mr. Kinnock *rose [Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinnock: From his answer it is obvious that the Prime Minister has not made up his mind about making up his mind. Why does he not do the sensible thing, abolish the poll tax completely, which is what the whole of Britain wants and introduce a new system—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—very interesting. But despite his hon. Friends and their enthusiasm for the hated poll tax, why does he not introduce a system calculated on the basis of property and charged according to ability to pay? A fair system—and Labour party policy.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will find out soon enough. Was not it the same right hon. Gentleman who said that the Labour party would produce several different tax bases and bung the figures into a computer?

Q2. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that children need protection not only from abusers but from officials who fail to provide proper protection? Will he instruct local authorities to use some common sense instead of carrying out secret dawn raids on innocent families?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend may know, my hon. Friend the Minister for Health said that further guidance would be issued this summer to local authorities and, of course, the Children Act 1989 comes into force this October. That will ensure that the welfare of children is paramount. I hope that those steps will make it less likely that another situation such as that in Rochdale will occur in future.

Mr. Ashdown: May I congratulate the Prime Minister on the sea change in both the tone and substance of his European speech last night? If he does as he says—place Britain at the heart of Europe, play a constructive part in steps towards a single currency and encourage political and foreign policy integration—he can count on our united support—*[Interruption.]*—even if he has to cope with splits in his own party.

The Prime Minister: It is a generous offer, but I am not sure if it is a fair swap. There are only three ways to go in the Community—to leave, which is unthinkable; to stand aside and let ourselves be dragged along by others, which is untenable; or to be at the very heart of the Community and to help frame the decisions, and that is our policy.

Q3. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Townsend: During my right hon. Friend's admirably timed talks with the crown prince in Kuwait last week, what assurance was he given about the protection of the large Palestinian community there and about future democratic developments in Kuwait? As the Kuwaiti police force was destroyed by the Iraqis, will Britain play a part in rebuilding it and in training the Kuwaiti defence forces so that they can play their full part in the excellent plans for the Gulf, which were recently agreed in Damascus?

The Prime Minister: I raised the first part of my hon. Friend's question with the crown prince when we met last week. He gave me a firm assurance, which he has subsequently repeated to others in public and in private, that the Kuwaiti authorities would not tolerate retaliation against the Palestinians. In the present circumstances in Kuwait, it is difficult for the Government to exert control, but I understand that law and order has, to a large extent, been restored.

In reply to the second part of my hon. Friend's question, we should be prepared to provide the training that he suggests, as we have done in the past. We are discussing the terms and conditions with the Kuwaiti Government.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the Prime Minister stop darting, dithering and dodging and tell us that he is ready for turning by announcing the abolition of the poll tax which, as he knows, is unfair and unworkable and which, as he knows to his cost, is also unpopular?

The Prime Minister: As I have explained, the hon. Gentleman will not have long to wait for the answer.

Q4. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Devlin: If the Government's policy is to stand up for small nations that are invaded by their larger neighbours and to prevent atrocities and the trampling underfoot of cultures by invaders, why will not my right hon. Friend meet the Dalai Lama when he visits the United Kingdom next week?

The Prime Minister: The Dalai Lama is visiting the United Kingdom on a private visit and no conditions have been imposed by the Government. I have no wish to be discourteous to a distinguished spiritual leader. I understand that my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor will see the Dalai Lama at a meeting that he will chair.

Q5. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Prime Minister find some time today to reflect on his words yesterday about producing a more tolerant, more efficient and more just society? Will he tell us how those words relate to the continued imposition of the poll tax on the people of Scotland? Will he relate those words to the problem and, instead of disparaging

votes cast against him and his party as votes cast into a dustbin, would not he do better to look back on the Scottish votes cast against his poll tax in 1987? How can he justify continuing to impose the tax on people who are on income support and on students? Would not it be best to cast the poll tax into the dustbin?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman will endure with the same patience as his hon. Friends, he will soon know the answer. I may come to Garscadden and make a speech about the matter there.

Mr. Budgen: May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the good relations that he has achieved with Herr Kohl, demonstrating that there does not need to be ill will when there are differences of interest? However, will he give the House and the nation leadership and tell us whether he personally favours a single currency?

The Prime Minister: As I have said to my hon. Friend on previous occasions, we have set out in detail our proposals for economic and monetary union, and we have produced treaty language to that effect. There is now welcome evidence that a number of European nations are following our proposals and moving closer to us.

Q6. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Taylor: Is the Prime Minister aware that within the past fortnight, his Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has finished off 2,000 years of tin mining in Cornwall? That decision has been taken despite the pledge of Government support. The cost to the Department of Social Security and to other Departments will exceed the money saved by the Department of Trade and Industry. Will the Prime Minister look again at the way in which Departments operate? At present, one Department may attempt to save money, although there will be an all-round cost to the Treasury in excess of the savings, and there will also be the cost of the jobs of people who lose work as a result.

The Prime Minister: An overall look is taken on these occasions to see what is the right policy. We have to examine the matter not just in the short term, but in terms of what is sustainable in the medium and long term. That is what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will have done.

Mr. Mills: Will my right hon. Friend comment on whether his discussions with Chancellor Kohl and his speech last night are likely to be more fruitful in achieving European unity, while maintaining national sovereignty, than the more fundamental and more difficult to accept proposals of Commissioner Delors?

The Prime Minister: The proposals of Commissioner Delors are not generally acceptable in the House and they are not acceptable to me. We have made that clear on a number of occasions and nothing in that respect has changed.

Q7. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Galbraith: In view of the Prime Minister's strong words against the property tax, which the whole House will have noted, can we take it that he is now in favour of the poll tax, or is he still dithering on the matter?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is as unoriginal as his hon. Friends. He will soon know.

Tourism

Q8. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Prime Minister if he has any plans to appoint a Minister with responsibility for United Kingdom tourism.

The Prime Minister: I fully recognise the importance of an industry that contributes more than £22 billion a year to the economy and which provides work for 1·5 million people. The present arrangements allow for the separate interests of England, of Scotland, of Wales and of Northern Ireland to be effectively represented, while ensuring the necessary co-ordination of the policy for the country as a whole.

Mr. Gregory: As tourism is Britain's fastest growth industry and is the major employer in cities such as York, will my right hon. Friend look closely at the possibility of appointing a Minister who has overall responsibility, rather than leaving this important area to junior Ministers in England, in Scotland, in Wales and in Northern Ireland?

The Prime Minister: It would be difficult precisely to do what my hon. Friend suggests without raising difficulties over territorial responsibilities and the territorial Departments. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has a co-ordinating responsibility for tourism as a whole in Great Britain, but the day-to-day responsibility in Scotland, in Wales and in Northern Ireland rests with my right hon. Friends the relevant Secretaries of State.

Sir Bernard Braine: In view of the importance of tourism between our country and all the other countries in Europe, particularly Germany, is my right hon. Friend aware that those of us on both sides of the House who, over the years, have worked hard to promote friendship and understanding with the Germans and who recall their special efforts in our three attempts to enter the European Community, warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's efforts to establish a trusting and lasting relationship with the Germans in Europe? Does he recognise that the relationship between our two Parliaments which has involved a certain amount of tourism—*[Interruption.]* is closer than it has been for many years. Indeed, it is closer than the relationship between any other two Parliaments in Europe.

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend, who expresses his view with great clarity. I hope that, in view of that clarity, he will see many German tourists in south-west Essex.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a short business statement.

The Opposition have decided that, instead of the debate on the national health service previously announced for the first half of tomorrow, there will now be a debate, until about Seven o'clock, on an Opposition motion described as "The Urgent Need for the Abolition of the Poll Tax". Afterwards, there will be a debate on an Opposition motion described as "Family Hardship in the Recession", followed by a motion to take note of the report by the European Court of Auditors for 1989 and a motion on the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Immunities and Privileges) Order.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Is not the real reason why the Leader of the House has made a business statement not that the Opposition have changed the business for the Supply day, which could have been displayed in the No Lobby, but that the Government have made a mess of dealing with the European bank for reconstruction and development order in Committee and must now bring it to the Floor of the House? Will the Leader of the House guarantee that, when we debate the poll tax tomorrow, there will be a Minister able to give the House and the country a clear idea of whether the Government will stop dithering, swithering and muddling, and simply abolish it?

Mr. MacGregor: There are two reasons for my making a business statement today. First, the Opposition have changed the subject of tomorrow's debate, and I wanted, for the convenience of the House, to inform hon. Members. Of course, a Minister will be involved in the debate. Secondly, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to say that the European bank for reconstruction and development order went to the joint Committee on Statutory Instruments last Tuesday and some defects were found in the original order. A new order has been laid to remedy the defects. It could not be taken in Standing Committee in time for the order to go to the Privy Council scheduled for next week.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I say to hon. Members who are rising that their questions must relate directly to the change of business and nothing else.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Leader of the House has announced a debate to take place tomorrow, initiated by the Labour party, on the abolition of the poll tax. Does he have notice of the motion? He will recall that, when we last debated that subject, the Labour party proposed no alternative to the poll tax. When the voters have a choice, as they had in Ribble Valley, they will vote for a party that wants to abolish the poll tax and has a coherent alternative.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not want to start discussing the merits this afternoon, because they are a matter for tomorrow's debate, and an important Bill is to receive its Second Reading debate this afternoon. I do not think that the voters of Ribble Valley looked carefully at what the Liberal Democrats were putting forward—if they had, they would have come to a different view. In answer to the hon. Gentleman's substantive question, I do not have notice of any motion.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Does my right hon. Friend believe that the reason that the Opposition requested the change was because they were more concerned to explain away the record poll tax set by Lambeth borough council than in the health of the national health service?

Mr. MacGregor: I certainly expect, and suspect, that the issue of Lambeth's community charge will come up in tomorrow's debate.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Given that there is to be a change of business tomorrow, is it not extraordinary that the Prime Minister has not made a statement to the House about his discussions yesterday with the German Government? Surely we should have an opportunity to discuss such a vital issue.

Mr. MacGregor: The Prime Minister not only made an important speech yesterday, which I am sure all hon. Members heard, but answered questions on the issue this afternoon.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): If the Opposition have run out of things to say on the national health service, could we have a Government debate on the subject next week?

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me, but that question goes beyond tomorrow's business.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Would not a debate on the poll tax give the Prime Minister a good opportunity to answer the questions that he has refused to answer today? Will the Leader of the House get the Prime Minister to the Dispatch Box to express his regret for his enthusiastic support that he showed for that dreadful tax over the years when he was a senior member of the Government?

Mr. MacGregor: The debate will be on an Opposition motion, so I am sure that the House will be interested to hear the answers given about Opposition policies on the issue.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): My right hon. Friend will be aware that there is widespread pressure from Conservative Members for a Question Time for questions to be put to the Opposition——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not in the business statement.

Mr. Allason: It is about tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member will have heard what I said—questions must refer to the business for tomorrow.

Mr. Allason: Does my right hon. Friend agree that tomorrow afternoon would provide an ideal opportunity for the Opposition to detail their exact proposals for an alternative to the community charge?

Mr. MacGregor: Certainly, since the Opposition have chosen the subject for tomorrow's debate, I have no doubt that many questions will be asked of the Opposition in that debate.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Is the Leader of the House aware that normally, when a new Member waits to take his seat, I would not ask a question, but as the Liberal Whip, the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), chose to hold up the proceedings, I feel free to join in the questioning?

Will the Leader of the House look at his briefing material and tell us the last time a Leader of the House advised the House in a business statement about a change of business for an Opposition Supply day? In view of tomorrow's motion for the quick abolition of the poll tax, will Government Members be in the Lobby with us to vote against the abolition of the poll tax, or in the other Lobby —or will they be in both Lobbies?

Mr. MacGregor: The first point in the hon. Gentleman's question was a long way of delaying proceedings. There were two changes in tomorrow's business, and I thought it would be for the convenience of the House if I informed it of that.

As for the vote, the hon. Gentleman had better wait and see what happens tomorrow.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As this is such a narrow statement, the questions now are a little repetitive, so I shall take two more from each side, and then we shall move on.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Does the Leader of the House agree that to have a debate tomorrow on the community charge or the poll tax—call it what one will—is a gross misuse of parliamentary time? We are in the middle of a review, the result of which will be announced shortly, as the Prime Minister told us four times this afternoon. The Opposition were invited to say their piece and make their input into our review, but refused, although other parties agreed. What on earth are we wasting parliamentary time for?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should make that speech tomorrow.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend makes his point loud and clear. I cannot be held accountable for what the Opposition decide to do or how many times they change their mind.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Surely the Leader of the House understands one thing about tomorrow's important debate about the poll tax. The rethink that is apparently going on in Government circles has nothing to do with fancy speeches in this place—it is all to do with the mass struggle, the gut reaction of working-class people throughout Britain, and the by-election.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must make that speech tomorrow, if he is called. The hon. Gentleman must ask a question. These are debating points. Bring it to an end, Ron.

Mr. Brown: It is unlikely that I will be called, because many people on the Left are not called. Could the Leader of the House arrange for members of the Anti-Poll Tax Union to meet Ministers to express their views and feelings about the poll tax? That is important.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Really, that has nothing to do with the business for tomorrow.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My right hon. Friend will be aware that two separate pieces of legislation brought about the community charge. Will he confirm that any proposals made by the Opposition or anyone else should take that into account? Shall we have the opportunity fully to debate both pieces of legislation?

Mr. MacGregor: I simply do not know what the Opposition will say tomorrow. The debate will be an opportunity to probe them on their position.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House make arrangements tomorrow for the Prime Minister to put the Government's case on the poll tax? He has failed to do it until now. Is the Prime Minister waiting for George Bush to give him the answer?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman was waiting to get that in at Prime Minister's questions. If I may say so, it was a weak point. The Prime Minister has made it perfectly clear that we shall announce the outcome of the review at the appropriate time. The hon. Gentleman can be sure that the Prime Minister will be fully in command of that.

NEW MEMBER

The following Member took and subscribed the Oath:

Michael Carr, Esq., for Ribble Valley.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of Order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, the Prime Minister made an important statement of policy in Germany, but no statement has been made to the House. I know that you do not have any direct control over that, Mr. Speaker, but surely, as a matter of accountability, when the Prime Minister makes an important statement that we are to capitulate completely to the Common Market, he should make the statement here or give an account of it so that he can be questioned on it. It is disgraceful that the Prime Minister is avoiding that accountability. Have you had any indication that the Prime Minister will have the guts to come to the House and make a statement?

Mr. Speaker: I have had no indication that there is to be a statement today. I did not even have a request for a private notice question.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Electricity Industry (Rateable Values) (Amendment) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Training and Enterprise Councils

3.44 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for full public disclosure of the financial affairs and administrative decisions of training and enterprise councils.

I should like first to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) for sitting up half the night to obtain this spot for me this afternoon.

I sought to introduce the Bill after having read a copy of a letter dated 12 December from the permanent secretary to the Department of Employment, Sir Geoffrey Holland, KCB, to all TEC chairmen about the first internal audits of TECs. The letter gives the findings of the first five audits of fully operational TECs. Sir Geoffrey Holland said that, because of the weaknesses in financial management that they reveal and the disquieting overall picture, he was drawing the matter to the attention of all TEC chairmen.

The second paragraph says:

"I attach a detailed note of the main weaknesses revealed. But the picture that emerges is one in which financial control weaknesses have led, and could continue to lead to substantial levels of overpayment of public funds either to individual Councils or by the Councils to providers. The Public Accounts Committee would not regard such a situation as satisfactory. And I write primarily because I am anxious that you should be able to defend yourself before the Public Accounts Committee should they call you at any time."

Sir Geoffrey Holland went on to say:

"I attach to this letter a detailed note of the audit findings but you will see that the weaknesses centre on:

a. claims by the Councils which could not be supported by adequate documentary evidence.

b. claims overstated by the inclusion of expenditure which was outside the terms of the contract;

c. attendance records not being properly maintained by Training Providers:

d. financial appraisal and monitoring of providers not being carried out; and

e. excessive working capital loans and substantial cash balances being held.

It is very probable that these same issues are occurring at other operational Councils which have not yet received a visit from my Internal Auditors."

That letter from the permanent secretary, Sir Geoffrey Holland, shows that Parliament needs to review the present position of TECs.

How many right hon. and hon. Members realised, when the White Paper "Employment for the 1990s" was announced, that the TECs would slip through the back door of Parliament without a Bill, without a Committee, without the usual scrutiny by Members, with no real debate or meaningful consultation, thrown together by devious means and given authority to spend some billions of pounds of taxpayers' money?

The Department of Employment said that the management of those bodies would be run by a board of at least nine but no more than 15. At least two thirds of the directors, including the chairman, must be local business leaders from the private sector who are chairmen, chief executives or top operational managers at local level or in major companies.

The composition of the boards and the reasons for the directive need careful scrutiny, because those are the very people whom the Department of Employment has been attempting over the years to encourage to introduce training in their companies and who have constantly and continually failed or, in most cases, never even attempted to introduce any company-run training scheme.

It is passing strange, to say the least, that, as soon as the Government are prepared to pump money into new schemes, those overworked, busy, pressurised managing directors become interested overnight. Within 12 months, from March 1989 to March 1990, there were 65 potential TECs, with 600 directors or managing directors on their boards of management, all taking a new-found interest in training.

So what was the purpose of the transformation from employment training to training and enterprise councils? Was it to benefit the training programme, to provide better trainers, to give more and varied opportunities for trainees, for all the training managers to have sufficient funding to provide adequately for the training and expertise needed in the changing modern industrial world, or to help get through the recession and meanwhile provide a trained work force to overcome the challenge in the aftermath of the recession?

Alas, it was nothing so ambitious, nothing with such forethought and constructive imagination. TECs were created to give private sector employers, backed by specially selected civil servants, the opportunity to run down what some training managers have taken a decade to build, and to destroy the whole concept of devoted trainers training trainees with patience and care, to enable them to develop and maintain a rightful, dignified position in the employment of their choice, with skills to maintain themselves and their families and to be of use to employers and their country in future.

The training structure has been replaced with a system which caters for the concept of greed and malicious manipulation. Having rid themselves of the real purpose of training, the Government have replaced it with a system which directs funding and training places to their own firms, for personal greed, with easy backhand treatment of civil servants administering the system and without parliamentary scrutiny, with the excuse of plc cover to avoid answering the questions of hon. Members.

It is frightening to think that Parliament, with all its Select Committees to scrutinise the executive, has been hoodwinked into allowing such a system to be established. Already, 6,000 experts in training have been made redundant as a result of the £350 million reduction in Government spending on adult training—at a time when unemployment has been increasing constantly for 10 consecutive months.

The position is even worse when redundancies are particularly severe for the trainers in the voluntary sector. One group, Community Industry, specialising in training for special needs, has already declared 1,000 staff redundant. The National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders has already had notice that 10 of its projects will not be funded, and more are to follow. Places with many and varied organisations all around the country are being cut.

The Secretary of State for Employment, having cut the budget by £350 million when TECs were introduced, announced on 26 February—no doubt aware of the general election round the corner—that an extra £120 million would be made available to TECs. There is a need for more funding, but with proper financial scrutiny,

especially by Parliament, to prevent trainees being sent to TEC boards and companies in collusion with their chief executives and other officers.

In Mid Glamorgan TEC, the chief executive officer, Mr. Alan Williams, has decided to cut a training organisation of 10 years' standing that trained 4,000 trainees. It was recognised throughout the Principality and praised by Ministers and others for a well conducted, organised and efficiently managed scheme, but Mr. Williams claimed that the organisation did not meet the training standards set by TECs. At the same time, he spends thousands of pounds advertising for new training managers whose training is not accessible, because they have yet to establish themselves. The places are brand new, or are in firms in a list approved by him or others.

The whole system lends itself to the possibility of great corruption. Private firms seem to have all the advantages. We need to know who makes decisions and on what basis decisions are made. Who receives the funding? What amounts do they receive? Hon. Members must be able to question everyone involved. All TEC meetings should be open to the public.

I am given to understand that, when the Mid Glamorgan TEC board met at 8 am on Tuesday 19 February, there was a decision of no confidence in the managerial staff. Yet they are still there. Why? Have they something to say, so they stay? Even the right-wing Bow Group of the Conservative party is pressing the Government to make sweeping changes. Phillip Virgo, the author of the report, recently claimed that the Government should ensure the quality——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has already had his 10 minutes. Will he please bring his remarks to a close?

Mr. Powell: —and relevance of current training bodies such as the training and enterprise councils, through the regular publication of performance figures, student placements and employment satisfaction. That accountability is what my Bill aims to achieve.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Ray Powell, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Jim Callaghan, Mr. Donald Anderson, Mr. Tom Cox, Mr. Paul Murphy, Mr. Alun Michael, Mr. Ernie Ross, Mr. Doug Hoyle, Mr. Frank Haynes, Mr. Dennis Turner and Miss Kate Hoey.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Ray Powell accordingly presented a Bill to provide for full public disclosure of the financial affairs and administrative decisions of training and enterprise councils: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 26 April and to be printed. [Bill 107.]

Orders of the Day

Planning and Compensation Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, during the last few years I have accepted the responsibility on this side of the House for keeping you out of trouble. I always worry deeply when you stray a little from the straight and narrow. I refer to your response to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who raised a point of order about the need for a statement on the Prime Minister's visit to Germany and his discussions there. I was not a bit surprised when I heard you say that you had had no request for a statement, but I was absolutely flabbergasted when I heard you add that there had not even been a request for a private notice question.

As you well know, if an application is made for a private notice question and you refuse it, we on these Benches are strictly forbidden to raise the matter. In your final months of office, I should not like to see you making such an elementary mistake.

Mr. Speaker: I have to confess to the hon. Member and to the House that it was a mistake. I am not supposed to give my reasons. It slipped out.

A great many hon. Members wish to participate in the debate. Therefore, I intend to place a 10-minute limit on speeches between 6 and 8 o'clock.

3.57 pm

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Sir George Young): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Our system of town and country planning has been in place for over 40 years, and by and large it serves us well. In a country which is as densely populated as ours, difficult decisions about the proper use of land are unavoidable. Most activities require land—homes, growing food, manufacture, transport, leisure. Conflict is not uncommon between those in both the public and private sectors who wish to change the use of land—whether to provide public services such as schools, hospitals, roads and rail links, or private services such as new homes or shopping centres —and the interests of conservation and amenity and of local people who are reluctant to see change. The planning system provides the framework for resolving these inevitable conflicts. The Bill brings the system up to date, and enhances its credibility.

It does this by ensuring that planning decisions are made efficiently and effectively; that they take proper account of the many interests involved; that the system provides for as much certainty as possible for those who use it; and that its provisions are properly enforced. Our aim is to strike the right balance between planning authorities and landowners; and, in land compensation, between private interests and the public interest. I hope to explain the provisions of the Bill with those fundamental considerations in mind.

Many hon. Members are rightly exasperated at the ease with which people can flout planning controls and get away with it. The present enforcement systems are rightly criticised for their complexity and slow operation. That

[Sir George Young]

reduces public confidence in the development control system and appears to penalise those who comply with the rules. It can also adversely affect our environment.

Clauses 1 to 11, and their Scottish equivalents, clauses 28 to 37, contain important measures to strengthen, improve, simplify and speed up the enforcement process. They are based broadly on the recommendations made by Mr. Robert Carnwath, QC, in his report of April 1989 entitled "Enforcing Planning Control". The Government, and indeed everyone concerned with the planning system, are grateful to Mr. Carnwath for his clear and succinct report.

Mr. Carnwath's recommendations were generally welcomed in the extensive consultation exercise that followed publication of the report. They provide a balanced package of improvements so that planning authorities can take effective enforcement action where necessary.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): The Association of District Councils compliments the Government on the improvements in the Bill but is conscious that measures contrary to the interests of planning can occur. No proceedings can be taken when a field is developed by gipsies without planning permission, who then assault officers of the local authority when they serve an injunction on them. Would it not be better if the Bill provided for a criminal offence, so that notices could be served by the police and whoever was responsible for those actions would have a criminal record, which would certainly act as a strong deterrent?

Sir George Young: Many Conservative Members feel strongly about this matter. I had the pleasure of receiving a delegation from my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), when we discussed it at length. Clauses 2 and 3 will give local authorities additional powers, which may help with the problem that he described. The power to take an injunction against persons unknown will be especially helpful in dealing with gipsies, because it is sometimes difficult to get their names from them.

On the specific question of criminalisation, initially I agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham that it would be right to bring the criminal law into play, but the Carnwath report persuaded me the other way. The House must take on board several arguments. The onus of proof in a criminal case is far higher than in a civil case. In a civil case, the balance of probability applies, but in a criminal case the onus is on the prosecution to prove it.

The problem with creating a criminal offence is that it does nothing to remedy the offence. The local authority could apply to a magistrates court for an injunction and prosecute, but it may be weeks before the case is heard. Even if the case is won, the offence still occurred. To tackle the underlying injustice, the local authority would have to take enforcement action, so two parallel processes would be going on at the same time.

To reduce bureaucracy and achieve a better system, there must be a better enforcement system, with substantially increased penalties, which we are providing for in the Bill, rather than a criminally based system, which would not deal with the fundamental problem. I hope to say more about that later.

The new planning contravention notice, which is introduced in clause 1, is meant to encourage developers and authorities to talk to each other in the early stages of the process. At present, when a development goes ahead without planning permission but is broadly acceptable in form, the planning authority faces a dilemma: it cannot regularise it by granting planning permission, perhaps with conditions that it wishes to impose, and if the development is not acceptable, it will probably have no alternative to taking enforcement action, even though it might be changed to make it acceptable as a result of discussion with the developer.

In future, the authority will be able to use the planning contravention notice to break the deadlock by requiring the developer to refrain from carrying out further development or by inviting him to apply for planning permission if it would be willing to grant it. The advantage of that procedure is that it does not bring the developer immediately within the scope of the criminal law, and discussions can take place between the authority and developer.

I prefer that more constructive approach, rather than criminalising all unlawful development, which carries a risk of catching a range of minor planning offences which none of us would regard as criminal behaviour. Where enforcement is necessary, the Bill provides important strengthening and improvement of the present enforcement powers, including the possibility of obtaining a court injunction, and greatly increased summary maximum penalties for enforcement offences.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): In supporting my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) and the Association of District Councils, am I right in assuming that the provisions give discretion to the local authorities, which would surely not be under an obligation to go down that route? Therefore, the frivolous, small or inadvertent case would not be prosecuted in that way because the local authority would choose a criminal prosecution only when it was faced with persistent offenders.

Sir George Young: I understand that argument, but it detracts to no small extent from the argument for criminal sanctions which, as put to me by the delegation to which I have just referred, was that a criminal sanction would act as a deterrent. I do not think that it would act as a deterrent—[HON. MEMBERS: "It will."] It would not act as a deterrent if there was some uncertainty about whether the power would actually be used. My hon. Friends should also bear in mind the fact that the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the Local Government and Planning Bar Association and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities were all against criminalising this offence. The only representations that I have received on behalf of criminalisation were from the planning officers of the district councils. There is no unanimity that it would be right to criminalise that action among those responsible for enforcing the planning process.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Is my hon. Friend aware that, in 1989, 74,979 complaints were received by planning departments throughout the country about unlawful developments? That is the scale of the problem. Giving a criminal twist to this matter would mean that those people who build houses without planning consent in areas of outstanding natural beauty, as has happened in

my constituency, would think twice before doing so. The threat of criminal sanctions will prevent people from carrying out such anti-social and unlawful acts.

Sir George Young: I look forward to a long and vigorous debate in Standing Committee on the question of whether it would be right to introduce criminal sanctions into the planning process. Of course, I recognise the strong feelings of my hon. Friends about the need to enforce the credibility of the planning system.

The proposals in clauses 10 and 36 clarify the lawful use and development of land and are also based on the Carnwath report's recommendations.

Clause 12 makes important changes to the law relating to planning agreements. It introduces the concept of planning obligations, which includes both the familiar planning agreements, and unilateral undertakings. The clause will enable a developer to make an undertaking to carry out works or to contribute to infrastructure, as an alternative to a planning agreement with the local planning authority. I stress—there has been some misunderstanding of this point—that undertakings will be an alternative to agreements, not a replacement for them.

Under the present law, a planning authority may hold out for exessive planning gain or be unwilling to reach an agreement that will resolve its planning objections to a proposed development. The developer can, of course, appeal, and the inspector may be willing to grant the appeal subject to a satisfactory planning agreement, but if the authority still obdurately refuses to reach agreement, the developer is stuck. Allowing him to make an undertaking, enforceable by the authority, will break the logjam.

The second major change is to make provision for the modification and discharge of planning obligations. At the moment, a planning agreement can be discharged or modified only by applying to the Lands Tribunal, and then only on the grounds that it is legally obsolete. But, over time, the purpose behind a planning obligation may disappear, or circumstances may change, so that the obligation is no longer relevant in planning terms. Clause 12 provides that modification or discharge will be possible either with the consent of the parties or by a formal process of application to the local planning authority, with a right of appeal to my right hon. Friend where the application is refused or not determined in time. That right will be available only where the obligation no longer serves a useful purpose.

Clauses 13 to 16 and 38 to 40 make a number of changes to the procedures governing planning applications. They are designed to simplify the development control process and make it more efficient. Clauses 13 and 38 enable the Secretary of State to prescribe in a development order the detailed arrangements for publicity and notification of planning applications.

This will mean that the statutory requirements for publicity and notification can be adapted with greater speed to reflect changing demands and circumstances. For example, we should not have to wait another 10 years for the next planning Bill if we wished to alter the number of days that a site notice advertising "bad neighbour" development was required to be displayed before a planning application for that development could be submitted.

Consideration of clause 13 in another place stimulated discussion about the extent to which planning applications should be publicised, and the options for achieving such publicity. We have stated our intention of tabling an amendment which would specifically require the owners and tenants of agricultural holdings to be notified of planning applications affecting land in which they have an interest. We have also undertaken to prepare further guidance about neighbour notification generally for local planning authorities. I look forward to hearing the views of the House on that subject.

Clauses 14 and 39 are designed to give local planning authorities the power to decline to determine an application if a similar application has been rejected by the Secretary of State within the previous two years and there has been no material change in circumstances. That will enable authorities to deal with developers who use repetitive planning applications as a means of wearing down the resistance of local authorities and local communities.

Clauses 15 and 40 would enable the Secretary of State to dismiss an appeal where the appellant delays its progress unreasonably. That is designed to stop developers using planning appeals as a tactical device rather than as an action of last resort.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): The theme of the Minister's last remarks has been efficiency. I appreciate that the point I now raise is not in the Bill, but it seems that much of the delay in the planning procedure occurs in his Department, which first takes a lengthy period to decide whether to call in a decision, secondly, to appoint a date for the inspector to hear the appeal, thirdly, for the inspector to report, and, fourthly for the Minister to make up his mind. If his Department could get its skates on, many of the problems associated with planning decisions would go away.

Sir George Young: My Department is increasing the number of inspectors dealing with that problem. Also, the number of cases being dealt with per inspector has gone up —their productivity is increasing—and that, combined with a reduced number of appeals, will, I hope, mean that the backlog will be caught up and my Department can improve its performance in that respect.

I was referring to clause 15. Amendments to that clause were moved in another place to overcome the problems associated with twin tracking. That is a tactical device of submitting two similar planning applications at the same time. Where a decision is not reached within eight weeks, negotiations with the planning authority can continue on one application while the other is the subject of an appeal to the Secretary of State. If the authority grants permission on the first application before the appeal is heard, the appeal is withdrawn. That can be a useful spur with which to goad some local authorities into swifter handling of planning applications, but it can also waste public resources.

In response to the amendments in another place, we have issued a consultation letter inviting comments on a proposal which would allow local planning authorities to decline to determine a planning application while a similar application is the subject of an appeal. If appropriate, we will table a suitable amendment to the Bill during its passage through this House.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Having chaired a planning committee for five years, I am aware of the difficulties that the Minister is addressing; but does he

[Mr. David Wilshire]

accept that, as well as trying to tip the balance against applicants who take advantage of the system—by making more than one application or appealing frivolously—there is substance in claiming that applicants who are spun out by planning authorities or by his Department should have some redress? Will he consider, as well as saying that, if an appeal takes too long it should be dismissed, saying that, if a planning authority takes too long, the appeal should be allowed automatically because of dithering by bureaucrats?

Sir George Young: As I said, the present system acts as a goad to the local authority. The Government have not taken a decision on whether twin tracking should be banned. We are consulting in an exercise that began on 6 March, and when we have a clearer view of the balance of opinion, we shall reach a judgment and perhaps table an amendment at a later stage.

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): Why has the Minister not taken this opportunity to introduce a right of appeal by citizens whose interests will be affected by the granting of planning permission? As the Minister knows, the only right of appeal at present is by an applicant whose application has been turned down. Many people may be adversely affected by the granting of an application, and a right of appeal is a long overdue reform. The Minister should consider this matter.

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman rightly reminds the House that objectors have no right of appeal if planning permission is granted. That has always been the case. The theory is that the local planning committee takes the decision as the representative of the community. That is the process by which the views of the community are fed into the decision making machinery. If the hon. Gentleman or any of his hon. Friends wishes to table an amendment giving a right of appeal to objectors, we shall consider it and try to persuade the Committee that it is redundant. That is another debate in Committee to which I look forward with mounting anticipation.

Clause 17 provides the statutory framework for reforming the arrangements under which local authorities deem themselves planning permission. This package of measures was welcomed by most respondents when we consulted on it last year. It will require that all local authority development proposals must be fully advertised and decided in public by a committee that is not responsible for the management of the land concerned. We shall also require that, when such proposals conflict with the development plan, they must be reported to my right hon. Friend, so that he can consider calling them in for his own decision.

Clauses 18 and 41 and schedules 1 and 7 implement proposals set out in the consultation paper on efficient planning, although modified in the light of the responses to that consultation. They provide for development involving the depositing of mineral waste to be subject to the same planning powers and controls as apply to the winning and working of minerals, and extend, for use in suitable circumstances, the power to impose after-care conditions to development involving waste disposal. That will make it clear that local authorities' powers to review mineral working operations and to impose orders updating those operations to modern standards extend to the tipping of mineral wastes as well as to the extraction of minerals.

The House will be aware of the increasing concern about old minerals permissions granted under interim development orders. Indeed, many hon. Members have written to me on this subject. As I announced on 21 February, the Government consider that it is inequitable that the extent and terms of these permissions, which have been existed for close to 50 years, are not recorded, and that householders and others may have been disadvantaged by this lack of knowledge. It is wholly unacceptable that somebody can purchase a house or land in good faith, having carried out all the usual searches and received a clean bill of health, only to find subsequently that there is an interim development order permission affecting his property.

I therefore intend to table amendments to the Bill to require that, unless the holder of such a permission applies to the appropriate mineral planning authority within a specified time for the permission to be registered, the permission will cease to have effect. This in itself is a major step forward in removing an anomaly which has existed since the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 came into operation.

However, I am not convinced that registration in itself goes far enough. We are therefore consulting on the proposal that applications for registration should be accompanied by schemes of operating, restoration and, where appropriate, after-care conditions for the mineral planning authority's approval, to ensure that such permissions as are registered are operated in an environmentally acceptable way. Clearly, that would have some implications for the minerals industry, and it is right that I should listen to its views before reaching a decision. The consultation period ends on 15 March, and I will report the outcome to the House.

I turn now to the Bill's provisions for reforming the development plan system which are contained in clause 22 and schedule 3. They give effect to the proposals in the White Paper of January 1989, as modified by our decision announced in September last year, to retain county structure plans as part of the development plan system. That decision reflected the widespread recognition that strategic planning at the county level has a very important part to play in the planning system.

The structure plan sets out the framework for local planning at the district level, together with the relevant national and regional policies and the counties own policies for the area. It is very important, if consistency and coherence is to be achieved, that the structure planning framework is clear and authoritative. Structure plans have successfully established that function over the past 20 years, and for that reason we have decided to retain them as a component of the development plan.

Turning to local plans, the main change is that non-metropolitan districts and national park authorities will be required to produce and keep up to date a single district or park-wide local plan covering the whole of their area. At present, the preparation of local plans is discretionary. We estimate that only some 30 per cent. of the population of England and Wales is covered. Mandatory preparation of local plans should greatly increase the local community's confidence in the planning

system and simplify the process of day-to-day development control. It will also ensure the removal of detailed policies from structure plans, allowing county plans to focus on key strategic issues.

While the plan can never override all other material planning considerations, in future the balance should shift from planning by appeal to planning by local choice, within the framework of national and regional policies, with local authorities taking their own decisions through the preparation of development plans and the process of public consultation that that involves. The proposals incorporate safeguards to prevent districts from ignoring the need for realistic development in plans. Local plans have to be consistent with the relevant structure plan and my right hon. Friend has reserve powers to direct modifications, should it become necessary.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Can the Minister make it clear to the House that the import of what he is saying is that, for the first time for 10 or 11 years, the Government want to move towards a plan-led system of development, rather than a market-led system?

Sir George Young: We want the system to be plan-led. I made it clear that plans had to be consistent with regional guidance, which will fall within national policy. We want the district plan to be the indicator—the signal—of what is permitted development and the market must respond to the local plan.

Mr. Wiggin: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir George Young: Yes, but for the last time.

Mr. Wiggin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way to me yet again.

How am I to convince my constituents that the Minister really means what he has just said? We strongly welcome the proposition that there should be local plans, but in the village of Wrington, in my constituency the parish council, the district council and all the inhabitants opposed a development which is outside the village fence and was previously outside the local plan. However, an inspector came along, for some reason decided that the development should be allowed to proceed, and the Minister confirmed that decision. Can the Minister give me an assurance that, from now on, he will use local plans as his yardstick to a far greater extent?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend will be better able to convince his constituents than I. He can tell them what I have just said in the House, and on the record, as a statement of Government policy. We believe that, when there is a system of district plans which covers the country, instead of 30 per cent. of the country as there is at the moment, we will be able to devolve decision-making down to an extent that is simply not possible nowadays because district plans are so patchy. If there is a coherent system of regional guidance from the department, down through county structure plans to district plans, that system should result in planning by local decision rather than planning by appeal.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Sir George Young: No.

Mr. Steen: Just a quick one.

Sir George Young: No, not even for a quick one.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir George Young: I shall just get this paragraph behind me because it is relevant, and then I shall give way, for the last time, to my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor).

The new provisions will offer an opportunity and a challenge to the local planning authorities. We are giving greater importance to their role in the preparation of plans —but it will be their responsibility to get on with that task, to ensure that development plans are prepared quickly and are kept up to date. Many authorities throughout the country are already responding enthusiastically to that challenge. We also want communities to see their plans as important vehicles for local choice and for decisions about the local pattern of development to respect people's feelings for their neighbourhood and what is precious in it. Obviously, plans have to be consistent with national and regional policy, and they have to be realistic, but within those constraints, there is much more room for genuinely local choices to be made.

Mr. Ian Taylor: My hon. Friend is very patient, and I am grateful. Can he make clear from the Dispatch Box today that his inspectors will recognise that the 30 per cent. of authorities which submit local plans that are recognised and conform to all the regulations, will not be penalised simply because 70 per cent. of district councils have not put plans in place? There is a suspicion that inspectors do not tend to pay full respect to the local plans which are already approved.

Sir George Young: I can give that assurance—so long as the plans are up to date and conform with regional guidance. The inspector should attach more credibility to such plans than to proposals of an authority that has not got round to having a district plan at all.

Clause 24 gives the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England power to prosecute or to seek injunctions to prevent breaches of listed building control, and also to be treated as a local authority for the purpose of requiring information as to interests in land.

Clause 25 is concerned with the power of the Secretary of State to award appeal costs in certain circumstances when a party's "unreasonable behaviour" in the appeal process results in wasted expense incurred by another party.

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): A moment ago, my right hon. Friend mentioned listed buildings. Can he say a few words about clause 26, which removes the right to compensation when listed building consent is refused? This seems unfair to someone who has an unlisted building that subsequently becomes listed. If my right hon. Friend does not have the answer at his fingertips, perhaps he will write to me about the matter.

Sir George Young: The answer to that rather detailed question is indeed not at my fingertips. Perhaps it will be at the fingertips of my hon. Friend when he replies at 9.40. If not, one of us will certainly write to my right hon. Friend.

Parts III and IV of the Bill, together with clause 65, deal with land compensation and compulsory purchase procedure.

Clauses 55 and 57 place the home loss payment scheme on a more generous basis. The residence qualification is reduced from five years to one year. This will mean a very

[Sir George Young]

substantial increase in the number of people—tenants as well as owner-occupiers—who qualify for a home loss payment. The rules on eligibility for payment are relaxed in a number of other ways.

For instance, the law already provides for a home loss payment to be made in the case of a voluntary sale to an authority possessing compulsory purchase powers. We are now extending this principle by removing the current bar on payment in the case of blight notice acquisitions. In addition, there is an increase in the actual level of payment to owner-occupiers, for whom an enforced move can be especially traumatic. Such claimants will now receive a payment of 10 per cent. of the value of their home, subject to a minimum of £1,500 and a maximum of £15,000.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir George Young: I said three times already that I would not give way again. As so many hon. Members want to speak in this debate, I hope that the House will forgive me if I press on.

As I have said, claimants will now receive a payment of 10 per cent. of the value of their home, subject to a minimum of £1,500 and a maximum of £15,000. The changes will take effect as from the day of the Bill's publication—16 November 1990. We estimate that, together, they will lead to a doubling of expenditure on home loss payments.

The Bill applies to England, Wales and Scotland. I have mentioned the Scottish clauses along with their counterparts for England and Wales. The only Scottish clause that does not reflect provisions for England and Wales is clause 44, which gives Scottish local authorities power to deal with fly posting—a power that is already enjoyed by the English and Welsh counterparts of those Scottish authorities.

A number of people have criticised this Bill on the grounds that it is not sufficiently green. Indeed, the Council for the Protection of Rural England has challenged the Government to demonstrate their green credentials. However, as I said at the beginning, the purpose of the system is to provide a framework for the resolution of conflicts by ensuring that all material considerations are taken into account. That requires that planning system to be even-handed and to ensure that all interests are listened to. We therefore resisted in another place amendments that sought to place a specific environmental duty on planning authorities.

None the less, the Bill does address environmental concerns in many respects. Both the enforcement provisions and the provisions relating to development plans will make a considerable environmental contribution by ensuring that action is taken against breaches of planning control, and by providing a clear planning framework throughout the country. The Bill also includes a number of specifically environmental provisions, such as the requirement that local plans must include policies in respect of the conservation of natural beauty and amenity, and the after-care provisions in relation to minerals and wastes.

Finally, I return to what I said at the beginning. Overall, the Bill will lead to valuable improvements in the operation of the planning system. It is not intended to tilt the balance significantly in favour of, or against, particular types of development. Planning policies will continue to be effected through the existing mechanisms of planning policy guidance notes and departmental circulars. The Bill will, however, make the system fairer and more efficient.

I emphasise to my hon. Friends who have intervened that the Bill is a decentralising measure. It will give local authorities the opportunity, through the self-adoption of plans, to set out more strongly the pattern of development that they, as representatives of local people, want to take place in their areas; and, through their enhanced enforcement powers, they can do more to ensure that that vision is not spoilt by unacceptable development.

On Third Reading in another place, Lord McIntosh described the measure from the Opposition Front Bench as basically a good Bill, which represented a serious attempt to improve the efficiency and justice of the planning system. It has won wide support outside Parliament, and I hope that it will win equally wide support in the House, to which I now commend it.

4.30 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The Minister has just offered me the lifeline that Lord McIntosh offered him in the House of Lords when he said that this was not a bad Bill. I think that that is basically true, but I also think that the Minister will need that lifeline, judging by some of the interventions from his hon. Friends. Our complaint is not that the Bill is bad—although we consider certain parts of it bad and they are among the parts that we want to change. Our biggest criticism relates to what has been left out.

Let me extend a hearty welcome to all the Conservative Members whose speeches I have had the joy of hearing for so many years in planning debates in the House, and who have signed early-day motions and tabled questions. All that has demonstrated that the Government are in an appalling mess over planning; they deserve that, following the way in which they have treated the issue over the past 10 or 11 years. We now have an opportunity to start redressing the balance and we look forward to doing so in Committee.

Let me tell Conservative Members that I shall exert all the influence that I can bring to bear to ensure that as many of them as possible are members of the Standing Committee. I shall give them as much time to speak as I can, and I shall do all in my power to keep their constituents informed about how they vote as well as how they speak. I do not just want to see bared fangs; bared votes are ultimately much more important, and I think that Conservative Members' constituents will find them very interesting.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): As one who will volunteer to serve on the Committee, I assure the hon. Gentleman that he will not need to say a word to my constituents. I shall tell them all by myself how I vote, and I think that they will be very pleased with the results.

Mr. Soley: I undertake to offer the hon. Lady an additional service, which she will be pleased to receive when it comes to it.

The Minister rightly pointed out that there had been relatively little change in the legislation since the 1947 Act. That Act put this country well ahead of the rest of the world and was generally received as a welcome step in the

right direction at the right time. It has served the country very well. Everyone knew that it needed to be changed and updated; what we did not need was the bonfire of planning controls about which the present Secretary of State—the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)—talked in 1980.

It is one of the ironies of politics that, when the then Secretary of State was replaced by the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley)—I do not know whether he can be described as his right hon. Friend or not—the latter poured petrol on the flames, and the right hon. Member for Henley began persuading all his hon. Friends to sign early-day motions criticising what his replacement was doing. Now the right hon. Member for Henley is back in post and, as well as having to sort out the poll tax, the poor man must try to sort out the planning system.

The Bill does not represent a bad offer; as I have said, it is not a bad Bill. There are many good things in it, although there are also many worrying aspects—above all on the bureaucracy side, which some hon. Members seem to think that they are addressing. They are not; they are passing the buck. The main issue is our failure to engage in the debate in which we should be engaging: a debate about the type of planning system that we need for the 21st century, and about how we are to address the 'green' issues that are now so critical throughout the country, especially in the over-populated parts of the south that are now so well represented on the Conservative Benches.

When Conservative Members complain about green-field developments behind their houses or their villages, what they are complaining about is population pressure in a particular area of Britain—the south—where it is most intense. Population pressure exists elsewhere, but it is most intense in the south.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Will the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) explain what he means? He has told us that the 1947 Act is a good Act which has stood the test of time, and I agree with him. Now he says that we need a radical restructuring of the planning system. What has he in mind? What is wrong with our present system? Does it not contain good checks and balances?

Mr. Soley: No longer, unfortunately. Many of the changes made in the early 1980s were retrogressive, and we missed the opportunity of putting in new things. I hope to address some of those new issues during my speech and throughout consideration of the Bill, and the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) is welcome to look at a number of documents published under my name for the Labour party.

We must acknowledge what I shall call, for want of a better phrase, the green issue. In southern Britain we have a population of 22 million to 30 million in a very small area, which makes it one of the most densely populated areas in the world. If we are serious about not just protecting our environment in such an area but enhancing it, we must take account of the green issues. They apply to every other area of Britain, but, because of the population pressure in the south, they bring out Conservative Members like moths to the flame of a candle; they cannot resist coming, because the pressure on them is so great and because it has implications not only for green issues but for jobs, leisure, recreation, transport and so on.

That is one reason why I put this forward as one of the solutions that we can offer: we must have regional structures including a regional planning structure, not least to deal with transport and planning in the strategic sense. The Secretary of State is taking a step towards that with his county structure plans. I was interested to note the words that the Minister used: he spoke of regional guidance being offered. If we need regional guidance, we need regional government on this issue. We cannot get round the problem simply by adding another bureaucratic layer, which is not particularly responsive to anyone, in the Minister's office, looking at questions that the Minister is supposed to answer in detail. He cannot. That is one of the problems of the present system.

When the right hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) was briefly Secretary of State for the Environment, he said:

> "The planning system is in many ways the most effective tool of environmental management available to us."

Anyone interested in green issues who reads the Bill will not believe that it was written by that Minister. I suspect that a large part of it was begun by the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury. He was replaced by the right hon. Member for Bath, who saw it, nearly passed out, tore up large chunks of it, put in lots of amendments in another place and passed it on to his right hon. Friend the Member for Henley, who is now dealing with it. There are welcome changes, and I want to accept them.

We shall argue in Committee the need for environmental impact statements. I should like to take the Minister with me on this. The House of Lords disliked the idea and wanted to reject it, as do some Conservative Members. However, if a local authority cannot say in certain circumstances—not all—that it would like to have a statement on a particular planning proposal, it will be unable to address many of the issues that trouble it, especially with regard to green-field sites. An initial development may not affect a green-field site but it may well have implications for the future. For example, a large shopping centre or new urban development leads to greatly increased use of surrounding roads and causes many other pressures on the surrounding countryside.

The Minister has not, therefore, convinced Opposition Members or, I suspect, some of his hon. Friends that there is no need for environmental impact statements. I accept that it is difficult to define where they should start and end, whether all developments should be included or only some, and how they should be drawn up, but there is no doubt that, in the heavily populated areas of the country, we need these statements if we are to put some flesh on the bones of the idea of protecting and enhancing our environment.

I use the words "protecting" and "enhancing" because too often we think only about not developing a field or forest, in the hope of keeping it as it is. I represent an inner-city constituency, and I believe that to do the right thing, we should positively enhance the green environment. I want some of the countryside in the city, but there are areas in the country where we need to enhance the quality of life generally and to give nature an opportunity to be restored rather than merely protected.

I have already mentioned that we need regional structures. Development is a problem for the Government. I accept that it would have been a problem for any Government, although it has been aggravated by this Government's wrong policies. Development is unplanned in the most intensively developed area of Britain—the

[Mr. Soley]

south and the south-east—while there is underdevelopment and often the wrong type of development in the northern and western regions.

It is all very well to say that we do not want development to take place and that it should be for local people to control it, but if we do not follow the logic of that argument and demand better developments in other parts of Britain, things will stay as they are in the south. That is not good enough. There must be development of the right type throughout the country. It is a question not merely of having the right type of development in the south but of ensuring appropriate developments in the north which can take the pressure off the south. That often means that major investment decisions will be influenced by either regional or national Government as France and every other member of the European Community has done so successfully.

It is significant that, in the European Community, Britain alone has chosen not to introduce regional government. In 1992, we shall pay an appalling price for that, not least in London, which will remain the only unplanned capital city, with snarled up traffic and a deteriorating quality of life. Frankfurt and Paris have expressed a desire to take over London's financial role, and they will be more attractive places in which to live and work. If we do not deal with the problem, we shall pay a high price.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): How would the hon. Gentleman deal with the problem that Greater London, the 12 shire counties and many beyond come within the economic commuting ambit of London? If there were a regional government to cover such a huge percentage of the national population, how would that square with the responsibility of the House and, at a much lower level, that of local councils?

Mr. Soley: I do not want to deal with that issue in too much detail, because it is a different debate, but a regional government would not cover a region of that size. There is a need for a government of London and the south or the south-east, but there is a problem of boundaries. We have assessed that we should need between eight and 12 regional governments for England. That would provide a number of sensible and logical options about how to deal with the south-east. It is an approach which has been used successfully without exception throughout the European Community. In 1992, Europe will be a community of economic regions and we shall be the one country which does not have regional governments to fight for the regions and look after their needs.

Mr. Jones: Other European countries have an entirely different geographical structure. Their population are distributed differently and there are very few cases in which the capital city is so close to the trading exists—whether ports or airports. Such a system would be much more difficult to achieve in the United Kingdom than it is in a disparate society such as Germany, or in Italy or France.

Mr. Soley: Each area always has individual difficulties, but it is exactly the same in the Ruhr valley and in northern France. They have solved the problem, and I do not believe that it is beyond the wit of the British to solve it.

These are important background issues, but I do not want to deal with them in detail today. The Minister said that he wanted county structure plans, and that the proposal to extend local plans should mean strengthening the importance of planning in general. I intervened in his speech because he made an important admission of a major change in Government policy, which I welcome. He said—I saw that several Conservative Members agreed—that the Government's approach is no longer market-led development but plan-led development. It behoves us to get the planning structure right, and we must stop ducking the question by blaming the bureaucrats in the council or in the Ministry. It is up to the House to get the legislation right, but if we do not get it right, it is no good our passing the buck. That does not mean that the bureaucratic structures outside the House do not cause problems, but it is the legislation rather than the bureaucratic system that is faulty.

We need a far clearer understanding of the rules, as do developers and, above all, local communities. Once they know what the rules are and how plans are drawn up, they can become involved. They also need to know whether the plans are certain. As the Minister discovered, one of the great problems of the present system is the lack of certainty. A decision that has been made locally may be confirmed by an inspector but then overturned by the Government, or vice versa.

Mr. Steen: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, on appeal, the inspector considers not only local plans, which have been properly drawn up and approved by the Secretary of State, but the planning policy guidance? Does he agree that they should not be more important than a valid local plan? At the moment, there is conflict, and the inspector tends to favour development. That should be questioned and changed, so that he follows only a valid local plan.

Mr. Soley: I have some sympathy with that idea. I want to make certain statements about local plans and to consider the appeal system, but I shall not be wildly out of line with the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen). Planning policy guidance is necessary in the short term but in the right planning structure, it would become less important.

The predictability and rationality of the system are important and we need to get them right. The Bill helps by clarifying and improving some of the rules, which is why people have welcomed it as a step in the right direction. However, it is not enough.

Clauses 1 to 11 deal with enforcement. They should impose a general duty on local authorities to ensure that planning controls are adhered to. That is difficult, because, for that to be done, we must get the legislation right.

Several hon. Members intervened on the question of criminal sanctions. The Minister will probably be sorry about this, but I have considerable sympathy for him. It is widely assumed that all probation officers want there to be more crime so that they will have work if they need to look for their old jobs, but that is not correct. I am rather doubtful about extending the role of the criminal law. Generally, it is not a good idea, and the assumptions about deterrence are usually wildly wrong. The theory of deterrence works best when considering the dangers of being caught.

When a developer breaches a planning law, guidelines should aim to ensure that he redresses the breach, and that the building is returned to its original state at the earliest opportunity. The hon. Member for South Hams gave the example of a house that should not have been built and he said that the criminal law would act as a deterrent. A far greater deterrent than putting the gentleman concerned under my supervision—which might not be a deterrent—would be to tell him that he must restore the building to what it was previously. It might have to be restored as a barn, and I suspect that most people would not want to live in a barn. People would not take such action if they knew that there was certainty.

We should consider the time lag. Often, a developer knows that, if he keeps his head down for long enough, he will get away with it. We may need to provide a longer period so that people cannot keep fobbing off the planning officer by saying that they do not have the capital, that they have to do this or that or that they will get round to it. We should make it a harsher system in terms of ensuring that the person cannot get out of it simply by delaying.

There may be a case for criminal sanctions if the position is irreversible. One can give a number of simple examples. An opencast mining development may eat up half the coastline or several fields. It may be difficult to reverse the knocking down of a listed building. If the position cannot be reversed, there may be a case for criminal sanctions. I have my doubts even then, but I should be willing to consider that compromise. We should not kid ourselves that we can stop crime simply by creating a criminal offence. Often one cannot. It is far more effective to deter by ensuring that the person who has done something wrong has to put it right and that he knows that the chances of getting away with it are slim. That means that we must get the planning system right.

Mr. Tim Smith: Has not the demand for the criminalisation of unlawful development arisen partly from frustration at the failure of the civil penalties? I see no point in doing what the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) suggests and placing a statutory duty on local authorities to ensure that planning control is enforced. I think that that is what he said. There is no point if we do not give local authorities the powers that are necessary to do such things. I have many examples in my constituency where not just for weeks or for months, but for years there has been no effective enforcement, because the local authority does not have the power.

Mr. Soley: I have much sympathy with that view. I know of cases in which people have got out of doing what they need to do simply by sending occasional letters saying that they will do it or that they are putting off doing so for various reasons. If they delay matters long enough, it becomes out of time. That is especially true of London with the building regulations. There are a number of areas in which we need to ensure that the matter cannot be put out of time and that local authorities have the power to step in and say, "You have done this without permission. You must put it right." That does not mean that we must always take a hard line. A development may be started reasonably and may not be out of character. One might then need to give retrospective development permission. Those are exceptional cases, but we can get the balance right if we put more faith in the local authorities.

One of my criticisms of the Conservative party, in planning as in many other areas, is that Conservative Members tend to believe that local authorities are incompetent and useless, and that they should be got rid of generally. In fact, most local authorities are efficient and good. However, they need the right powers to do the job. They need the right structure of legislation from us—and that is our responsibility—and they then need to be told to get on with the job. We may need additional safeguards to ensure that they do the job of ensuring that the people who live in the area get the service that they deserve. We must not undermine the competence, management and morale of local authorities and then expect them to do the job well, because they will be unable to do so.

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Soley: I do not want to give way much more, because I am aware that many hon. Members want to speak. However, I will give way to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Ground: I just heard the hon. Gentleman say that he wanted to make it mandatory for local authorities to enforce planning control. Is he saying that he wants them to stop having to consider whether it is expedient to enforce planning control, which has always been a fundamental aspect of the provision? If so, he is taking away a huge area of discretion for local authorities which some of us think is important.

Mr. Soley: I deliberately did not use the word "mandatory". I seek a clearer framework of planning powers for the local authorities which would allow them, as I suggested when I gave my example, to give retrospective planning permission. I want to ensure that the local authorities can use their planning powers effectively when there has been a breach of planning law. The present problem is that local authorities often cannot do that, either because the matter is out of time or because they do not have effective powers. We must get such matters right in the Bill; we have not got them right yet.

It is not merely an argument about mandatory versus expedient. It is more an argument for giving local authorities the power to act in both directions so that they can deal sympathetically with the genuine case of a person who has gone ahead with a building repair or change without following through all the regulations. The change may be perfectly reasonable. We want local authorities to allow such a case to be put right retrospectively, without at the same time allowing someone to turn a barn in a field into a mini-factory, which aggravates so many people in rural areas. The general duty for local authorities to ensure that planning controls are adhered to is important and we look forward to the debate on criminal sanctions.

One problem is the appeal mechanism. I suggest to the Minister and to Conservative Members that we have an opportunity in the Bill to consider that mechanism, which is inadequate. In Committee, we may wish to consider whether we should take a bolder step and say that if there is a modern plan, drawn up by the local authority, by the regional government or by the county, it must be, as the Minister seemed to suggest it should be, the guiding light for planning development in the area. If it is, it follows that, if someone makes an application for a development that runs counter to the plan, there is a strong case for

[Mr. Soley]

saying that there will be no appeal. However, if a person is refused a permission when it is in line with the plan, there should be an automatic right of appeal.

The critical point is that if the plan is out of date or if recent dramatic changes have taken place, such as the building of an airport which might change the nature of the area, there should be a case for appeal—perhaps a judicial review—to see whether the plan is sufficiently up to date for the local authority to decide to refuse permission. There should be a three-pronged approach: a right of appeal if a person's application has been refused when it is in line with the plan, no right of appeal when it is not in line with the plan and a right to judicial review if there are doubts. I do not give that structure in detail, although it is an area on which we have worked. We consider that it has sufficient potential to be considered for inclusion in the Bill.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) said, there is also a case for a third-party right of appeal. That needs to be tightly defined, because we do not want to provide another opportunity to delay development that has already been tried and tested. However, there are cases in which the local authority and the developer both want the development to go ahead for wider reasons, but in which the local people have genuine reasons for saying that the development would not be right or would be out of line with the plan. In such circumstances, we should try to draw up a tightly defined third-party right of appeal, which would go some way to meeting the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham. The third-party right of appeal troubles not only the south but the north. People sometimes feel that their views are not taken into account in some of the larger developments. There is a case for a third-party right of appeal.

Planning gain is an important issue and clause 12 troubles us very much. I urge Conservative Members to look carefully, long and hard at clause 12. All who are worried about green-field development around their backyards will find the dangers in the clause. It would allow a developer to go ahead, having more or less decided what planning gain he or she will give. It does not allow the local authority the right to say no. That is profoundly dangerous, so we should not go down that road. There is a strong case for a far more carefully thought out approach to planning, gain. It is one of the most difficult areas of planning and we often come across it in our own constituencies.

The Hammersmith Broadway project under Brederoe taught me a great deal. An enormous development was going ahead. It seems that the local authority says, "We will slow down your permission to develop if you do not give us certain things." The developer says, "We will fight you all the way, and make it very expensive and difficult for you if you do not give us something else instead." One ends up with a saloon bar face-off over who backs down first and who gets what.

I am not saying that there should be no negotiating process in planning gain—it is almost impossible to avoid it—but if it is seen simply as a negotiating process and we tell the developer that he can keep his development if he gives us certain things, that is wrong. First, it must be decided whether a development is appropriate for an area, and that should be determined on the basis of a plan. Secondly, we need a clear method of deciding how planning gain can be written into that process, not only for the immediate facilities on the site but for the implications of larger sites that affect the surrounding countryside for some miles.

We must look long and hard at clause 12, which I find impossible to support in its present form. For the Minister's own sake, he should rethink it—it requires much thought and effort, and must be changed.

Several other aspects of the Bill are important, but I shall not take the time of the House now. Constituents come to see many of us about developments that have taken place and complain that they were not made aware of their rights. One such difficult case involved my local authority allowing a housing development to go ahead. The windows in that development were not supposed to overlook my constituent's garden. Eventually, once the development had been owned by a couple of companies that had gone bankrupt, windows were installed and it was discovered retrospectively that planning permission had been given by delegated authority without the knowledge of local people.

I have many other examples of local people who were inadequately informed. There is a strong case for looking harder at the need to inform local people about the full impact of any development that may take place. There should be a duty to inform not only people who live in the vicinity but local interested groups, such as conservation groups. In that way, we could involve people in the planning process, as we should want to do.

It would be a sorry tale if we were to argue on the basis of development versus planning. Development should always take place. In a heavily urbanised country like ours, it should fit in with other needs and take on board the growing importance of green issues. We cannot continue with this nonsense of burgeoning development in the south, which we are in danger of concreting over from Andover to Dover, while there is a chronic shortage of housing and it is becoming almost impossible to move on public transport and on the roads. That shows that there is a failure in housing and transport policy as well as planning policy.

I regret that the Government have taken no steps to face those problems but we intend, in the Bill, to try to ensure that we have the opportunity to face them. Judging from the number of nods of support from Conservative Members, I think that they will be voting for me when we debate the Bill in Committee.

5.4 pm

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), but he did not have a nod of support from me, and I do not look forward to being on the Committee with him.

I shall focus almost entirely on the question of planning enforcement. Before doing so, I should say that I welcome the provision in the Bill increasing the penalty for defiance of tree preservation orders by increasing the fine. I hope that it will be within the scope of my hon. Friend the Minister's ingenuity to extend the reforming legislation on tree preservation by closing the loophole whereby a landowner appears to be able to anticipate and thus escape a tree preservation order by felling trees in an area of woodland of four or five acres and saying that the area is

part of his garden. Such areas are an attempt to secure planning permission by creating a barren, unattractive area in place of an agreeable piece of woodland that formed part of a local amenity. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can bring such cases within the scope of the Bill.

I heard my hon. Friend the Minister's comments and I echo, to an extent, what the hon. Member for Hammersmith said about criminalisation. It would be going too far to bring every breach of planning control within the scope of criminal law, but I have considerable sympathy with the argument of the Council for the Protection of Rural England that unauthorised, irreversible development should be made a criminal offence. If my hon. Friend the Minister believes that that is wrong, he should say why. It is surely a crime to inflict such damage on the heritage that has been handed down to us if that damage cannot be reversed. Civil penalties are scarcely adequate in such cases. Some of my hon. Friends may wish to press that point further.

Problems of enforcement worry me most. When I saw that the Bill was coming up for debate and the general welcome that it received, I asked the planning officers of my two borough councils, Woking and Guildford, whether they could give me a sample of the worst cases with which they have had to deal in recent years. I also asked them how they hoped that the Bill might strengthen their hand in dealing with such cases in future. I had an interesting response, although I already have box files on more than one of the cases that they mentioned.

I am prepared to accept that the case of a householder who persists in putting a roof extension on his house, against the wishes of his neighbours and despite being told by the planning authorities that he is breaking the rules, will be covered by the powers in the Bill; and that such a person can in future be stopped in his tracks because the local authority will be able to act quickly and effectively. I hope, too, that a case in which a disused shop is turned into a car hire and taxi business, and run as that for two years to the great annoyance of the neighbours and in clear defiance of planning regulations, can be brought to a halt more quickly than at present.

I hope that the users of the Bill—the people on the other end of the planning process, not only those who apply for planning permission but those who are affected by the granting of permission and the breach of planning control—will judge it according to its effects on the speed with which regulations can be enforced and the scale of penalties for persistent breach of controls. In the two cases that I have mentioned, speed may be the only change that the Bill would bring, but that would be a considerable bonus.

Another case in which marginal farm land is being persistently used for dumping materials to build up ground levels, with the clear anticipation of something more to follow, may also be stopped in its tracks. I hope that the people who carry out such action will be given clearly to understand that there are no gains to be had from it in the short or long term. Using land as a tip is profitable, even if such use is not authorised, and may also involve much undeclared money.

Another case involves somebody who set about laying hardcore, surfacing land within the green belt and subsequently placing a couple of caravans on it. In spite of the local authority's refusal to give planning permission and all its efforts to resolve the issue, the case has continued for the past two years, and the site has become a derelict eyesore. The perpetrator appears to have vanished—the police cannot find him—and despite two public inquiries, it is still impossible for any effective action to be taken to put the land back in its original order. Who will decide who should pay if the man has disappeared?

I have cited a relatively minor case, but a more serious case which attracted a good deal of public attention in my constituency concerns Brookwood cemetery. Anyone who knows what it used to be like and sees it now will be astonished to see that a large part of it appears to have been turned into a battlefield, with enormous piles of waste material and derelict earth-moving equipment parked on it. Although the cemetery owner is at last beginning to understand what needs to be done, and to co-operate with the local authority, that state of affairs should never have come about—it should have been prevented at the outset.

If the Bill has powers to do that and to prevent the deposit of rubble in sites of special scientific interest and the general vandalism of graves and desecration of a considerable national monument, I welcome it wholeheartedly, as will everyone else. The scale of damage done to sites such as Brookwood cemetery is not an everyday occurrence, as there are not all that many such sites, but there are plenty of places where things occur that need to be the subject of firm action.

Not far from Brookwood, in the neighbouring parish of Pirbright, a man named Mr. Crimes got hold of a piece of land on which, over a relatively long period, he has managed to dump thousands of tonnes of rubble. He built up enormous mounds around the site, to which he seems to have obtained unauthorised access across Ministry of Defence land. He has now vanished, and all the local authority's powers to stop the action are ineffective, in the sense that although action has now stopped, it cannot easily be reversed. It will be almost impossible for the county council to find the tens of thousands of pounds needed to restore the site to its former condition as a perfectly ordinary field. It is now a major eyesore.

It is no use looking to Mr. Crimes to make a substantial contribution towards the cost of restitution because he has disappeared. When my hon. Friend the Minister winds up, will he tell us more about restitution costs? Some of the perpetrators of such breaches of the law are very elusive people. Local authorities are not always fortunate enough to locate the perpetrators and make them understand that they must work within the ambit of planning regulations.

I will describe two more cases in which my constituents would like an assurance that the Bill will improve the position in which they have found themselves in recent months. The first may seem small, but it involves a long history of disagreement between neighbours, following the granting of planning permission at a small infill site. Events have culminated in the owner of the site having more or less deliberately defied the planning condition that he should erect a fence and not seek to establish access along one boundary. By erecting a fence with a gap, flanked by two brick pillars, he appears to be using the gap as a means of access. As the law stands, I do not know how long it will be before that relatively minor case is brought to a conclusion. On past form, it could easily be at least a year.

I heard of the second case only at the weekend. Two of my constituents complained that a neighbour of theirs had recently started to use the land just beyond their garden fence as a dump for wrecked cars. It appeared to be

[Mr. Cranley Onslow]

impossible to bring any effective action to stop the neighbour. When I made inquiries, the local planning authority said that it was true that complaints about that activity on the land had started at the end of last year. The owner was eventually traced and said that the use was well established and went back many years.

The owner was given six weeks to apply for an established use certificate or whatever the relevent piece of paper might be. That time limit has expired and the council will have to debate the matter to decide whether to issue an enforcement notice, which will take time. Even more time has to be allowed for an appeal. Meanwhile, the unfortunate people living in the district can look forward to a scrapyard on the back doorstep for at least another 12 months.

I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to say that the Bill will bring such breaches to a halt and make those who break planning regulations subject to effective action and penalties. It is high time they were, and unless and until such regulations are seen to be a feature of the planning system, I am afraid that public confidence in the system is bound to be diminished. Our task should be to reinforce and increase that confidence, and this is our opportunity to do so.

5.15 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): As a Scottish Member, I have found one of the most striking aspects of the debate so far the high number of Conservative Back Benchers participating. That is not something to which hon. Members are accustomed when dealing with Scottish business. It is refreshing to see that Conservative Back Benchers take an interest in some of the Bills that pass through the House, if not the Scottish ones. That feature of the debate also reflects the continuation of the north-south divide in this country.

The south of England contains the bulk of Government Back-Bench Members, the country's wealth, population and investment, both public and private. Consequently, the south of England has the greatest pressure on its land use and the greatest conflict between environment and development needs. Therefore, it is not surprising that such wide interest is shown by southern Members in a Bill that sets out to strengthen the planning process at the expense of the operation of the free market.

I was also struck by a Conservative Member's reference to the problem of gipsy encampments in fields where there was no planning permission, and the inability of local authority officials to do anything about it. The remedy suggested was to make it a criminal offence and call in the police. The Minister gave his reasons why that would not be a good idea and why he preferred a strengthened planning enforcement system and stiffer civil penalties.

A better approach might be to tackle the underlying injustice of lack of provision for gipsies and travelling people. Such an approach is attempted in Scotland, where we try to ensure that all local authorities provide travelling people with sites. It is then possible for the police to move unofficial encampments to official sites. It is in everyone's interests—Government, local authorities, local people, travelling people and police—that a sufficient network of such sites should be made available to gipsies and travelling people.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): It does not necessarily follow that one solves the problem by simply providing more gipsy sites. At present, South Cambridgeshire district council, part of whose area I represent, is not a designated council under the Caravan Sites Act 1968. Over the past few years, numerous new sites have been provided, both privately and publicly, in that district. It has been possible to plot on a graph an exact correlation to show that the more sites are provided, the more gipsies move into the district and park along the roads. It is not necessarily the case that, if one provides sites, one solves the problem.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman fails to understand that not all United Kingdom districts contain sufficient networks of sites. Therefore, if one region provides more sites, it attracts more travelling people and gipsies. If there were equal provision of sites across the country, every local authority accepted its responsibility and the Government accepted their responsibility to help local authorities provide sites through funding, it would be easier to ensure that provision was evenly distributed across the country and gipsies could travel their own routes without being attracted only to districts that provided sites—*[Interruption.]* The Minister with responsibility at the Scottish Office looks restless. If he wants to intervene, I shall give way.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): This Parliament has established a large number of travelling people's sites in Scotland. One is soon to be established in the Dundee district, and an earlier one was turned down on the grounds of representations by the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) as well as others. All the facts must be taken into account.

Mr. McAllion: The Minister is right. He did not tell the House that I was merely the candidate for my constituency when I made those representations. But that is entirely beside the point. The original site was the wrong site. It was opposed by Tayside regional council in its entirety —Labour, Tory and Scottish National party members and everyone else. A far better site was available, which will now be provided.

Getting the site right is the problem for people in the local area. There is no doubt that sufficient sites must be provided throughout the country and not only in some areas. That is the approach which the Government should take, and in Scotland they have done so. I cannot understand why such an approach has not been taken in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I should like to correct the hon. Gentleman. It is the approach in England. It is the law. The Government provide substantial financial assistance to local authorities. My hon. Friend the Minister will intervene to give the exact figure. I cannot remember whether the Government reimburse 85 per cent. or 100 per cent. of the cost to local authorities. But we are still left with a problem as a result of the difficulty referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) and of the weakness of the original Liberal legislation of Eric Lubbock, which was woolly-worded and has led to all sorts of difficulties since.

Mr. McAllion: The Government have had 12 years to do something about woolly-worded laws which were

passed before they came to office, and they have not done so. If the hon. Gentleman believes that it is the Government's fault, I shall not seek to dissuade him.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tim Yeo): First, the Government meet 100 per cent. of the cost. Secondly, the number of sites provided is now greater than the number of gipsy vans in 1979. It is only because of the massive and rapid growth in the number of gipsy vans referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) that we continue to have a surplus of vans over sites.

Mr. McAllion: There is a surplus of vans over sites, and there will always be a problem until that surplus ceases to exist, and sufficient sites are made available for gipsies. That is the key approach which the Government should take. They should not seek to criminalise people's way of life or seek to force people into ways of life that they do not wish to follow.

I have not even started the remarks that I had intended to make. Conservative Members have had me going for six minutes.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Almost seven minutes now.

Mr. McAllion: Yes, as my hon. Friend says, virtually seven minutes.

The Bill has been variously described as a pot-pourri of measures, an opportunity to complete the planning jigsaw and the first opportunity in over 20 years to overhaul the land use planning system and strike a balance between the need to protect the environment and at the same time satisfy the demand for jobs, housing development and economic growth. I have no quarrel with any of those descriptions.

However one describes it, the Bill will surely be judged on how it answers a number of simple questions. Does the Bill make the planning system fairer? Does it make the planning system more efficient? Does that planning system strengthen rather than weaken the environmental policies that we are developing? Above all, is that planning system subject to democratic and local control?

There can be no doubt that developers' demands, opportunities in the marketplace and possibilities of making profits do not always coincide with what is best for the local environment and countryside and, indeed, the well-being of present and future generations of local people. The tension between those two factors is very real indeed. That is why the Government had to resort to introducing enterprise zones, which are areas free of not only local taxes and rates but planning restrictions which might be placed on incoming developers.

We must always remind ourselves that we are not discussing the Bill in a vacuum. Particularly in areas such as mine, there is mass unemployment and poverty, created by the lunatic economic policies pursued by the Government. Local industries, employment and investment have collapsed. If new employment, industries and investment are to be attracted back, the enterprise zone logic means that it will have to be on the terms dictated by those who make key investment decisions. That means that there is no role whatever for planning authorities or people who live in the area and no place for any democratic input.

Whatever the developers want, they get. If they want a retail superstore instead of a housing development, a retail superstore will be built. If they want an office block instead of a travel interchange, an office block will be built. If they want car parking instead of a local museum, car parking will be provided.

The criteria are always the same in areas similar to mine in the north, Scotland and Wales—to maximise the return on the developers' investment and to squeeze every last ounce of profit out of the investment. If that damages the local environment, defeats the aspirations of local people for different types of development and ensures that the jobs created are part-time, low-skilled, low-paid jobs, it does not matter to the Government. In areas of high unemployment, we are not given any choice. We either take it or leave it. We either take what the developers want or have to do without any investment whatever.

Of course, enteprise zones are the exception rather than the rule, but they reveal the real nature of market forces in Britain. They throw into stark relief the true instincts of developers and uncover the driving force of economic decision making in the United Kingdom. It is always profit. It is profit first, profit last and profit before everything else. That is why it is absolutely essential that in this Bill we begin to build in the necessary safeguards to protect people, places, the environment and all of us against the worst excesses of the pursuit of private profit.

The Bill is absolutely right to tackle what has been described as the weakest link in the planning system. Enforcement powers need to be strengthened. I understand entirely that local authorities must be left some discretion in the exercise of their enforcement powers. Inevitably, there are cases in which there is a genuine conflict of interests between protecting amenity and encouraging business activity in an area. A balance must be struck between the need to secure jobs and economic growth by sanctioning a particular development and the need to protect the environmental amenity of residents who happen to live immediately adjacent to the development.

The *Glasgow Herald* this morning contained a report about a £70 million project to build a hotel, housing, a business park, a golf course and a visitor centre at Dunblane in Scotland. Local residents, who fear that it will destroy the amenity of two local villages, have objected to it. The councillors in the surrounding area are divided on the matter. The project was given permission by only a narrow margin—a majority of one. The project has gone to appeal to the Secretary of State for Scotland.

The case at Dunblane highlights the tensions that exist in ordinary parts of the country. It shows that any legislation should give preference to allowing such decisions to be taken locally. The particular circumstances of each area vary. The surest way to facilitate a proper balance is to allow the local authority, which knows all the local circumstances, to make a local judgment. It it makes the wrong judgment, it is an elected body and it can be dealt with by the local people at the next local elections. There is also the local safeguard of an appeal to the Secretary of State to protect local interests.

It cannot be right to deny all discretion to local authorities and insist on the strict enforcement of planning legislation, when such enforcement may in itself be against the interests of local people. That is why I especially welcome clause 28, which sets up a new discretionary procedure—the planning contravention notice—for

[Mr. McAllion]

Scottish planning authorities. It will allow local authorities to obtain information on suspected minor breaches of planning control and to increase the penalties for those who fail to comply with such a notice. Above all, it will allow local authorities to consult those involved, to offer advice and to make recommendations, without resort to enforcement through a stop notice. Therefore, the procedure allows for compromise rather than confrontation. All hon. Members will welcome that clause.

I also welcome the breach-of-condition notices in clause 29, which will enable local authorities to deal simply and swiftly with instances where a planning condition has been breached. There are many such instances. The right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) referred to some of them. What are essentially businesses are sometimes run from the front gardens of local houses or the streets of local housing estates in clear breach of planning law, which requires planning permission for such activities.

Such activities clutter up and disfigure the environment for all the neighbours who have to put up with the activity. Too often, the existing procedures for dealing with such problems are insufficiently clear and flexible or unduly cumbersome, so far too often, nothing is done about the selfish practices of the few, which are allowed to proceed unchecked and make everyone's life a misery. It is to be hoped that the new breach-of-condition notices will enable local authorities to take swift and effective action in such instances, and to give justice to local people.

I welcome too the provisions of part IV, which improve home loss payments to those whose homes are compulsorily purchased for new road and rail developments. I only hope that those encourage the Government to make the kind of road and rail investments in Scotland which have been required for the past decade but which have so far gone largely unnoticed.

The major quarrel that Opposition Members have with the Bill is not so much what is in it as what is not. No power is given to local authorities to require environmental assessments from developers where the local authorities believe that such investments are necessary. There is no ending of Crown immunity. Surely, at a time when the very survival of the planet is at stake, no one, no matter how high, should be exempt from planning control. Nor is there any increased involvement of ordinary people in the planning system. That system needs to be opened up to democratic influence, and planning decisions must be taken openly and in a manner which allows them to be accountable to those affected by them.

Above all, the Bill fails because planning law as it now stands allows the indefensible to continue. For example, any decision by Nirex to site a nuclear dump at Dounreay in Scotland will be taken in opposition to the local planning authorities, local opinion and public opinion in Scotland. Such a decision can only be taken if there is a Tory Secretary of State for Scotland to side with Nirex against the Scottish people. Any planning system which allows that farcical situation to persist cannot be defended, although the Government try to do precisely that. Even after the Bill is passed, that indefensible situation will continue.

The Government have had more than enough opportunity to do something about that, and they have failed to do so. It is at least in part because of that failure that the Government will fail too when they finally find the courage to face the British people.

5.31 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Britain suffers from a lack of space. We are a vastly overcrowded and highly mobile population. When I looked up the figures this morning for this brief speech, I saw that 40 per cent. of the population of Islington moves every year. None the less, it is tempting to think that they are forced to do so because they have one of the worst Labour councils in Britain. That may be the mobile gipsy population that has been mentioned. However, the rest of us move once every five years and inevitably, therefore, there is great difficulty in finding enough room to accommodate all of us in the areas in which we wish to live.

Planning controls of any sort are a large interference in the way in which people move around. As a Conservative, I regard planning controls as an extreme interference in the marketplace, forcing up the price of land and resulting in house prices being too high. Essentially, therefore, I deeply regret the need for any planning controls at all. They give power over local lives and livelihoods which almost matches that of the mediaeval landlord.

Parish councils—the bodies most representative of local views—have no power and scant influence over irrevocable decisions which destroy their lands and carpet them with concrete. I should like parish councils to have some sort of planning teeth, even if they are only milk teeth, with a delaying ability. District councils wield the real power, but most decisions there are taken by officials and not by elected members. The only weapon of the county councils is the county structure plan. Although county councils consistently oppose the districts they are fundamentally powerless.

I will give some examples of what I see as weaknesses in the current legislation and why this new debate is badly needed. They have, of necessity, to be constituency examples; I make no apology for that, because planning is so much a local matter. I use them to put forward five points of national importance.

Compensation for farmers who are not always willing sellers is currently determined under present use. Why should we not ask privatised companies to pay a premium, or even development value, where it is clear that the land is to be developed? Roadford reservoir in my constituency was opened last year by the former Secretary of State for the Environment, my right hon. Friend the chairman of the Conservative party. The inspector at the inquiry authorising that huge development said that all development subsequent to the reservoir being created should be modest and in harmony with the beauty of the place. Plans are now being put forward and will probably be implemented, including a large time-share hotel and probably other property developments. I should have liked the farmers, who were not all willing sellers, to be compensated at those prices.

Tenant farmers have an even rougher time. Many of them are pushed out of the business completely because they are not compensated within our current planning regulations at sufficient value to enable them to go to another farm. Despite the consultation paper, which I and the National Farmers Union warmly welcomed, that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries

and Food announced three weeks ago, those of us with farmers in our constituencies know how difficult it is for a tenant farmer to find a tenancy. It will continue to be difficult for young farmers and older existing tenant farmers to find new farms, despite the fact that the new agreements should be more favourable towards them. I should like to see tenant farmers treated more kindly in the new debate.

Involvement is of vast importance. The Opposition have called for a right of appeal by the third party. That will be difficult, but I welcome the continuing exercise of the calling-in procedure where the county structure plan is not being adhered to. Within half a mile of where I live in Winkleigh a large development is postulated on a disused airfield which the district council tells us will incorporate 1,000 houses, another time-share hotel and a golf course. Half a mile into a different district council over the boundary is another plan outside the county structure plan for another time-share hotel, another golf course and more development.

I value the county structure plan immensely and great thought should be given to going against it. It matters to me and, I am sure, to other hon. Members because it reflects local discussion, local creation and a local plan. It has gone through the parish, district and county council structure. It is the one part of the planning process which genuinely involves all levels of local people. That is why I find it so important and beg my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to continue to focus strongly on the calling-in procedure.

Other hon. Members have talked about the criminalisation of unauthorised development. I am not sure whether criminalising it will help. That would be a heavy weapon to use on something that my constituents and I find not just irritating but somehow worse than that. West Devon borough council is scrupulous in its planning processes, but we have another planning authority—Dartmoor national park committee—which has sometimes let unauthorised development go through.

The village of Mary Tavy is a case in point. The Dartmoor national park committee tells me that stopping such developments relies on neighbours spotting things going wrong. That conjures up a vision of neighbours running up and down with rulers, measuring roof heights and trying to see what is going on—a ridiculous situation. We have two planning authorities for one patch of land. Dartmoor national park committee has allowed unauthorised development to continue even after it has been pointed out that it is outside the agreed plan that the committee itself passed.

My answer would be slightly different from criminalisation, which has already been proposed. I believe that at least one third of the membership of a national park committee should be elected from the parish councils which encircle the national park. It is the local people who care—not those who are nominated or delegated by other bodies to sit upon the committee.

I hope that in Standing Committee we shall debate the importance of architecture. How can planning people, who are elected councillors, know sufficient about architecture to be able immediately to unravel plans put before them at open council meetings? Could we not have guidelines or rules dealing with the pitch of the roofs in a village, or the type of materials used? In Devon we have veritable mushroom farms of drably designed little bungalows, which are very unappealing visually and which neither reflect the local architecture nor enhance the villages. They provide homes for local people, but what will future generations think of the way in which we have allowed the individuality of the United Kingdom to be so diluted?

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): My hon. Friend has made some excellent points, but the last was particularly important. I raised it in a debate about two years ago. Perhaps Department of the Environment rules lay it down, but many modern constructions are of a size which dwarfs the traditional cottages and farm settlements. I hope that my hon. Friend will persist with the point.

Miss Nicholson: I wholly support my hon. Friend. The point is of keen importance in the western area, not just to us but to those who holiday there and to the many thousands who want to live in our beautiful countryside, because they believe that it is still an area of outstanding natural beauty. It is indeed, but we need to work a great deal harder to keep it so. Back-pedalling needs to take place on matters such as architectural guidelines. It can be done. The French do it. Why cannot we see what our friends across the channel are up to?

Environmental assessment should be at the heart of our planning system. It is a Government policy priority, but I should like to see it on the face of the Bill. Land today must have multi-faceted use. It is not enough to say that it will be for ever agricultural, for ever Dartmoor national park land, for ever heath, or uplands or lowlands, or for ever covered with houses. Things can change rapidly; bad buildings can be pulled down.

The problem is ownership. Here I differ strenuously from Her Majesty's Opposition, who speak so gaily of regional planning, regional ownership and of regional requirements over local people. As a true Conservative, I believe that decisions should be taken as close to home as possible. What matters is the ownership of a project. It is a case of "me and mine" being so much more valuable to a human being than "us and ours". Certainly, in the west, I cannot think of Bristol or Bath as having anything to do with Devon. I sincerely hope that we have no regional planning godfather—that would be a very unfriendly prospect.

The Minister stated that the Bill was basically good, and I strongly agree. I hope that I, and colleagues fortunate enough to serve on the Standing Committee, can make it an even better Bill.

5.44 pm

Mr. David Bellotti (Eastbourne): I welcome quite a number of the reforms in the Bill; I hope that in Committee they will be improved upon.

One of the biggest points missing from the Bill is environmental impact assessment. In every constituency, we know of developments which have taken place without anyone assessing their impact until it was too late. Very often, there is a highway impact because thousands of cars go through streets which are not equipped to take them. Often, the impact on smaller communities, perhaps rural villages, is not seen until it is far too late. It is essential for an impact assessment to be done on every development before it is approved.

In a more micro manner, there are impacts from shops. For example, we see litter from takeaway shops in the nearby streets. Trolleys are wheeled half a mile from

[Mr. David Bellotti]

supermarkets and left in the streets. Had environmental impact assessments been done earlier, regulations could have been attached to the planning applications to ensure that the local environment was not affected. Whether it be highways or supermarket trolleys that cause the problem, if an environmental impact assessment were done first, it would lead to better results for the local communities, however large or small.

The Bill has fudged the enforcement question. I should have thought that the House would want unanimously to condemn any person or party who deliberately flouts rules by producing a plan in contravention of what has been set in concrete by the local authority. If that is not made a criminal act, we are encouraging it. I hope that, in Committee, the Government will consider criminalising such action; that would be a step towards improving enforcement.

The Bill has also fudged the whole question of Crown immunity. Why should the Crown be immune from regulations which the rest of the people have to follow? I hope that, in Committee, the Government will permit a debate on that. It has always seemed unfair to my hon. Friends and me that the Crown can get away with not being subject to the laws it makes.

We should also consider the way in which planning regulations are interpreted locally. It has not been mentioned so far, but the debate impinges largely on the review which the Secretary of State is undertaking of the structure of local government. Far too often, a district council, having considered plans submitted to it, thinks that the only reason for refusal is a highway ground and leaves the decision to the county council. When it gets to the county council, it takes the view that, because the district council has considered the plan and has not objected, it would be foolish for it to object on that ground alone. That has happened often in East Sussex, with many examples in Eastbourne.

Were multi-purpose authorities to be introduced in the review of local government, that not only would help to speed up planning applications but would lead to better decisions that were better informed.

The comment of the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), about regional authorities is helpful. It has been my view for a long time that local authorities should not be judge and jury on their own planning applications. The results of that can be seen across the country, again certainly in East Sussex. It would be interesting and helpful to consider submitting a planning application by a local authority to a regional authority rather than to the Secretary of State. Regional authorities have much more local knowledge than the Secretary of State.

In the context of the review of local government, it is important to acknowledge that, time after time, local council officers do not have the time to follow up what happens to planning applications after they have been approved. They are unable to check what is happening on the ground. That is due to the Government. Government grants to local authorities are such that local authorities have to consider carefully the allocation of tasks within local government departments. All too often, there are insufficient staff in planning authority enforcement departments. I hope that, in his review, the Secretary of State will look again at the help the Government are giving to local authorities so that they are able to enforce their planning decisions.

Recently local authorities have not been helped—this certainly applies to my constituency—by what is referred to as twin tracking. If a developer submits a planning application to a local authority, one often finds that about eight weeks later he submits another one. That places an enormous burden on local authority staff. Moreover, it confuses local people. If they are objecting to or making comments about a planning application, they are confused if another planning application relating to the same land is submitted. Twin tracking ought to be dealt with by the Government in Committee. Before Third Reading, I hope that they will come forward with proposals to avoid it.

I hope that the Government will also examine the question of planning gain. When local council officers discuss plans with developers, they often gain something that will benefit the local community. However, due to this country's economic situation, the land is often sold on; the gain is subsequently lost in the ensuing negotiations. If a planning gain is obtained for the benefit of the community it must be passed on if future applications are made concerning land for which planning consent was previously obtained.

In Sussex, as in other parts of the country, we have a beautiful coastline, and we want it to be preserved as far as possible. A plethora of Government bodies have an interest in the coastline. Therefore, it is impossible for Sussex to protect its coastline when planning applications are made. I refer specifically to the Crumbles, an enormous development in Eastbourne. It will certainly lead to a much poorer coastline.

When planning applications are made, local authorities ought to be provided with far greater powers over coastal development. I visited another coastal area about 10 days ago, the Ribble estuary, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn). The planning approval granted for developments in the area has caused considerable concern about wildlife in the estuary. No assessment has been made of the impact of those developments upon it. Local authorities ought to have the power to take environmental matters into consideration.

The Bill does not provide for public participation. I served on local authorities for a number of years. I was always surprised by the fact that the general public felt that they were genuinely participating in the planning process when I knew that in many cases they were not. Members of the public ought to have the right to address planning committees on issues that cause them concern. The Government should consider granting them that right.

As for the shire part of East Sussex county council, particularly Lewes district council, on which I served as a member, I was appalled by the fact that parish council comments were often reported verbally and extremely briefly. Their comments were not given the same weight as those made by developers when submitting their planning applications. I was often surrounded by maps and beautiful drawings provided by the developer, but I heard only a few brief verbal comments on behalf of the parish council, which plays an important part in the planning process. It ought to be given more credence.

The ability of third parties to appeal is another matter that ought to be considered in Committee. They should be given the right to appeal when the permission granted is

contrary to the local plan. Such a right would be seen to work, and would be fair both to those who are in favour of a development and to those who oppose it.

All hon. Members could refer to constituency examples of plans that have gone wrong and of people who have a justifiable grievance about what has happened, subsequent to the granting of approval. We could all refer to local authority staff who have a very difficult task to perform in trying to get the plans altered late in the day, or enforcing them after they have been approved. The Bill ought to provide that, if constituents draw planning irregularities to the attention of their local authority, they can be put right.

In my constituency, planning permission has been granted for garage premises. The cars being repaired stand on the highway in a state of disrepair. They are taken in at night and put out again in the morning. Garage owners will always obey any police instruction. Moreover, when the local authority's environmental health officer and planning officer visit a garage, the garage owner always complies for the time being, but thereafter the situation deteriorates again. When applications are made for garage premises, we ought to be able to ensure that regulations are in place that will prevent that.

Houses have been built in Eastbourne that are a metre nearer the road than they ought to be. Planning officers are in a delimma about enforcement. The consequence for local people is that, in order to keep a road the right width, the pavement has to be very narrow, so it is not as safe as it ought to be. The Bill ought to enable local authorities to take all the action that they need to improve the local environment.

The test in Committee will be whether the voices of our constituents on both smaller matters and larger structural matters are heard and listened to. The test will also be whether the House decides to support local authorities that have a difficult enforcement task to perform. The question whether local authorities and our constituents are to be supported ought to be uppermost in the Government's mind in Committee.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. It would be sensible at this time to remind the House that Mr. Speaker has required that speeches between 6 and 8 o'clock should not exceed 10 minutes.

5.57 pm

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): I intend to deal with two aspects of the land compensation provisions. One element is already included in the Bill. The second will, I hope, be included by the time the proceedings on the Bill are completed.

The element already included in the Bill relates to the very welcome provisions in clause 49 as they apply to England and Wales, and in clause 61 as they apply to Scotland, whereby highway authorities are to be given wider discretionary powers to buy blighted houses by voluntary agreement with home owners. That, to me, is exceptionally welcome, as I have a major problem in my constituency which I believe many hon. Members will also face in years to come.

More and more of our major roads are being widened. In the south of England in particular, many already go through built-up areas. A major road-widening scheme is taking place along the M20, between junctions 3 and 5, as part of the road improvements for the channel tunnel. That section of road goes almost entirely through an area that is built up on both sides.

The current blight provisions are inadequate. The distance commonly used by the Department within which a blight notice can be served is 67 m. Eccentrically, that distance takes no account of the width of the road. It is calculated not from the edge of the motorway or from the edge of the furthest carriageway but from the centre line of the motorway and therefore is a relatively thin strip.

Those whose houses are within the 67 m distance are happy. Blight notices have been served on them, they are being fully compensated for the unblighted value of their properties and are moving away. But probably hundreds of my constituents whose homes are equally blighted and unsaleable, but which fall outside the 67 m blight line, are trapped from the day when the intention to widen a road or to build a new road is announced, because the Department of Transport must define the road line and obtain the funds to build it, and only a year after it is opened, are people entitled to injurious affection compensation under the Land Compensation Act 1973. That will take my constituents five years or more. It is intolerable that people should be unable to sell their main assets and be trapped in that way by the need for public infrastructure works.

I very much welcome the provisions of the Bill, but will my hon. Friend the Minister clarify the criteria to be applied in operating clauses 49 and 61? If a meagre and parsimonious approach is pursued, those powers will hardly be worth having. I hope that the Government intend that those unable to sell their house due to blight will be able to serve a blight notice regardless of distance from a motorway or major road.

I especially hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will assure the House that personal hardship will be taken into account. In any sizeable community over a five-year period, some people who cannot move will be placed in desperate circumstances—such as unemployed people who have to move to take up a new job, those whose health suffers and who need to move near a relative who can care for them, and those whose marriage breaks down and who desperately need to sell the matrimonial home so that the assets can be divided between the parties. Such circumstances make it imperative that personal hardship should be taken into account by the Government.

A further personal hardship—this time from a different source—is not covered by the Bill, but I hope that it will be. Some of my constituents face a dramatic worsening of their environment as a result of a huge intensification of use of existing transport infrastructure. I refer, as the House may have guessed, to the proposed designated rail links to and from the channel tunnel.

Those who buy a house near a major road take a chance, in the belief that there is a limit to the extent to which disturbance from the road can increase before new works are necessary, which trigger an entitlement to injurious affection compensation, but it is possible dramatically to change the use of a railway line, particularly an under-used line, without new works and thus without the need to pay injurious affection compensation.

Without exaggeration, some houses in my constituency will be uninhabitable from the moment the channel tunnel trains begin to run in the summer of 1993. The houses are situated by the line through Maidstone, East, the second

[Sir John Stanley]

designated freight line to the channel tunnel, which is currently scarcely used at night. Their inhabitants will be unable to have unbroken sleep. According to British Rail's published plans, channel tunnel freight trains, which will be half a mile long, will run at 75 mph within a few yards of those people's bedroom windows every 20 minutes from 10 pm to 6 am seven nights per week. I suggest that even my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) might not be enthusiastic about purchasing such a property.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport kindly visited my constituency to see for himself the problems that my constituents face. He said that the Government would announce their policy on injurious affection compensation for the intensification of existing use. I had hoped that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State would make that announcement today, but clearly he was not in a position to do so. We were promised an announcement early this year, and it is already March. When will the announcement be made? It is extremely germane to the Bill, because, if the Government decide to extend injurious affection compensation on a discretionary basis, a relatively minor amendment to clauses 49 and 61 would give the necessary statutory powers for it to be paid for serious environmental deterioration and when people are unable to sell their house because of an intensification of existing use.

If the Department of Transport can make such an announcement quickly, I hope that the Government will table an amendment to clause 49 in Committee or on Report to give statutory effect to the policy announcement. I look forward with interest to the reply of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State.

6.8 pm

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): I should like to speak specifically to home loss payments under clauses 55 and 57, which amend the Land Compensation (Scotland) Act 1973.

A tenant or owner-occupier whose property is compulsorily purchased and who is displaced—perhaps because of new house building, a road building programme or rail development—is eligible for a home loss payment, which was standardised in 1989 at £1,500. Previously, the payment varied according to the rateable value of the house, but that practice was discontinued in 1989, when the poll tax was introduced. The Prime Minister's puzzling comments in the past few days suggest that it might not be too long before rates are on the agenda and, perhaps, back in being. I hope that that does not lead to payments for home loss being viable once again.

When there is compulsory purchase, councils generally offer equivalent housing to their tenants. From time to time, they also make offers to owner-occupiers who are obliged to move and they may offer them local authority housing. I accept that there is a need for differentiation in the treatment of tenants and owner-occupiers. The £1,500 payment will remain the standard, but for owner-occupiers there will be a 10 per cent. premium on the market value of their home.

That is fair and understandable, given that people who are obliged to move house have often been living in substandard accommodation and may find it difficult, if not impossible, to buy similar accommodation—if they want to. Such people could suffer considerable financial loss because their homes may even have been dangerous, which is often the reason for the compulsory purchase, and they are almost always obliged to buy up-market, which costs them considerably more.

It has been claimed that a premium in excess of 10 per cent. should be applied. This morning, I was surprised to receive information from the Confederation of British Industry urging that a 25 per cent. premium might be applicable for owner-occupiers who lose their homes in that way. I understand the CBI's motive in making that claim which was stated clearly. It is to facilitate the rapid development of the transport infrastructure, about which Conservative Members representing constituencies in the south-east have been concerned, but which is less of a problem in Scotland.

However, the CBI should balance its argument. If it is suggesting that owner-occupiers should receive an increased premium over and above the 10 per cent. set out in the Bill, it should also advocate additional finance for local authorities to enable them to build more houses to speed up the transfer of council tenants whose homes may stand in the way of developments or which may require redevelopment. If the CBI is serious about this matter, it should strike a balance.

My main concern about my constituency relates to its local authority tenants. I have to admit that they stand to benefit from the Bill because the qualifying period for home loss payments is being reduced from five years to one year. Although that is to be welcomed, I should like to know why any qualifying period is specified. I cannot see that there is any justification for assuming that a family who have occupied their home for, say, one month are less likely to suffer trauma or to be out of pocket than a family who have occupied their home for a year. One of the first things that people generally do when moving home is to decorate, spending a considerable amount of money. Therefore, I cannot see any relevance in the one-year cut-off. If we are reducing the period from five years, why not get rid of the qualifying period altogether, so that anybody who is faced with losing his or her home, whether it is owned or rented, is suitably compensated? I hope that amendments will be tabled in Committee to remove the qualification altogether.

Another area in which I should like to see some improvement relates to the date on which the improved home loss payments become applicable. According to the Bill, the effective date is 16 November 1990. I have a constituency interest in this matter because of what has happened in the Queen Elizabeth square area of the Gorbals district. That complex of multi-storey blocks was designed by Sir Basil Spence in the mid-1960s. I understand that Sir Basil was given an award for his work, but anyone who drives past Queen Elizabeth square, let alone lives in it, must wonder about the judgment of the people who made the award.

The Gorbals area has been much maligned over the years. I will not have the place done down—not least because I have a family connection, in that my grandfather was born and brought up there. The people who live there are warm, genuine and proud. It is perhaps surprising when one looks at the place that, given the chance to leave their homes, which is being offered at the moment, the people who live there do not want to leave the Gorbals district. They will move heaven and earth to stay there. In

many cases, people are turning down accommodation in better parts of the city, where there are more amenities and fewer social problems. The Gorbals people have a link with their area that they want to maintain.

Queen Elizabeth square is now 25 years old and has all the problems that are endemic in multi-storey blocks, such as dampness, condensation, alienation of the residents, and many forms of crime. I was intrigued, although I might have been amused if the circumstances had been different, at the comments of the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson)—I am sorry that she is not in her place to hear this—who said how terrible it was that drab bungalows were being thrown up all over her area. I can tell her that the people of the Gorbals in Glasgow and of many other areas of cities throughout the United Kingdom would be delighted if somebody said, "We are going to build some drab bungalows in your area and get you out of these multi-storey blocks." That highlights the different world in which we live and puts the question of housing into perspective.

As I said, Sir Basil Spence was given an award for designing that property. Having sentenced people to live there for 25 years, perhaps he should have been obliged to spend——

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): At least 60 days there.

Mr. Watson: Yes, at least 60 days, or perhaps even longer than my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) has suggested. If Sir Basil Spence had experienced what it was like to live there, he might have changed his ideas—and those of some other architects and developers—about the concept of multi-storey living.

It is not the fault of Glasgow district council's housing department that those blocks are in their current state. It has done the best that it can with its limited and reducing resources over the past 10 years. Last year, the council was faced with a bill of £12·5 million to bring Queen Elizabeth square up to habitable standards. On closer examination, the council found that it would cost one third of that amount to demolish the blocks altogether. With some trepidation, the housing department organised a public meeting, called the residents together and said that there was no real alternative but to move them out of Queen Elizabeth square, to demolish the complex and to build other houses, which would be low-rise, elsewhere.

The council felt that, because of the close affinity that Gorbals people feel with their environment, it would be met with abuse and strong disagreement with its proposals. One councillor has told me that he was reluctant even to go to the meeting. In fact, the housing department officials have been bowled over in the rush of the tenants to accept their right to move out of those flats because they are so terrible and people want something that is more conducive to pleasant family living, although, as I have said earlier, they want to stay in that district of the city.

Last summer, the first of the 400 families living in Queen Elizabeth square began to move out. By 15 November—an important date—150 families had moved out. The point is that 50 more families have left in the intervening period and will be treated substantially differently from those who left before 15 November. I come, therefore, to the thrust of my argument about the part of the Bill that states that increased home loss payments will be applicable from 16 November. In many cases, families left on a purely arbitrary basis. Let us consider two families of similar size, living in identical accommodation. Family A might have found it acceptable to move to a particular house, while family B might not, but if it delayed beyond 15 November, it stands to gain considerably if it did not meet the five years' qualification.

That is not only a great pity, but is extremely unfair because neighbours in otherwise identical circumstances will be dealt with on a two-tier basis. I do not see any reason why the legislation cannot provide that everybody is treated equitably and fairly. I understand the reason for the date of 16 November, but there must be some method of ensuring that everybody who is involved in the clearance of Queen Elizabeth square is treated in the same fashion and benefits to the same extent.

The provisions on home loss payments have their merits, but I hope that they will be amended and approved in Committee. Incidentally—I must finish, because I have now run out of time—we must try to establish some review of the discretionary payments, about which, unfortunately, there is no mention in the Bill as drafted.

6.20 pm

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): It is a pleasure to speak following the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) who hit the nail on the head with his references to high-rise blocks and awards for design. I recall my days in Scotland, when I lived in a university building which won for James Stirling the Concrete Society's prize for design. The building leaked like a sieve and was falling apart, but it won a prize.

Like most debates on planning, this one has been conspicuous for the wide variety of views, many in conflict with one another. Indeed, as it is a commonplace that hon. Members should have conflicting views, I can think of no better Minister to pilot the Bill through than the Minister for Housing and Planning. If anyone can reconcile the irreconcilable, he can, with his broad experience and detailed knowledge of these issues. Unfortunately, most people who deal with planning matters do not have such detailed experience, which is why we sometimes end up with haywire and unworkable legislation.

It is appropriate that, almost 50 years after the passing of the 1947 Act, we should be having a major review, although certain issues have been examined before now. For example, I served on the Standing Committee which examined two measures in recent Parliaments, when we reviewed various aspects of the planning system.

I warmly welcome the Bill's provisions on enforcement —they represent a useful step in the right direction—but a large number of other issues are not dealt with in the Bill. they need urgent attention, too, or the planning system will continue to dissatisfy not only those who make most use of it, such as developers, but those whose lives are impinged on, including objectors and others living in the community.

A famous epitaph to an architect recorded,

"If you seek his monument, look around."

The same should be true of planners, because there are good and bad aspects of the planning system. Just as planners gave us the green belt, the most positive planning policy in Britain, so it also gave us tower blocks and all the problems associated with them. I do not believe that that

[Mr. Robert B. Jones]

state of affairs would have arisem in a free market system, because people would not have been prepared to pay for flats in tower blocks.

As I represent an area with a large rural hinterland, hon. Members will expect me to refer to the green belt, which is the prime consideration of many of my constituents, whether or not they live in villages in the green belt. I believe that the policy is too hard-line in terms of villages located in the green belt, as opposed to the green areas, a subject to which I shall come.

The Bill purports to address the problem of inefficiency in the planning system. It contains provisions that will, I hope, improve the system. But in terms of dealing with applications quickly and effectively, I see nothing in the measure that will improve on the present situation. Many applications are not dealt with in eight weeks, and that is particularly true of some local authorities with the lowest volume of applications. In other words, there is no correlation with work, for even as the work load has fallen, the performance has not improved substantially.

Between April and June 1990, for example, there was a 13 per cent. drop in the number of applications compared with the same period in 1989, yet there was only a 4 per cent. increase in the number determined in the statutory eight week period over the 12 months. The only way to police the time it takes is to use the appeal system, which is slow and ineffective. I regret that the Bill does not deal with delays either in dealing with applications or in policing any delays.

However much we may welcome a structure plan system, there is still widespread incidence of nimbyism. People say that any pressure for the creation of new housing must come from the economic magnet of the south-east, and that is true to a degree, but it is not the whole answer. We need more houses, because old people are living longer, because young people are leaving home earlier and, sadly, because there are more divorces. I am afraid that those who resist every housing development are, in effect, condemning their sons and daughters and grandsons and grand-daughters either to be priced out of the market by what happens to prices or to decamp into the next town or village further up the road.

Just as I could not have afforded to live in the area where my parents live, so I have no doubt that my children could not afford to live in the area where I now live. That problem must be addressed if we are not to stifle ourselves economically and create an extremely major problem in housing conditions in Britain.

Although reserve powers are built into the Bill for self-certification to protect us against that sort of nimbyism, I fear that that will lead to buck-passing by local authorities, in the same way as the present system often leads authorities to turn down planning applications knowing that any unpopularity will pass to the Secretary of State instead of to the elected members of the local authority. Much of the increase in the number of successful appeals in recent years has occurred not because the Government have overruled the local authorities but because the authorities are shirking unpopular decisions.

Certain matters that should be included in the Bill are not in it. The agricultural exemption is far too wide. The subdivision of farms, particularly in the south-east, supported by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, rides through loopholes in the planning law and leads to the urbanisation of some of our most beautiful areas. The Minister should get together with some of his opposite numbers in that Department to try to get a more reasonable policy on that issue.

The exemption for farm buildings is far too large, so that, without planning permission, one can erect large buildings in a way that affect the visual appearance of the green belt. One can build a hard standing for pick-your-own farming without planning permission, and that can lead to the sort of situation about which we have heard, with ugly tarmac covering the green belt.

I said that the green belt should not be hard-line on urban areas that lie within it. There are villages in my constituency in which, in the urban centre, there are vacant pieces of land for which planning permission is regularly turned down on the grounds that it is in an area of outstanding natural beauty or in the green belt.

If the Minister reads a booklet that I wrote on the subject, he will find the prime case of the owners of cement works in Kent who applied for planning permission to demolish the works and build houses on the site. The application was supported by the residents of the housing surrounding the site on all three sides, but it was rejected on the grounds that it was in an area of outstanding natural beauty. Considering that it was a cement works, the refusal was crazy.

Many of my constituents are concerned with zoning restrictions and believe that the land use categories are not tight enough. We still get many complaints about, for example, building societies taking over high streets. I shall say no more about that today. If I am fortunate enough to serve on the Standing Committee, I shall raise the issue then.

There is no easy answer to the problem of neighbour notification, because it is impossible to define who is a neighbour. A neighbour may live a long way away and have a direct view of an application site, rather than next door to the site, yet most local authorities which practise neighbour notification notify the people in the immediate vicinity without thinking of the view, say, across the valley, or even about the situation a few hundred yards away.

I strongly endorse what my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) said about compensation. It is a gross injustice that people whose homes are blighted, often for long periods, should be unable to obtain compensation. If anything, my right hon. Friend understated the case, because the Minister knows that five years is a short time in terms of the planning of a road. In my constituency, we are about to acquire a bypass the planning of which began nearly 50 years ago.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Does my hon. Friend agree that, in addition to that point and the point that my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) made earlier, the whole process of getting roads built would be speeded up if more generous compensation provisions were built into the process?

Mr. Jones: I agree with my hon. Friend, and we have many lessons still to learn. The Select Committee on the Environment, on which I served, spent much time looking at the effectiveness and efficiency of the appeal system. The Minister should take on board some of the lessons to be drawn from that. Indeed, he should look widely overseas

to see what beneficial lessons we might learn in order to implement provisions relating to the whole area of compensation.

I have pleasure in commending the Bill, and hope that it will be amended in Committee.

6.29 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I take part in the debate as someone who has had about five or seven years experience as the chairman of a large local authority environmental planning committee. I also have many years' experience of the frustrations not just of politicians but of residents. I also know about the costs incurred by local authorities in chasing developers who have not complied with planning regulations or who did not receive planning permission in the first place.

Another annoyance is that when a local authority takes a developer to appeal the developer often seems to get away scot free; even when the local authority is in the right, it often has to pay the bill. However, that did not apply in a particular case because the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), when he was Secretary of State for the Environment, changed the rules in respect of one particular application. I leave it to the imagination of hon. Members to work out why the right hon. Gentleman did that.

The Government have tried many ways to speed up planning applications. The introduction of urban development corporations was supposed to do that, and to a limited extent that has worked, but the emphasis has always been placed on speeding up planning applications which give the developer an advantage while lesser advantage and resources are given to planning officers and councils who have to make sure that developments are correct and accord with the environment of the area. Big business has exploited that situation for many years, and losing appeals does not seem to make any difference to it.

At present there is a planning application for a large Tesco development in my constituency, which I and many others are fighting against. It is proposed for the present site of a cricket pitch with a beautiful pavilion and open space just as one enters Sheffield. The application has been going on for months and has taken up a great deal of planning officer time. Amended plans may be coming in and sooner or later the officers will be frightened to death to refuse the application in case it goes to the Secretary of State and finish up with a worse development. The planning department may also have to pay the costs. The restrictions on local government in this area are unjustifiable.

I do not know whether any hon. Members have received the District Planning Officers Society's report on making unauthorised development an offence. I recommend it to all hon. Members in the hope that they will accept its recommendations. The society seeks the support of metropolitan planning officers for its proposals to strengthen planning authorities' enforcement powers beyond those in the Bill. The report states:

"The aim is basically to propose further strengthening to tackle the growing number of deliberate offenders who flout the planning system to their own ends, usually to the considerable harm of local people who suffer the effects of their development for months and years as the planning enforcement procedures take their cumbersome course."

I shall try later to give some examples of that.

Everyone accepts that development consideration has to take place, provided that the environment is protected. People who have invested in housing, and so on, do not want their environment destroyed by people who flout the planning regulations and procedures for their own ends. At the end of the day, such developers usually win. When they lose, they lose little in terms of compensation or cost.

A complainant who is quoted in the report says:

"Evading planning permission is a very insiduous method of undermining planning legislation and its regulations. These have been instituted to protect the nation's environment, both urban and rural. If one individual or organisation is successful in flouting the valid constraints, a very serious precedent is set for others to follow."

That is precisely what is happening now. Exploitation of land, land values and development costs are encouraging more and more people to flout the planning regulations, laws and procedures, and they are doing it every day. I know not only from my experience as ex-chairman of a planning committee, but from the experience of constituents, of the frustrations which can arise from the cumbersome procedure that we have to go through to stop a development taking place, especially before that development has been agreed by a planning department.

I commend the proposals by the District Planning Officers Society for an amendment to the Bill which will make unauthorised development a criminal offence. That is my personal view; I am not speaking on behalf of the Opposition Front Bench or the Labour party in general. The creation of such a criminal offence is the only way in which we can pose a threat of which the offender will take notice.

Planning officers have to go through a long legal procedure, and developers, when it suits them, think that a battle is worth the effort. They think that by going through the procedures they will tire out the city council and the planners and may win on appeal. In the case of a criminal offence, such developers would have second thoughts. That is the whole point of my argument. It may stop further unauthorised developments if the offenders are brought before the courts rather than having to go through the normal procedures with the planners.

Stop notices have been useful in the past, but clarification is needed about compensation. Injunctions have their place and would be more effective than stop notices in dealing with threatened breaches of control. We need stronger deterrents than those proposed in the Bill.

Some people say that the courts are not qualified to deal with such issues, and that may be so. In saying that, I mean no disrespect to magistrates. The matter is complicated. I am not saying that the magistrate should make a judgment about whether a planning application is good or bad. The whole idea is for the court to decide whether a developer, whether a person or a company, is legally right or wrong in starting a development before having proper consent.

The court would not deal with the implications or the effect on the environment or the technicalities of the matter. The bench would have to deal with a straightforward question. If it is not seen as straightforward, a little training could easily be given to magistrates to enable them to make the correct judgments. While that is going on, the planning officers and planning departments in general could still follow their normal professional procedures and carry their usual responsibilities.

I do not propose giving the courts power to deal with planning applications. The proposal is that a court may immediately stop anyone on a criminal basis, rather than making the planning officer follow the cumbersome

[Mr. Bill Michie]

present procedures. I have many examples, but I do not have time to give many of them. I will give one which is not in my constituency—a meadow which is perpetually defaced by hardcore. A meadow is an area of beauty: it is obviously green belt and should not be used for the dumping of hardcore. The planning officer tells the person who dumped it that it has to be shifted, and the dumper refuses. The example that I am outlining started in January 1987 and the applicants were in the High Court in August 1990—three years after the dumping started. When the planning officer insisted on the removal of the hardcore, it was taken away—but then more was laid down, and the process started all over again.

That is an example of the system being used in an attempt to make the planners give up the ghost, but they do not. People in the area who suffer from such matters become frustrated with the council and ask the council to do something about it. However, although the council follows the correct procedure, it gets nowhere, because, when the hardcore is removed, the order falls. Then when the stuff is put back, the procedures have to start again from the beginning and the process goes on and on. A simple amendment to the Bill to take people to court who have no legal right to carry out a certain activity would allow planners to deal with the planning issues. I feel strongly about the matter and I hope that hon. Members agree with me.

6.39 pm

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): Thank you for calling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a subject which is of great importance to my constituency. I regret that I cannot follow the arguments of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) about development corporations. In my experience, they were introduced only when a local authority was unwilling to allow development of any description, or in some cases when an authority felt unable to do so because it could not grapple with the problems. However, I shall follow his remarks about the dumping of hardcore in green belt areas.

First, I must deal with the Opposition's idea that there should be regional councils and plans. I regret that some of my colleagues seemed to assent to that. In my constituency we know what a regional council means—extending the boundaries of the Birmingham conurbation into Worcestershire, hotly pursued by the erection of tower blocks in the green belt and an increase in the community charge. We all know what that means, and we want none of it.

I counsel my hon. Friends further about subscribing to the doctrine of plan-led development. We have seen some examples of Labour plans—we only need to reflect upon the Ryder plan for the motor industry. My goodness, what a failure that was, but Labour spent a great deal of our money on it, leading us precisely nowhere. Labour does not have development plans but embalmment plans in mind.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) did not want any development. He dismissed shops and he dismissed jobs, saying that they were all low-tech and part time. That is a bit hard to take from the hon. Member for Dundee, East, when one remembers what happened with the Ford motor company. If there were no profits, how would all the training be provided? How would all the other goodies be secured, including the social provision which has to come out of taxation?

No, we do not want regional councils and plan-led development. The Opposition have been parading their green credentials. However, in the knowledge that power stations are the biggest source of ozone and the greenhouse effect, they are the ones complaining about the move to nuclear power. The hon. Member for Heeley objected to dumping of nuclear waste and the Liberal hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti) complained about proposals for barrages, which one would have thought were a more acceptable form of power. However, he started wittering on about the wildlife involved. It is rather strange to hear the beneficiary of a Liberal by-election victory complain about litter, when one considers the way in which the Liberals fly-post and, one suspects, the way in which they exceed their election expenses.

Mr. Bill Michie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Hal Miller: No. I do not have time to give way. I shall come to the hon. Gentleman's comments about hardcore in a minute.

I welcome the Bill's provisions on compensation, but I couple that with the caveat of my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), who undershot when he talked about blight lasting for five years, as 15 is commonplace in the case of motorway construction. However, he was right to say that it is those people whose enjoyment of their property is affected, though their land may not be taken,who cannot achieve any compensation until the 15 years—or whatever period —are over. Some of them are placed in a serious position, as he said, due to loss of a job, illness or break-up of their family and I ask the Minister to consider that, as it is not clear to me that that is covered in the Bill.

It will be no surprise to hon. Members that I shall examine the subject of the green belt, which has been under threat in my constituency for the 17 years that I have served there. Part of that effect—including the dumping of hardcore, to which the hon. Member for Heeley referred and what we call the development of horseyculture, is the degradation and downgrading of land on the urban fringe, despite the valiant efforts of the urban fringe project set up by my county council, assisted by the Department of the Environment.

That effect arises because of the uncertainty that I regret to say was introduced by Government actions. After all, a Conservative Secretary of State decreed that there should be three business parks in the green belt in the midlands on the motorway network. There have already been four applications for the parks that he will permit in my constituency. That upsets everyone, but, more important, it results in a tremendous waste of time for all the officials involved in the prolonged inquiries.

In one case, quite a small group of people raised £30,000 to put up an alternative and are now engaged in raising £50,000 to be represented at the inquiry. It is not merely a waste of public money but a waste of the public's private money, dealing with vexatious applications which have been encouraged by the Secretary of State.

As regards the structure plan, the Government set housing targets for the county, which divides them between the districts. If one sets a housing target in Bromsgrove, which is all within the green belt, it means

that all the houses have to be built on green belt. Where is the commitment to maintenance of the green belt? It has been undermined by strategic guidance given by the Government and passed on through the county. That is a serious problem, and I had hoped that the legislation would contain some measure to deal with it, or at least that it would be accompanied by some announcement on Government policy on the green belt, about which there is so much uncertainty. In the light of the uncertainty, people try to chance their arm in ways that have been described.

Finally, I should mention enforcement. A whole alphabet of subjects, from aerodromes to zoos, are included, and most seem to occur in my constituency.

Mr. Bill Michie: What about heliports?

Sir Hal Miller: Yes, heliports are the latest problem, as available planning controls seem to be inadequate.

One of the problems involves the amount of time that people are allowed to carry on activities before any interdiction can be brought. In that context, one thinks of Sunday markets or the stationing of caravans, which are difficult to control as sometimes they only have to move a few yards to evade controls. Local authorities find it dispiriting to try to counter that problem.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling referred to the intensification of use, which commonly happens with lorry parks in my constituency. For example, a few lorries were stationed at a site on Haslucks Green road in Wythall some years ago. Now it is a full container operation, with mobile cranes reaching up between 40 and 60 ft. It is floodlit and diesel engines run all night. The local authority is disinclined to take action because it fears that there is established use and it may be liable for damages. However, the intensification of use is on such a scale that—not only to my mind but to the residents' minds—it has resulted in a change of use. We need more guidance in the Bill on that issue.

I give a warm welcome to the more generous provisions for compensation, citing my experience in Hong Kong, where we used to have to resume land for public purposes. We always made it the practice to pay over the odds to secure the agreement of those living in the vicinity and to accomplish the work more quickly, doing away with the costs and delays of inquiries so that the whole matter proceeded more cheaply. The typical motorway procedure, with preferred route consultations and compulsory purchase orders, followed by a side roads order, results in unconscionable expense and delays, and I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to consider that before the Bill comes back for Third Reading.

6.49 pm

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): In the time available to me, I want to deal in particular with the references to home loss payments to people whose homes are purchased compulsorily. The Bill contains much that is to be applauded. I refer in particular to the proposal to improve the levels of compensation and to the proposal to reduce the residential qualifying period from five years to one year. I must express some concern at evident gaps, particularly in clause 25. I urge the Minister to address the situations which give rise to home loss payments to certain categories of tenants. He should direct his attention also to a couple of issues related to the date of displacement and to the rather loose drafting with reference to disturbance allowance payments.

Under the Bill, tenants who have to move out of their homes permanently for the purpose of improvements to the property are entitled to home loss payments. There is no reference to people who have to move out by reason of major repair work, such as repairs to roofs, and restoration of damp courses. I invite the Minister to address this evident deficiency by being prepared to accept appropriate amendments. If he accepts that there is a gap, he ought to be prepared to close it.

Clause 29 protects the right of secure tenants of councils and of housing associations to home loss payments if their homes are required for redevelopment purposes. I suggest that there is a need to extend this right to assured tenants of housing associations where the landlord requires vacant possession for redevelopment purposes. I urge the Minister to direct his attention to this issue and to be prepared, in Committee, to accept appropriate amendments.

There is a need to define more closely the legal interest which must be present if entitlement to home loss payment is to be assured. For example, there appears to be a need to extend qualification to those occupiers who are statutory tenants under the Rent Acts. Another important category of occupiers who need protection are those who could be described as contractual licensees—persons who pay their landlords for the right to occupy property but who, for whatever reason, are not tenants. This category includes flat sharers, lodgers and people under 18 years of age, as well as others who do not have exclusive occupation. At present, such people have no entitlement to home loss payments unless the landlord is a local authority. I suggest that the exclusion of this category of people represents an anomaly which could be removed if the Minister were prepared to accept an appropriate amendment.

I hope that the Minister will be prepared to extend the entitlement to increased home loss payments. As drafted, the Bill covers owners and the holders of long leases—and rightly so. An owner who has occupied a property for the minimum qualifying period of a year—actually, 13 months—is entitled to full compensation, up to a maximum of £15,000. Contrast such an owner with a person who has occupied a property for half a lifetime on the basis of a weekly tenancy. There are examples of such people in my own family—people who live in the older parts of Merseyside. Under the Bill as currently drafted, such people would get the minimum compensation of £1,500 for the loss of their home, in which they might have spent the best part of their lives. I hope that the Minister will look with favour on an appropriate amendment to remedy that anomaly.

It is a strange anomaly that the date of displacement is not defined. Problems would arise from the need to work backwards for the purpose of calculating home loss payment. An amendment could easily provide a clear, workable definition, under which a displaced individual would get the maximum compensation. The defined date could be that on which an occupier was required to give up possession. Some definition would be better than no definition at all.

With regard to disturbance allowance, I cite people who live in the area that I represent. People should certainly be compensated for the loss of their home, but such people

[Mr. Edward O'Hara]

are not always able to dispose of their old chattels and set up anew. They incur disturbance costs. For example, certain soft furnishings may have to be replaced. People should be entitled to compensation for the disturbance of losing their home as well as for the actual loss of their home. I hope that the Minister will consider whether, in this respect, the provisions of the Bill might be made clearer and more generous.

As my statutory time is about to elapse, I conclude by asking the Minister to receive my suggestions in the spirit in which they are made. The Bill contains some laudable provisions, but there is prima facie evidence of some omissions. I hope that the Minister will be prepared to accept appropriate amendments.

6.59 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Like other hon. Members, I welcome the Bill. It is a thoughtful and positive contribution to our planning system, which is so critical to the protection of our towns and villages and the countryside surrounding them.

First, let me deliver a message—through my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), the Minister for Housing and Planning. Let me reassure him about the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) about the effect of opinions expressed by local planning authorities, and even more local organisations such as town and parish councils.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently overturned the findings of his Department's inspector regarding development of houses in the grounds of Hoddern farm, an old farm in the south downs close to Peacehaven, in my constituency. That is welcome: such a development would have run counter to every local plan, as the inspector was told. It would also have run counter to good sense, as it would have eroded an area of outstanding natural beauty and, eventually, put at risk other kinds of development in similar parts of the south downs. I note the increasing propensity of Ministers to exercise good sense, and to reconsider after noting reports from their inspectors.

None the less, the planning process is too often flouted by offenders—albeit a relatively small number. Some have been identified by my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) and others; sadly, I could identify a myriad more cases, stretching from Chalvington in the east of my constituency to Wivelsfield Green in the west. The problems have rumbled on over the years: offenders have put the planning law to scorn—often persistently—using its weaknesses and gaps to erect buildings and to build extensions, to establish driveways, entrances and exits leading to and from the public highway and to demolish buildings. They have used land for purposes that they know are not allowed under planning law.

Currently, the law can be avoided for eight, 10, 12 or even more years by a determined builder or developer who dodges hither and thither between the appeals and excuses available to him. Meanwhile, the surrounding community suffers, and the planning law is brought into disrepute.

The Bill goes some way towards meeting the problem, but, like other Conservative Members, I do not think that it goes far enough. That is not just my opinion, based on a number of offences that have been committed in my constituency; it is shared by planning authorities almost everywhere, and has been voiced sensibly and forcefully both in the other place and by my hon. Friends today.

The general feeling is that a breach of planning control should be the relevant offence, rather than the breach of an injunction suggested in the Bill. That would dissuade offenders, even if bringing a case of law still rested within the discretion of the local planning authority. It would ensure that such breaches did not recur, or that the offender was made to rectify his offence in a reasonable period, rather than in 10 or more years.

I believe that local planning authorities know the identities of the offenders; they know who are the persistent culprits. I hope that the Government will reconsider their attitude—that they will not merely listen to the arguments and debate them, as my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning has promised, but react more positively than the other place.

What is now needed is a power to end offensive development, and to show offenders that they can no longer continue to offend against the planning regulations: that they must stop, and not offend again. If the Bill achieves that—as I hope that it will, if it is amended—we may at last begin to have effective planning law that will do what all but the crooked developers want it to do.

7.5 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): It is unusual for an hon. Member representing an urban constituency to quote the views of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, but I was impressed by its briefing, which observed:

> "The Planning and Compensation Bill could be one of the 'greenest' Bills to enter the House of Commons for many years. With a few changes to existing Clauses and a constructive approach to the introduction of new ones it would emerge as a linchpin of environmental policy. With robust legislative backing, the planning system will then be equipped to fulfil its wider environmental potential."

That, surely, puts the finger on the Bill's "green" potential.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): A green finger.

Mr. Cohen: A green finger, as my hon. Friend has so wittily suggested.

The key amendment to the Bill should be the introduction of an environmental duty for local authorities considering planning applications. The protection of the environment should rank as a priority. That should strike a chord with Conservative Members; after all, they are supposed to want to conserve what is best—at their best, that is. Along with energy conservation, that should be deemed as important as the economic and social considerations with which local authority planning committees must deal.

The marshes that surround my constituency are constantly threatened by developers' plans—road plans, for instance. My local planning authority, and neighbouring authorities, should surely be encouraged to try to save the marshes for future generations. The same applies to listed buildings: a penalty should be imposed on developers who destroy or damage them. Planners should be encouraged to respect conservation areas and to adopt the "urban village" approach. There is a notable shortage of improvement areas and parks in towns.

The Government promised to introduce control over demolition. In the last Session, a Conservative Member introduced a private Member's Bill to that effect, but it went no further. Without such controls, ugly sites will ruin the environment.

There needs to be planning gain for the community as a whole. There are very few opportunities for local authorities to do it themselves because the cost of acquiring land is prohibitive these days and they have no money, so using planning to achieve a gain for the community is legitimate. But it must be an open process—the public must have a say in it. There should be no deal between the local authority and the developer, with the public excluded.

The suggestion of third-party appeal, made as an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) in the Minister's opening speech, is a good one. There should be a right of appeal for people affected by a planning application; it should not just be the developer who has an opportunity to appeal. The idea is practicable. The Secretary of State could be given wider call-in powers, as recommended by the Select Committee on the Environment in 1986 or, if the planning application that has been approved, conflicts with the local plan or the structure plan, it could be a ground for a third party appeal.

I welcome the proposal in the Bill to increase compensation for owner-occupiers, but I feel that it is grossly unfair to have no equivalent for tenants affected by planning applications. A number of my constituents are tenants who are affected by the M11 road scheme. They have been treated shabbily by the Department of Transport and face being thrown out of their homes with no compensation at all. The council cannot help to rehouse them, because it has its own housing crisis. The Government should consider compensation for tenants.

With regard to planning in London, the London Docklands development corporation has a limited life; it was set up with a limited life and it is due to come to an end shortly. In those circumstances, it is not right that it should make the local plans for the area since it will not be answerable for them in due course. It is the boroughs surrounding the docklands area which should be involved in the local plans for docklands.

My main concern about London, however, is the need for a strategic overview of the environment and of planning. There is still a case for an overall London planning authority. It could almost be the authority to decide appeals when more than one borough is involved or in dispute; or when a local authority is trying to give itself planning permission, the planning authority could hear appeals from citizens. I think that it should also scrutinise each borough's local plan, see whether there are gaps in the overall planning environment for London and ask boroughs to review the plans and fill in the gaps. It should also be charged with the "public gain" role for London. There is an important link with public transport, roads and traffic policy as well, but overall it should have a green policy for London. Although the Government abolished the Greater London council, therefore, there is still a strong case for a Londonwide environmental authority.

7.13 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I want generally to welcome the Bill, but I will confine my remarks to parts III and IV, on compensation for compulsory purchase. As a non-practising chartered surveyor, I must declare an interest.

During the past 70 years, the compensation code of this country has been based on open market value; that is, it has been assumed that there was to be an agreed price between a willing buyer and a willing seller. In 1972 the White Paper on development of compensation "Putting People First" introduced home loss payments. The White Paper committee was made up of two senior civil servants as succeeding chairmen, nine local government officials, one private practice engineer and two private practice architects. One must therefore marvel at how helpful the Land Compensation Act 1973 was in looking after the interests of those who have been dispossessed of their accommodation. Nevertheless, I felt then, and I still feel, that it did not go nearly far enough. It was an official's point of view and not a politician's point of view that we finished up with, and that is the main disadvantage of the present legislation.

The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) is absolutely right to mention tenants, and this is a matter to which we must address ourselves seriously. Home loss payments do not go nearly far enough in the context of compulsory purchase.

We must examine the cost of schemes carried out in various parts of the country. Having looked into this matter in some detail, I find that the average cost of the acquisition of land amounts to no more than 10 per cent. of the total cost of the scheme throughout the country as a whole and to no more than 20 per cent. in the London area. In the London area, therefore, the average cost of the other works—the construction, the removal and repositioning of the services, and the construction of the road, railway or whatever it may be—amounts to 80 per cent. of the total cost of the scheme in London and 90 per cent. outside London. So the actual amount paid by way of compensation for land is a very small proportion of the total, and we must not lose sight of that.

When they acquire property people do not want to give up possession of it in most cases; they choose the property because it suits them very well and they want to live there or carry out their small business in that particular area. They do not buy it with a view to being moved on in the near future at someone else's behest. Society therefore owes them a special debt and we have not paid enough attention to this in the past. If we were to ask ourselves whether we would care to be told that we had to leave our accommodation, we would find it very unsettling and unsatisfactory if we did it purely for the benefit of society as a whole.

There is also the question of blight. Everyone realises that there will be an enormous fight over the level of compensation, and that this will be a very unpleasant experience. Because it is so unpleasant, the people who might otherwise be prepared to purchase the property shy away from doing so, and its occupant is left to suffer alone, often for many years—it may even be as many as 20—from the time of the first mention of a scheme until the completion of the acquisition.

We must therefore take an entirely fresh view of compensation. We must look in a very bold way at what

[Mr. Neil Thorne]

we should offer the man in the street to acquire his interest. We should be considering as much as 50 per cent. over the odds for someone whose property is going to be acquired. If we were going to offer such people 50 per cent. more, there would be no incentive to move out of their houses in advance of acquisition; they would be happy to stay there until the property was needed by the authority acquiring it. So the question of blight could not arise; they would be happy to carry on improving their property as long as they were in it.

Mr. Steen: One of the problems in this country is that we are very mean when it comes to compensation, and that is why people are so resistant to new developments; they refuse to go, because they are not paid properly. If they were only given proper compensation when they lost their homes, as such people are in other European countries, we could get on with public developments much faster.

Mr. Thorne: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and he has anticipated what I was going to say. A scheme is entered into because Government Departments believe that people will expect a return of 20 per cent. a year on the money that has been laid out. People fight so hard to prevent a scheme because they know that they will experience aggravation. Clearly the delay costs the community a lot of money.

We should give 50 per cent. extra by way of compensation on top of the open market value as an alternative to home loss payments, so that people would have a choice between the two. The majority would prefer to take the 50 per cent., and would therefore take an entirely different view of being dispossessed.

What would such a scheme cost? If 50 per cent. were added to the 20 per cent. of land costs in London, it would mean an additional 10 per cent. on the total cost. If a scheme had to pay for itself within five years and was introduced six months early, it would have paid for itself. If it had been introduced many years before, the venom would have gone out of the protest movement. Society would be better off and the cost to the taxpayer would be much less. Elsewhere, the scheme needs to be introduced only three months early for it to be worth paying for.

Many schemes are required as a matter of urgency. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) faces enormous problems with the construction of the north circular, and many other hon. Members also face problems with roads and railways. People whose property is to be taken from them, suffer the constant problem of how to make ends meet and how to buy another property to meet their needs. They would have a different attitude if society were prepared to pay the proper rate.

If the 50 per cent. were paid, the taxpayer would be much better off and everything would happen much more quickly. As 1992 approaches, we must compete with the rest of Europe. If we do not tackle the problem quickly and sensibly, we shall be left behind, and it will be entirely our fault.

7.22 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I welcome the Bill, and the opportunity for Parliament to discuss a matter which has not been able to amass much parliamentary time. I introduced a Bill on planning a year ago and I hope that the Government have had the opportunity to study it. Some of the issues dealt with in that Bill are covered in this legislation.

I pay tribute to the local planning authority in Leicester, to the director of planning, John Dean, who is a former president of the Royal Town Planning Institute, to his two deputies, Christopher Gere and Tony Davidson, and to the chair of planning, Colin Grundy. They make a fine team. Although hon. Members are keen to be involved in planning, we perhaps back off when the issues become a little too controversial, saying that it is for the local authorities to deal with them. I do not agree. Although planning issues are dealt with by local authorities and local councillors, they directly affect the work of the hon. Members who represent the areas.

I want to deal with a number of issues and cite the developers as the true villains of planning in Leicester. In various ways, they have sought to subvert and undermine the way in which the planning authority operated. I welcome the Bill as an important step towards controlling the way in which developers have operated in Leicester. If I can convince my colleagues, I propose to table amendments which I hope that the Government will accept. I wish to name the amendments after building firms and developers who have sought to make the lives of my constituents a misery.

I propose to table a Jelsons amendment, named after the firm which sought to cause misery for the residents of Vicarage lane and Stanley road in the Humberstone area of my constituency. Jelsons sought to build a number of homes in the middle of Humberstone Garden City, against the wishes of the local people. The application was turned down by the local authority, but before the matter reached appeal, Jelsons sent in the bulldozers and completely destroyed the land in question.

Mr. Lomax, a local authority officer, has written a long letter to the Minister for the Environment and Countryside in which he sets out a history of the builders who have destroyed land between the time that an application is turned down and the time that an appeal is heard. Stronger powers should be given to local authorities to prevent such disgraceful and irresponsible activities. By the time an appeal was heard in the Jelsons case, the land had changed, so the arguments of local residents who said that it was a wildlife area could not be sustained. In the end, however, the inspector sensibly accepted my views and those of the residents, and dismissed Jelsons' appeal.

I also propose to table the Barratts amendment, named after the firm of developers which has caused misery for my constituents in the Barkby Thorpe area. That area has one of the largest landfill sites in the country. Between 1955 and 1972, various people have dumped waste there, and as a result, there has been an accumulation of methane. Barratts' application went before the planning committee at 5 pm today. Happily, the chairman of the committee said at a public meeting last Friday that he would turn it down.

It is vital that there should be no further development on landfill sites until a detailed report has been prepared by the inspectors of pollution who are sent by the Department of the Environment. Until that report gives a particular piece of land a clean bill of health, no applications for development on landfill sites should be entertained. I shall argue strongly that the Barratts amendment should be accepted.

I also propose to table an amendment named after Welland Homes, a firm of developers which has tried to develop a piece of land in the Barnwell avenue area of my constituency. Again, the piece of land in question has been described by local residents as ecologically sound. They want to retain it as an open space, but Welland Homes wants to develop it for commercial gain. Unfortunately—or perhaps fortunately, for the residents—Welland Homes went into liquidation during the application process. However, I subsequently discovered that the firm can still appeal against a refusal of planning permission. A firm that has ceased to exist still has a right to be heard by the Department of the Environment. I hope that the Committee will accept the amendment, which would prevent firms that have gone into liquidation from appealing against a refusal of planning permission.

I shall also table an amendment named after a local Leicester firm called Neal Brothers, which has operated for a number of years, causing a great deal of distress to residents in the Prestwold road area of my constituency. The issue shows the current flaws in the stop notice procedure. I will look carefully at the procedure in the Bill to ensure that it meets the needs of the residents of Prestwold road. We want a stop notice procedure that does what its title says—stops the activity going on. In the case of Neal Brothers, despite the fact that the local authority was able to serve a stop notice, the firm was able to appeal and to delay the procedure, causing a great deal of distress to local people.

I also want to table an amendment based on a constituency issue concerned with Chater close. A piece of land, owned by builders, is described by local residents as having been left as an eyesore. I went to look at it on Sunday. The local authority has no quick, specific or effective powers to ensure that the developers tidy up or fence the land. As a result of the failure of the developers—whom I have not been able to identify, so I cannot name the amendment after them—to fence the land, people are dumping bricks and other debris, and causing a nuisance to local residents.

I hope that amendments will be tabled to make it abundantly clear to local authorities that, if they plan a road through a city or a town, they should ensure that they decide where the road will finish before they begin work on it. The A46-A47 link road links into the eastern distributor road in the eastern part of my constituency. It has been achieved through various stages.

The local authority has spent £2 million on building the first part of the road up to Hungerton boulevard, but it has not decided where the third part of the road will go. It has not decided whether heavy lorries will be asked to go down Spencefield lane or Goodwood road. The result is that there is no end to the road, which was begun several years ago. The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) has laughed and smirked throughout my speech, but these are serious matters, and I hope that the Government will take them on board.

7.33 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): I listened with care to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz). I do not share his general distaste for developers, but I can understand the apprehension that large developers cause when they cast covetous eyes on rural areas where there have been improvements in major road schemes. I am fond of suggesting in speeches from time to time that, in the south-east, we face the danger of Orpington creeping yard by yard to the Kent and Sussex coast, thereby destroying the fabric of the rural community. I hope that that will never be the case.

Like other hon. Members who have spoken in the debate, I welcome the proposal to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning system, following the Carnwath report, which illustrated clearly the problems that local planning authorities meet in enforcing planning control. The Bill contains many important measures, not least of which are the lifting of the six-month limit for prosecuting an applicant who makes a false declaration, the rationalisation of secondary legislation governing development control and the power for local authorities to impose after-care conditions on landfill sites. Yet in one significant area, the Bill does not appear to go far enough. That as my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) said earlier, with enforcement when unauthorised development is deliberately and cynically carried on in flagrant breach of the spirit and letter of planning controls.

The problem of enforcement has been addressed by the District Planning Officers Society in its helpful paper, which has been circulated to hon. Members. Nobody knows better than planning officers just how frustrating it is not to be able to bring persistent planning offenders to account when stop notices cannot prohibit activity pending an enforcement appeal and when the use of injunctions is costly and of limited effectiveness in that they can halt, but cannot remove, the offending development.

The paper of the District Planning Officers Society, to which the district planning officer of Wealden district council contributed, includes among its illustrative case studies a notorious eyesore—an entirely unlawful development at Gladwish farm in my constituency, between the villages of Ninfield and Catsfield. In its paper, the society referred to Gladwish farm as

"the Caravan Park in the Meadow."

That is the euphemism which is applied in this case.

I do not wish to amend the Bill to allow unwitting offenders, who have fallen foul of the planning laws by some minor technicality, to be leant on with the threat of court action. However, it is important to consider whether persistent contravention, such as that at Gladwish farm, should be made a punishable offence. That is not the case at present. At Gladwish farm, quarter-acre plots are being sold by the dozen as agricultural land, but at prices that reflect a different intended use, to individual purchasers who promptly use the plots as sites for caravans and for a variety of sheds and similar structures.

The land at Gladwish farm overlaps the boundaries of Wealden and Rother district councils. Along with the Wealden planning officer, the chief executive and the planning officer of Rother, and a number of elected members of both councils, have been helpful in trying to tackle the problem. One of the main difficulties that both councils face at Gladwish farm is obtaining information. As Rother district council puts it:

"Many of the plots are uninhabited when a site visit is made, and it is not always easy to determine who owns/occupies a particular plot. Current enforcement notice procedures require that a notice be served on all persons with an interest in the land. If correct procedures are not followed there is always the danger of a notice being quashed on

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

appeal. This often leads to complaints that the Council is not taking action quickly enough to remedy the breach of planning control."

For those reasons, the development at Gladwish farm highlights a number of weaknesses in the present enforcement system, which are summarised as follows:

"The difficulty in establishing the owner/occupier of the land. The problems with identifying the actual breach of planning control eg. if an occupier of caravan states it is only used for storage and not for human habitation it is very difficult to prove otherwise.

The inability of the planning system to allow for stop notices to be served in respect of dwellings and caravans used as a person's main residence.

The fact that even if a stop notice can be served, the liability to pay compensation renders it very unlikely that such a process will be used.

The length of time an appeal against an enforcement notice takes to determine, . . . The lack of a quick remedy once a notice is upheld."

For all those reasons, Mr. Gladwish continues to have a field day—no pun intended—and encourages prospective purchasers of his quarter-acre plots with deferred payment schemes involving a down payment of just £300 to become a landowner. He suggests to them that they do not have to have a solicitor if they do not wish to and that he can handle the business by himself.

Wealden, in whose area the greater part of the farm lies, reports:

"Enforcement notices have been served in 34 cases regarding unauthorised caravans or structures. These have been served upon the 'owners' and also upon Mr. Gladwish. In every case, an appeal has been lodged. In total 84 appeals against the service of Notices have been received (34 appeals by Mr. Gladwish, 50 from other individuals)."

On a recent visit to the site by enforcement officers, there were on the site 20 caravans and one double-decker bus, all of which were occupied, 25 unoccupied caravans and a burnt-out caravan chassis. When I drove past the site while travelling between Battle and Bexhill over the weekend, there was also a large amount of funfair machinery on the site. It seems to be a high old example of a problem that needs to be tackled.

It is more than two years since the agricultural land at Gladwish farm was made over to this bizarre, wholly illegal and rather unsightly scheme. During that period, the officers and members of both councils have been as resourceful as possible within the scope of existing legislation in their attempts to prohibit unlawful development. That they have not succeeded has not been for want of trying. To their understandable frustration, the public have grown impatient of their apparent failure to put a stop to a highly visible blot on the Sussex landscape. Local residents feel threatened and, in some cases, have been menaced by the individuals who inhabit some of those caravans. Unauthorised access has been made to a busy main road between Bexhill and Battle, but nothing decisive can be done without inordinate delays.

Although I welcome the Bill, I hope that Ministers will not forget the lessons of Gladwish farm when they take the Bill on to its Committee stage.

7.40 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I have no problem with caravans in my consitituency at present. Could not the planning authority serve a blanket notice on all the owners rather than on individual owners? I do not know the Bexhill and Battle area, and perhaps planning permission was given. If the land was previously agricultural, planning permission for agricultural land may have been granted. I should have thought that a common order would have sufficed but I rely on the Minister's expertise.

Planning has always been a problem, not only for local councils but for Members of Parliament. I have become a little reluctant to argue about planning, because I have found out, over a long period, that there are no winners—someone always loses. I learned a lesson from the Poulson case and have since kept planning application problems at arm's length. Many people became innocently involved in that case and I always keep it at the back of my mind.

More information on planning should be made available to those who will be affected by the granting of planning permission. Local authorities and other planning authorities often keep information under their hats—perhaps not intentionally—and give only the minimum amount that they are required to give, so the matter often turns sour.

The Coal Mining Subsidence Bill could affect planning in areas affected by subsidence. Searches could provide more details on problems that may arise in the future. In my constituency at present, there is a problem of methane emissions and landfill sites. It would be wrong to go into detail, because the case of those who have bought houses in that area could be blighted if I did so. I prefer not to name any part of the site until the case has been resolved, but I cannot help feeling that, had more information been required before planning permission was granted, about the type of site on which the houses were to be built and the nature of the land adjacent to that site, some of the present occupiers would not be in such a position. Nor would the local authority be faced with what is proving to be an expensive and long-drawn-out problem in trying to get rid of the methane.

Something must be done about such problems and future planning applications should require more information to be provided about the area in which a development is to take place, the existing ground works, and whether there is a landfill site in the vicinity. It is fine for developers—they are in the business of developing—but when they go away and people start to make inquiries, the developers simply say, "It is not our fault: we did our job and built the houses. It is now a local authority problem." The problem eventually falls on the poll tax payers. The provision of all such information should be mandatory before planning applications are approved.

Rural areas present different problems, especially at present, because people want to build homes where they have never been built before. Moreover, people who have lived in rural areas for decades encounter problems when they want to extend their homes, because they are not allowed to do so in green-belt areas. I was one of many hon. Members who embraced lovingly the green belt policy but now find that we must look at constituency problems from a different angle. My constituents complain that they want to build an extension or an extra house for their families. If the building is for agricultural purposes, that is fine, but they are not allowed to build for residential purposes. The Bill could take those matters into consideration.

The Bill should also consider the right to object. When a planning application is turned down, the applicant has a

right to appeal to the Secretary of State, but if the local authority grants planning permission, those affected by the development have no right to approach the Secretary of State. That seems to be wrong.

In my constituency, 90 per cent. of the workplace was underground because it was a mining district. We were happy to have a marvellous green belt policy because all the jobs were underground. Now, however, the collieries have gone and it is a different ball game. All new jobs involve building on the green belt and developers will build there only if the infrastructure is right. After so many decades of embracing the green belt policy, I now tell my constituents that I must take a different approach if we are to attract industry to the area and overcome our 15 or 16 per cent. unemployment rate. I do not like doing that, but it is the only practical thing to do.

However, under the current system, the people who do not agree with me about granting planning permission have no right to object. Where can they go if the council and I agree that permission should be granted? All they can do is to set up a fighting fund so that barristers can object on their behalf. That system is wrong. There should be an avenue whereby they have the right to put their objections to the Secretary of State; that is only justice.

During the passage of the Water Act 1989, I raised an issue about the pollution of the Rivers Dearne and Don from the workings of the Bullhouse colliery. The Minister in charge of the Bill promised to come back to me and say how that could be dealt with under planning regulations. I did not think that he could do so and, as he has not yet come back, I have turned out to be right. Any solution would be expensive and I raised the issue then because of the possibility of finance from the local authority, the Government and British Coal. The Government should consider such retrospective problems.

The Bill should also consider the problem of partly developed sites. These days, people often overstretch their finances and go bankrupt, leaving a half-finished site with unmade roads and unfinished sewers. The local authority can do nothing about it and has no choice but to spend its money to tidy up the site for local residents. If the firm has gone bankrupt, it will have nothing to add. Unless the receivers can quickly find somebody else, there is a tendency for the site to become derelict and the rest of the houses to become blighted.

It is wrong that a person should be able to develop a new site without taking into consideration dwellings that already exist. If there is a private bungalow site and a developer wants to build two and three-storey houses, it would break up the district——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has run out of time.

7.50 pm

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): At the outset I declare two interests. I am a tax adviser to the Building Employers Confederation and I own some land and redundant farm buildings. However, my contribution will deal largely with matters which have come to my attention as a constituency Member.

I welcome the Bill for a variety of reasons, not least because it enables us to examine in detail the planning system as it has developed. From my constituency experience of the past four years, I believe that the system is generally working satisfactorily. As my hon. Friend the Minister will have seen from his recent visit, viewed from the railway, the Taunton skyline is acceptable. Only one modern building rivals the medieval church towers of Taunton—a development of Government offices. On the whole, the skyline has not been spoilt, and in the country areas there is generally harmony between development needs and the preservation of the countryside.

I shall concentrate on three aspects of planning: enforcement, consistency and democracy. First, with regard to enforcement, various hon. Friends have raised the issue of criminalisation. As hon. Members, a number of cases are brought to our attention. I cannot give any particularly lurid examples of blots on the landscape, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle) did, but I know of a number of cases, such as roof extensions which destroy or limit the view for next door neighbours, the illegal establishment of vehicle dumping yards and other nuisances. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti) mentioned the building of houses 1·5 m higher than planned, with intrusive windows. I know of such a case in the Staplegrove district of Taunton.

I support further enforcement and the proposal made by Sane Planning in the South East that there should be a general duty of enforcement enacted on local authorities, which have too often in the past been reluctant to take action against even flagrant breaches of planning control. However, someone who is well experienced in running the planning system recently advised me that "magistrates are odd when it comes to planning: and tend to believe that a property owner should be allowed to do what he wants with his property". As we examine the issue in Committee, we should weigh up that aspect.

Secondly, with regard to consistency, in our constituencies we encounter a variety of applications for barn conversions or the establishment of single caravan sites for individuals needed to work in the local economy, not always connected with farming. We would expect local authorities and planning authorities, including the Exmoor national park planning authority in my constituency, to operate with some consistency. That subject is linked to the proposal in the Bill to prevent vexatious repetition of planning applications.

Will the Minister say whether the measures in the Bill will prohibit the applicant from submitting the same or a broadly similar application during a two-year period, or is that matter left to the local authority? A number of us want to see a total ban on the application coming forward within the two-year period. There have been cases in which applications which have been turned down by local authorities are agreed by the local authority a year later due to influence, pressure or persuasion being brought to bear. That is one of the weaknesses of our planning system, particularly at the lower levels.

With regard to consistency I, too, must mention a matter raised by a number of other hon. Members—that of gipsies. Taunton Deane district council, like many others, has complained that the planning system permits gipsies to develop sites when other citizens are prohibited from doing so. The best example involves Bishop's Hull in my constituency. In 1985, before I was elected, someone asked for permission to establish a caravan site. It was turned down and the applicant lost on appeal. Shortly after that, a gipsy applied for a caravan site. He was turned down by the authority, but won on appeal to the Department because he was a gipsy. That is a scandal. I

[Mr. David Nicholson]

hope that we can pursue this problem. Since I was elected similar cases have arisen involving neighbouring sites in the village of North Curry and Ford Street, near Wellington in my constituency.

I hope that the Minister will forgive me if I also raise the scandal of the long delay involving the Middlezoy gipsy encampment application, about which I have asked questions in the House. Last July, a constituent wrote to me saying that the inquiry had been completed in March 1989. Residents were not only still awaiting the Secretary of State's decision on the inspector's recommendations, but all inquiries had been fobbed off for months with assurances that the result would soon come. That was in July last year. This month—March 1991—we shall celebrate the second anniversary of the inquiry's completion. We should have a major celebration of that remarkable event. It is disgraceful that development and the planning system with regard to gipsies in the east part of my constituency should be jeopardised by this delay.

Thirdly, on democracy, I am glad that the Secretary of State is taking action on deemed planning permission. My constituents lobbied the previous Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten), strongly on the subject because ill feeling had been caused when the county council used its ownership of a site in South road, Taunton to deem itself planning permission for a school. There was a good case for the educational reorganisation in the town and I shared the doubts of the county council about alternative sites, but the process was undemocratic. That is why we are pleased that the Government are now taking action to sort out deemed planning permission.

Another issue related to democracy is being tackled by recent ministerial circulars, but I should be grateful if the Minister could comment if he has time. Great ill feeling was caused in Hatch Beauchamp in my constituency in 1987 and 1988. A site was allocated in the local plan, there were numerous objections from villagers and the local authority said that there would be an inquiry. But before that inquiry began, a developer entered an application, which the local authority could not resist because it could not be faulted on planning grounds. That was a negation of democracy, because there was no way in which the objections could be entertained as the inquiry had not been held. Will that matter be addressed? We do not want to be placed in the same position in relation to the West Deane local plan which now involves the western part of my constituency.

I support the proposals made by Sane Planning in the South East for better notices and information, and a longer period for publicity. It suggests that it might be helpful to extend the statutory period for public comment to 28 days. One such case occured in, I think, Wiveliscombe in my constituency. Notices were published just before Christmas and before people could become aware of what was happening, the time allocated for public comment had elapsed. That is not satisfactory. If the planning system is to work satisfactorily, it must be seen to work by parish councils and by constituents.

I am delighted that the Department and the Secretary of State now regard county councils as retaining a role in structure planning. It is important that the sub-regional element and the role of district councils should be co-ordinated. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) was far wide of the mark when he said that the whole of the south-west should be run by regional planning from Bristol.

7.59 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) referred to gipsy sites. Hon. Members will recall that we had a debate six or seven months ago on the designation of sites for gipsy encampments, during which the Minister promised that the matter would be pursued and that local authorities which had designated sites would be asked to get on with developing them, while those which had not would be persuaded to produce or prepare sites in their area. It is disappointing that, in today's debate on planning, hon. Members have again pursued the issue of caravan sites when promises were made about sites six or seven months ago. Hopefully, the Government will take notice of the anxieties expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House on the matter, the provision of sites will be speeded up and we shall see some progress.

I am worried not by what is in the Bill, but about what is not in it. We must welcome the updating of some planning laws, but I am worried about the law on change of use. There are statutory obligations on change of use, but if a challenge is made, it is for the applicant to prove that a property was used for the current trade as from 1 April 1964.

I can give an example. A person purchased a grocery business 18 years ago, which had a business selling hot and cold sandwiches attached to it. That person wanted to sell the business to someone who wanted to turn it into primarily a hot food takeaway business. The person who was selling the business had to prove that it was a hot food takeaway on 1 April 1964, and it was difficult to prove that after such a long time. The law on change of use should be updated.

If the Bill is to make provisions that will work for the rest of the 20th century and into the 21st century, we should consider issues which give rise to anxiety. Reference has been made more than once to the vexed question of third-party concerns. My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) referred to that, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) during the Minister's speech. The Minister said that it was generally accepted that members of the planning authorities represented local communities.

If there are anxieties about a planning application which may be approved by the planning authority, aggrieved people who live in the area which will be affected have no redress. That significant and important matter should be addressed in Committee.

I have no doubt that many planning authorities represent their constituents' interests, but the structure of local authority planning procedures, especially in shire counties where counties are responsible for strategic plans, is such that the centre of administration may be remote from the areas affected by a planning proposal which is causing concern. Constituents may feel that their case is not being properly presented. Therefore, there is a justification for considering third-party concern.

I understand that, in another place, third-party concern was raised, but the problem, examples of which were given from many areas, was not resolved. I hope that

consideration will be given in Committee to people who may be genuinely aggrieved by a planning decision but have no recourse to the Secretary of State.

Perhaps the Minister would consider one proviso. If a planning application before a local authority requires an environmental statement—which must be drawn up as part of a public exercise—the Secretary of State has the right and the responsibility to make a judgment on the environmental factors. If it is possible that environmental problems could be created by the proposed development, there could be a public inquiry. Against that background, local people could have an input into a planning application which is causing anxiety in a community.

Perhaps we should also consider in greater depth when an environmental study should be made of the effects of a planning application. We should also address the need to consult parish councils, town councils and the communities which will be affected by any problems that may develop. While planning authorities have a statutory responsibility to consult parish councils, there is a general feeling in communities that it is simply a question of tolerance, and that meaningful consultation is not undertaken.

The Committee should consider the possibility of strengthening the role of parish councils, town councils and the community councils in Wales. Their role should be strengthened to give that branch of local Government more involvement in planning decisions.

Many planning applications and decisions affect people's standard and quality of life and the destiny of an area. Therefore, there must be meaningful consultation. I hope that, as the Bill proceeds, we shall consider strengthening the process of consultation.

If the Secretary of State feels that an environmental statement gives cause for concern and that there should be a public inquiry, local people can have a say. As more information is made available by various organisations undertaking studies on environmental issues such as traffic movement, noise, dust or lighting, the Secretary of State should call for an environmental statement to be updated before the final decision is taken.

There is some provision for overhead cables in existing legislation, but it is not sufficient to give the reassurance that people in development areas need, particularly those near power stations, where there is genuine concern about the effects of such cables. Therefore, I hope that that matter will be taken into consideration.

The Minister for Housing and Planning referred to the importance of unitary development plans and the fact that they should be considered in greater depth by local authorities. He stressed the importance of public participation. I hope that the Committee will consider the involvement of the community and the public in unitary development plans.

Hon. Members have dealt more than once with the use of recreation land for housing or industrial development. If local people protest about permission being given to build on a football pitch or a cricket field, they are told that the decision was taken when the local plans were being considered five, six or seven years previously. Local people should be in no doubt about provision in local plans for recreational areas to be developed for housing or commercial or industrial premises.

The same should apply to common land. For the past three years, the Government have promised to introduce legislation to protect common land, but so far nothing has been done. The protection of common land is another issue that the Committee should consider, despite its absence from the Bill. There is too much encroachment on common land, in many cases without planning permission. That matter should be given serious consideration and, where there is such encroachment without planning permission, immediate action should be taken to restore the land to its previous use.

Developers, particularly residential developers, often submit planning applications and then make changes during the development of the site resulting in cramming rather than planning. New planning rules should be in the best interests of the people who will live in such areas, and should also take into account the general improvement of the area. The environmental impact of a residential development should be considered. We should see better planning and less cramming.

It is what is not in the Bill that is important, not what is in it. The issues that I and other hon. Members have dealt with should be given serious consideration, so that the legislation will take us into the next century and provide better planning provisions for people in generations to come.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I appeal for brief speeches in the limited time remaining. A number of hon. Members have sat throughout the debate, and I hope that they will not be disappointed.

8.16 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Before I welcome the Bill, I should declare an interest. I used to make my living as a house builder and I still have an interest in what, due to the current state of the housing market, is inevitably a fairly dormant building company.

More importantly, my constituency of Wyre Forest has a large green belt which is subject to the depradations of, among others, the occupants of Hagley hall and their noble friends. We have a large road building programme —the west orbital route, and a number of areas of special scientific interest and of great natural beauty. We also have the second largest concentration of caravans in the country and a great deal of quarrying and excavation.

I therefore welcome the Government's adoption of the Carnworth proposals, which make it more difficult for developers who irresponsibly try to circumvent the planning system. I welcome, too, the right of the local authority to ignore persistent applications and the more flexible powers of enforcement available for authorities, particularly planning contravention notices and the breach of current condition notices. I also welcome the fact that stop notices can now be applied to residential caravan sites which have been developed without planning permission. Too often in my constituency people try to put pressure on the planning authorities, saying, "We will put gipsies on the land—try and get us off if you can."

I would not go so far as some hon. Members, who have said that they would make the contravention of planning permission a criminal offence, although I think that it is vandalism of a particularly permanent sort, but I agree with the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) that there should be a general duty on local planning authorities to uphold and enforce the planning laws. If an authority refuses to enforce the planning regulations in an

[Mr. Anthony Coombs]

area, the only way to make it do so is to take it to court. That is often beyond an individual landowner, and certainly beyond an individual householder. I urge the Government to do something about that.

I am pleased that, under clause 18 and schedule 1, county councils can directly control the development of quarrying and waste, and can make reinstatement orders to ensure that the land reverts properly to its original condition. That is logical, given that county councils are responsible for mineral plans.

I am concerned about a possible conflict of interest between county councils—which may not have people on the ground to ensure that the provisions that they lay down are properly monitored—and the detailed environmental policies of district authorities. Lickhill quarry in my constituency has been quarried for many years, and many people have reservations about the amount of topsoil that has been put on. The county council does not seem to be monitoring the position adequately. If county councils are given total control, I am concerned that their provisions and restrictions may contradict the policies of the district, leading to confusion and to a coach and horses being driven through planning policy.

It is all very well to provide for after-care after tipping, but what happens if quarry companies go into voluntary liquidation deliberately before the after-care is done, so that they do not have to carry it out? The county council will have to pick up the bill. A strong case could be made for performance bonds to be lodged by quarrying companies or their insurance companies so that people will know that money will be available for after-care when it is needed.

Interim development orders have been the subject of a consultation paper by the Department of the Environment. I was pleased to hear what the Minister said today. The position is scandalous. I am glad that the Royal Society for Nature Conservation has drawn to our attention the fact that there are no fewer than 1,000 IDOs, 330 of which pose a major threat to the environment.

As the demand for sand and gravel grows with the road programme, particularly in my area where various major road schemes are about to come on stream, the threat from IDOs grows. Of course, permissions for IDOs last as long as the minerals. Brant farm in my constituency has not been developed for a long time, but with new quarrying techniques, previously unmined quarries can now be mined. Quarrying companies can go back to a quarry and mine to a deeper level, and because of the IDO the planning authorities have no control over that process.

There is a strong case for proper legislation and for compensation for home owners where IDOs are discovered next to their homes. We should insist that all IDOs that have not been worked for 10 years should be the subject of environmental assessment before they are allowed to be revived. If the sites are redeveloped, they should be subject to performance bonds to ensure that the ground is properly reinstated.

On compensation, I am pleased that home loss payments of 10 per cent. above market value are to be instituted by the Bill, and also that, if there is a change of use after the compulsory purchase order has been made, the resulting difference in value must be paid to the former landowner under clause 52.

On the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), £15,000 is peanuts for many properties. For instance, in my constituency which will be affected by road schemes, properties are worth £300,000 if they are worth a penny. When a person pays 2 per cent. stamp duty to move, which is £6,000, and when he has paid his moving costs, there is scant recompense from the state for the compulsory purchase of a property which the person may have lived in for years. The compensation above market value should be at least 25 per cent., or possibly even 50 per cent. Certainly the Government should consider that point carefully.

Tenants should get compensation for home loss, particularly if they are lessees under long tenancy agreements. A tenant may have a 50-year tenancy which may be worth more than many freeholds. As I understand it, under the Bill tenants will not be entitled to compensation above £1,500. That should be put right.

There is a case for a better rate of compensation for the forced sale of commercial premises to reflect the goodwill inherent in the properties. If a person has been in a property for 20 years, he may get the value of the business from the city council that is taking over the property, but he will not get any payment for goodwill. Premiums should be paid, as in France, for forced sale of commercial premises in order to reflect the scarcity value.

Overall, the Bill is a worthwhile measure and I shall have pleasure in supporting it tonight, if necessary, or on Report. I say that advisedly. I wish the Bill the best, because it will make a significant improvement to planning and will stop up many of the holes which the less scrupulous developers have previously ridden through.

8.26 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Subject to— *[Interruption.]* In view of the murmurings from the Conservative Benches, I should point out that I was in the Chamber until about 7 o'clock and that I came back at 8 o'clock——

Mr. Vaz: Do not explain to them.

Mr. Griffiths: I feel the need to put right the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen); he has lost a few moments of time because I had to do that. It will be his own fault if he fails to be called.

There is much to be welcomed in the Bill. Apart from a few provisions that we should like to see amended, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said, the major problems are the matters that have been omitted, particularly when we bear in mind the White Paper "This Common Inheritance". I should have thought that the Bill provided an excellent opportunity to take up some of the environmental issues that rely on European Community legislation or on planning guidance and notes, sent out by the Department of the Environment, the Welsh Office and the Scottish Office.

It was surprising to find nothing specific about environmental issues when the Bill was introduced in the Lords. Although the Government made sympathetic noises in the other place, when it came to substantial amendment, there were no concessions. I hope that in Committee we shall take the opportunity to make additions that will display to the public the Government's

real commitment to enact in primary legislation many of their fine words on sustainable development and on handing over a better planet to future generations.

Specific environmental duties should be laid on planning authorities. As was pointed out in the other place, the Government charge a wide variety of bodies with specific environmental duties. They cannot argue that there is no precedent. There can, therefore, be no real argument against the Government's including a provision in the Bill to impose on local authorities specific environmental duties when considering planning applications. It would strike a positive note.

At the moment, we have to rely on a European Community directive relating to projects that are deemed to have a major environmental impact on the environment. In the annexes to European Community directive there are lists of defined major developments that are subject to environmental impact assessment. An example was alluded to in the other place. Sewage treatment plants are subject to environmental impact assessment under the directive, but potable water treatment plants are not subject to such an assessment, even though they may have as damaging an impact on the environment as any sewage treatment plants.

I hope that, instead of placing reliance on environmental impact assessment directive, the Government will, as they promised, extend its application by tabling amendments in Committee. In particular, I hope that they will carry out their promise to subject private Bill legislation relating to major developments to environmental impact assessments. At the moment, such developments are specifically excluded under the terms of the environmental impact assessment directive. For the purposes of the directive, private Bills are deemed to be public legislation.

I echo the words of the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) and other hon. Members who have spoken convincingly about the need to end the scandal of interim development orders. The Government have already made a commitment to take certain measures, even before the full consultation process has been completed. That is a welcome step in the right direction, and it will be supported with enthusiasm.

I hope that the Government will take this opportunity to widen the scope of planning controls to include farm buildings and major agricultural and forestry developments. They ought to be the subject of appropriate planning applications. Unfortunately, all too often ill-considered developments disfigure the landscape. It is time that they were brought within the scope of the planning law, as happens with industrial developments.

A statutory duty ought to be placed on local authorities to approach all neighbours who may be affected by a development. Many hon. Members have referred to the problems caused when neighbours feel that their views have been ignored during the planning application procedure. It leads to bad feeling. Perhaps planning decisions are then coloured by bad feeling between personalities rather than the issues involved being considered dispassionately.

The Government ought to make a commitment to allow third-party planning appeals. After a planning application has been approved, people with a clear interest in the development ought to have the right to appeal, in just the same way as developers have the right to appeal when a planning permission application is refused.

On common land, I ask the Government to look again at their last election manifesto and to table amendments to the Bill to enable them to implement those commitments.

I do not say that a particular organisation or institution ought to be responsible for coastal zone planning under our planning procedures, but the Nature Conservancy Council's report on our coasts and estuaries and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' report and survey of our estuaries demonstrate that there is a pressing need for additional steps to be taken to protect our coastal zones. Just about every estuary worthy of the name is subject to development proposals. Whether they relate to tourism, energy, transport, commercial activities, or a combination of them all, we believe that they should be subject to the most rigorous planning procedures.

Even if an estuary is not the subject of a development proposal, our planning procedures ought to include the steps that need to be taken to protect and enhance the estuarial environment. Estuaries are vital for migratory birds. The flora and fauna must be protected. Due to development pressures in the south, the south-west and Wales, planning authorities need to introduce coherent plans to protect long stretches of coastline that lie beyond the responsibilities of just one planning authority.

I hope that all these issues will be considered in great detail in Committee and that on Report the Bill will include significant improvements that will help to preserve our common inheritance.

8.37 pm

Mr. Robert Boscawen (Somerton and Frome): May I reinforce two points so ably made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs)? They concern mineral extraction, in particular mineral extraction from the Mendip hills in Somerset—part of my constituency. It is an area of outstanding natural beauty and the principal source of crushed rock. It is the nearest source of supply for the south-east—the principal area of rock aggregate consumption in the United Kingdom. Millions of tonnes of stone are exported each year. Our exports are increasing rapidly. Any measure that affects the responsibilities of mineral planning authorities—in our case, Somerset county council—is of great importance to us.

Two truisms are well known in this sphere. If the economy is to thrive, an adequate supply of minerals must be available to the construction industry. Minerals can be worked only where they occur naturally. Modern extraction of stone creates substantial environmental disturbance, especially in such confined areas as the east Mendips. Every effort must be made to minimise such environmental disturbance.

Under the Bill, the planning rules on the depositing of mineral waste will be brought in line with those on mineral workings. Although complex provisions will be necessary, they should be supported by all hon. Members.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest and the Minister said, there is nothing in the Bill on interim development orders. Those orders go back a long time and were introduced in a hurry in the 1940s to pump-prime the industry at the end of the second world war.

Most of the principal quarries in the east Mendips, of which there are about nine, are operated by major companies in or near areas that are subject to interim development orders. Minimal conditions are attached to the winning of minerals. Therefore, IDOs should be

[Mr. Robert Boscawen]

registered as soon as possible. The Government are losing no time in ensuring that that happens. All IDO permissions will be known to the mineral authority and to those who must make official searches on behalf of people who wish to buy houses.

Such certain knowledge would to some extent reduce the fears of individuals and groups who live in the area that further damage will be done to SSSIs if long-dormant workings were reactivated without conditions being imposed and a planning application being considered.

The majority of mineral operators want good relations with those who live and work in the area. In the Mendips, the quarry advisory committee brings together representatives of the quarry management and elected authorities, from Members of Parliament to parish councillors, so that they can listen to each other's point of view on the conflicting interests in quarrying.

I hope that, when consultation on IDOs has taken place, the operators will take a reasonable view of the Bill's proposals. I believe that they will. However, they may not do so if, under the Bill, existing mineral working rights are appropriated without compensation. The Government could fall into a minefield of traps if they pursued that policy.

The Government have undertaken to review all aspects of the compensation regulations. My hon. Friend the Minister will want to strike the right balance between meeting environmental concerns and ensuring that essential crushed rock resources are supplied to customers at a reasonable cost.

The long-term restoration schemes of quarry workings was mentioned. Somerset county council, our minerals authority, has a long and commendable record of pioneering environmental conditions attached to planning consents and to IDOs. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest and the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), it is concerned about funding and long-term maintenance responsibilities long after mineral workings cease. I should like to hear what solutions, if any, Ministers have in mind and whether long-term restoration funding has been seriously considered. It will not be easy to achieve the right balance in the controversial issues surrounding IDOs.

I would welcome a visit from my hon. Friend the Minister so that he could see the extent of quarrying in a relatively small area. Huge holes have been dug in the ground by modern machinery, and to a large extent they are carefully concealed by banking and trees. Much long-term capital investment is involved, including major public road and rail links. Limiting environmental damage is of prime concern. The long-established work force in the area must be considered.

If Ministers cannot achieve the right balance in the short time before the Bill is enacted, I hope that they will still take the opportunity to do so, because the matter needs to be treated sensitively for the future of the environment, and particularly for all those who live in the area.

8.46 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I welcome the Bill and should like to make four points, three of which are covered by the Bill. The one that is not covered, which probably would be better dealt with by a planning policy guidance, is the vexed subject of infill, which, more than any other planning policy, has destroyed the village structure of many rural communities. It has led to the concept that every square inch of available land in a village is built on, to the exclusion of stretching the village envelope.

The traditional broken village frontage has gone, and many villages in my constituency have only a market town high street with no green space, orchards or gardens visible from the main road. That is a tragedy. I would far rather that we developed back lands, punched out the odd close, keeping development close to the centre but behind the village street rather than cramming it into every piece of available land. I am sorry that the Bill does not address that, but perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will take my point on board.

My second point, which is covered by the Bill, is to welcome the moves under clause 17 to deal with deemed planning consent and land owned by interested planning authorities. I noticed that, on Second Reading in the other place, my noble Friend Baroness Blatch, a former leader of Cambridgeshire county council, referred to single-tier authorities that dealt with planning. Clause 17 also deals with county and district councils.

It is reasonable to allow a county council to make a decision on use of its own land, perhaps to construct a school, but it is patently wrong, when county councils are understandably looking for capital receipts, that they should be able to give themselves planning consent for residential development and then sell it on the open market. Everybody has to apply to the district council to erect a porch, so it is wrong that county councils can do otherwise. Of course, the boot can be on the other foot: district councils can develop their own land. Although that is less common, it happens and it should be addressed.

There is also the problem of local authorities wanting to use land for their own purposes. I have a particular problem in my constituency at the moment. The district councils proposals to build its own new headquarters are causing considerable local dissatisfaction, I shall write to my hon. Friend the Minister about it.

I am also concerned about the date of implementing those provisions, which is not included in the Bill. If we are to change the controls over deemed planning consent, I believe that the date of implementation should be with effect from the date of the First Reading of the Bill, which is already being used in relation to compensation; otherwise, between now and the Bill coming into force, authorities seeking to get around the provisions will cause a rush of deemed planning consents.

My third point has already been covered several times, but I have a particular angle on gipsy and traveller encampments. We in Cambridgeshire have suffered badly at the hands of travelling people, who have simply turned up and parked anywhere, on roadsides, in laybys, in parking places and on private land without any "by your leave".

I have two district councils—one is designated under the Caravan Sites Act 1968; the other is not, but is seeking designation. As I said in an intervention, the number of travellers in the area is constantly increasing. I am not saying that the county councils are getting the job absolutely right at the moment, but the proposals in the

Bill to extend their legal powers and to introduce stop notices so that they can deal more quickly with such contraventions are an important addition.

My hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) said that gipsies appear to get favourable treatment. That is a common belief. People all over my constituency are under the impression that gipsies are getting away, in planning terms, with things which ordinary law-abiding citizens would not get away with. That is not acceptable. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will bear in mind the fact that the powers to deal with that problem will have to go beyond what is in the Bill. The Department of the Environment will have to instruct its inspectors to take a much sterner attitude to unauthorised developments by gipsies, which are then the subject of late applications or appeal.

Over and over again in my constituency, a gipsy has applied for planning consent for a caravan and been turned down by the district council, but has then gone to appeal and been granted consent. Three years later, the same gipsy applies to build a house on the site, goes to the district council, is turned down, goes to appeal and is granted that consent. The result is a property in the back of beyond where nobody else would have a chance of getting planning consent. When implementing the provisions of the Bill, it is important that the Government ensure that they get other factors right, as well as the legal language of the Bill.

My fourth and final point relates to compensation. I very much welcome the Government's decision to address this issue in the Bill, but I am disappointed at the way in which it has been dealt with——

Mr. Steen: It is not enough.

Mr. Paice: As my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) says, the outcome is not enough.

It is a pity that the Government rejected a number of amendments that were tabled in another place. Their resistance to offering sweeteners to people who will be affected by planning applications and developments is short-sighted. As several of my hon. Friends have said, we must bear natural justice in mind. It costs a lot of extra money when one loses one's home and has to move—not just the 10 per cent. that is provided for in the Bill. There are also the other associated problems. However, the effect of having one's farm cut in half or losing part of one's garden goes far beyond the simple value of that piece of land and we need to recognise the case for natural justice.

A sensible case for offering sweeteners can also be made on the grounds of expediency. This country spends far too much money in the delay associated with and the execution of public inquiries. While it may not sound high-minded, I believe that there is a substantial case for stuffing people's mouths with silver if it means that the development can be achieved.

Of course I feel for those people who are affected. If my property was affected, I would probably oppose the development, object to it and take the matter to inquiry. That is totally understandable, for the simple reason that, if one does not do so, one gets nothing out of it. As several of my hon. Friends have said, the present arrangements are simply not adequate. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will reconsider their proposals and stance on compensation.

I appreciate that the hand of the Treasury is firmly involved in this matter, as in so many things. We cannot get away from that, but the cost of the delays and of the inquiries that inevitably result from the objections is far too great and must be taken into account. Now that compulsory purchase powers are held by private sector bodies, many of which were formally in the public sector, it is important that we ensure that those powers are used properly. In my own constituency, the dualling of the A11 in the near future is causing big problems. I believe that greater compensation could have short-circuited many of them.

The Bill goes a long way to resolving many of the planning problems that we are all acquainted with from our mail bags. I have outlined one or two points, but I emphasise my particular concern about compensation. I very much hope that my hon. Friend will look at that matter again.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have 25 minutes left and four Back-Bench Members are still seeking to catch my eye. The arithmetic is fairly obvious.

8.56 pm

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): I must declare an interest in this debate in that I have practised at the planning Bar for more than 20 years.

I generally welcome the Bill and should like to make four short points about it.

First, the provisions for planning contravention notices, breach of condition notices, and the right to apply to the High Court and county court for injunctions are useful additions to the enforcement powers of local authorities. They are likely to be effective because they are sensibly based on the practical experience of operating the existing system of planning control.

Secondly, I do not believe that it would strengthen planning control to make a breach of planning control a criminal offence. I welcome the increase in penalties for existing criminal offences, but local authorities have always had discretion and have had to consider not only whether there has been a breach of planning control, but whether it is expedient to enforce the provisions. That element of discretion remains an important part of planning practice.

The role of the criminal law in planning matters should be as narrow and circumscribed as possible. The criminal courts are not good at handling matters involving planning judgments or estimations about planning policy and the present pattern of enforcement in planning control is right in seeking to separate all judgments about planning policy from the implementation of criminal sanctions. The system is sensible in giving the local authority and the Minister power to make all the necessary planning judgments and then leaving it cut and dried for the criminal courts when it comes to prosecution.

I recall when things were otherwise and we had the most disastrous series of adjournments in the magistrates courts because they did not want to consider the criminal aspect of the case while there were applications for planning permission to the local authority and possible similar appeals relating to planning merits already pending. That would be the wrong path to follow.

[Mr. Patrick Ground]

Thirdly, I greatly welcome the changes that have taken place in what was clause 24 and is now clause 25 of the Bill. I am pleased that the Government have changed those provisions. I welcome discretion being given to the Minister in dealing sensibly with pre-appeal procedures and the sanction of costs for unreasonable behaviour.

It was undesirable to penalise someone for asking for a public inquiry simply because that person had exercised a right. Time and again, I have seen people who were inarticulate on paper and who made no impression in the written procedures subsequently attend and transform the whole course of the planning inquiry by explaining the issue to the inspector and answering questions in a way which dazzled and completely answered expert cross-examination.

It is important that that right to a public inquiry should be preserved, not only for the appellant but for local authorities, which often have a series of local residents wishing to put their points of view about a development. That would be lost if the matter were dealt with solely by way of written representation. I am therefore pleased that people will not be penalised in the way that was proposed. What is now in clause 25 seems a sensible way of dealing with one aspect of unreasonable behaviour.

Fourthly, I agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) said about clause 17. The area about which I am least happy in planning practice and law is the position when a local authority is making a decision on planning policy permission in relation to its own land or a development in which it is involved. I have several examples in my constituency. The local authority gave itself planning permission for council offices on land acquired for a public park. It allowed housing on land that was acquired or used for public open space. Recently it promoted a hostel jointly with the health authority when it clearly runs the risk of breaching planning control. Certainly seven people will be in residence. It is difficult to believe that matters would follow the course that is being pursued if a private developer were involved.

I welcome clause 17, but I shall be looking hard at it, because I am far from satisfied that it completely lays to rest a problem which I regard as one of the greatest difficulties and weaknesses of the present planning system.

9.2 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I am pleased to follow my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground), and shall endeavour to emulate the dispatch with which he made his points.

I welcome the Bill. It is seldom that an opportunity arises to alter and, one hopes, to improve the planning and compensation laws, so it is essential that we get the Bill right. I wish to focus on two aspects in particular—those dealing with enforcement and compensation. I will begin with compensation.

I support those who have argued that compensation for compulsory purchase should be higher, for all the reasons that they have eloquently stated, but particularly for reasons of speed in getting an application through and saving the money that is otherwise spent due to the huge cost inflation of projects. We now often have compulsory purchase not simply for the provision of what used to be solely a public service but for commercial gain, so it seems right that the individual losing his property—not just his home but, in the same category, possibly farmland—should have a beneficial gain, as well as those who will benefit from holding the land and developing it in the future for whatever purpose.

My right hon. Friend and neighbour the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) specified the particular problem of blight and the importance of amending the Bill to enable people to be bought out for future development of roads and, in my case, the high-speed rail link. Such people should not suffer years of blighted property, as a result of which their whole life style may be broken because they cannot sell their home and move.

We must look abroad. For example, French railways pay 125 per cent. of the value of property. That is an extremely sensible policy. As a result, people who are about to be or will be bought out for the development of a railway line in France cannot understand why we in Britain have difficulties over such matters. The reason, of course, is that under our arrangements for buying out, compensation for compulsory purchase is far too low.

I shall now deal with enforcement in the case of unauthorised development. Here we deal with buildings, tipping and gipsy sites. I am extremely uneasy about the improved enforcement powers in the Bill, because I think that they will prove to be inadequate. Perhaps, after much consultation, lengthy work in Whitehall and many parliamentary hours, the Bill will still be toothless in terms of enforcement.

I have high hopes for the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo). Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, he is dealing with his first major Bill, and I am sure that he does not want to produce toothless legislation. He wants red-meat legislation and I look to him to respond to the many concerns that have been expressed by hon. Members.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning, who opened the debate, has already made clear his conversion—whether on the road to Wigan pier I do not know—to the case against criminalisation of unauthorised development. I regret that view, and I shall be one of those who will continue to argue vigorously for a change in the Bill. We ought to listen to the District Planning Officers Society, which knows the problem. I appreciate that my view contrasts with that of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston who has a strong legal background and is familiar with the issue. We should be open-minded and ready to appreciate the force of the argument advanced by those who are desperately trying to carry out enforcement orders on the ground in our constituencies for the benefit of the people who live there. We should give them the powers they seek.

Legislation exists to protect the environment, both urban and rural, which belongs to us all. When an individual or an organisation succeeds in flouting those valid constraints, it sets a serious precedent for others to follow. It also brings the law into serious and deepening disrepute. People naturally say to themselves, "If he can get away with it, why shouldn't I? Is it really worth being law-abiding?" The national situation is serious. There is a major problem of unauthorised development. In an

intervention, my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) spoke about that and gave figures. I am convinced that it should be made a criminal offence.

Local authorities encounter a multitude of difficulties when trying to exercise their enforcement role. The enforcement notice is almost inevitably followed by an appeal which takes months or years to achieve. It is then necessary to go for a confirmed notice followed by prosecution in the courts for non-compliance. That is not cheap, and the public are paying the price. So far, the penalties have been derisory. The Bill will increase the penalties, but they will still not be enough.

Understandably, the public accuse councils of allowing the transgressor to get away with it, and the credibility of the system is therefore badly damaged. Although some of the difficulties have been fully explored in the Carnwath report and are addressed in the Bill, I do not think that the proposed legislation goes far enough.

I share the view that the deterrent effect of immediate court action is needed to restore proper public credibility to the system. Unless we have that, the deliberate offender —there are a number of them, and they are often well known at local level—cannot be effectively dealt with. Such offenders should be branded, publicly, as criminals.

My comments refer to unauthorised development of buildings, to tipping and to gipsy sites. I want other hon. Members to have the opportunity to speak, so there is not time to detail the problems that we have had with gipsy sites in my constituency. An authorised site for two caravans exists but, since 1987, there have been up to 30 caravans on it at one time. That is not good enough, and it is not for want of the local authority's trying to get the law enforced.

9.10 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I am glad to have the opportunity to speak about this important Bill. From what I have heard in the past five hours, I am one of the few Members of Parliament who, broadly speaking, welcomes development in my constituency, and is generally quite pleased about the changes happening in south Derbyshire.

Like the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) opposite, my constituency used to be a coal-mining constituency and many of the old developments—for example, the pits and the clay-taking which took place at the same time and in the same place —occurred long before planning law. The result was a terrible mess in much of my area, and there are now a large number of planning applications to clear the land, which cover thousands of acres, which I welcome. The applications are to clear the tips and to clean up old clay areas, and often involve opencast mining for minerals such as coal, and gravel. I have therefore experienced all the problems that have been mentioned tonight. However, I am convinced that, if this work is done, the net result will be a great improvement in south Derbyshire.

As I listened to Opposition Members speaking tonight it occurred to me that, if they were a little less negative about some of the suggestions for their areas and a little more positive, they might have what we have managed to achieve in south Derbyshire, despite the closure of pits —an unemployment rate below the national average, and I hope we shall keep it there.

Nor is it any accident that most of my colleagues on the Conservative Benches have spoken strongly about two major issues—enforcement and delay—and I shall give them some brief, but strong, support. It is apparent that we all share the same problem. I have to tell my hon. Friend the Minister that it is no use writing more legislation if we cannot get it enforced. We already have masses of planning legislation—more than the rest of the European Community put together, I suspect—but enforcement has turned out to be a problem that defeats many of our local councils.

The gipsy problem is apparent in south Derbyshire. South Derbyshire district council is designated under the Caravan Sites Act 1968. There are only four gipsy sites in the county of Derbyshire, and two are in my constituency, which has been designated for years. We have all the powers that we are supposed to need, and all the powers that exist in English planning law to get gipsies off unauthorised sites, but it has proved to be virtually impossible to do so.

My hon. Friends will be familiar with what happens. Someone—a Mr. Smith—buys a piece of land from an unsuspecting farmer. Overnight, a hard standing appears, as well as electricity, lighting, dogs and 24 caravans. Then it is heaven's own task to try to get these people off the land: residents will complain; planning permission is applied for and turned down; an appeal is submitted, which is turned down; residents complain again; an enforcement notice is served, which is accepted by the court; an appeal is offered and goes through the courts; and still nothing happens. Then residents complain again, and before we know it we are back in court.

In one example that I can think of, this process has taken four years to the point that I am describing. The local newspaper is having a campaign against the district council, carrying headlines saying, "Family to be moved off their own land, says council", when there have been nothing but complaints from local residents about the fact that the "family" and its cohorts should never have been there in the first place.

I to serve notice on my local council that, when the legislation is carried—either in its current form or, with the support of my hon. Friends, tightened up—it had jolly well better make use of it and get these people off land that they are not entitled to use in that way. We must bear in mind the fact that they are exercising rights that the rest of my constituents—most of whom pay their community charge and all their taxes—do not have and feel aggrieved about.

My other point concerns compensation. I am becoming convinced that my hon. Friends who have said that the compensation being offered under the Bill is not sufficient are probably right. That being the case, we give the Minister notice that, as well as coping with the Opposition's case, he may have to deal with pressure from his own side. I therefore hope that he will hearken to what has been said.

The insufficiency of compensation is one of the main causes of the unhappiness, grief or distress that attend all planning applications in this country—especially major applications in respect of public works, such as the development of the Stoke-Derby M6-M1 link road, which will go right through my constituency, and in respect of which a planning inquiry is currently proceeding. That road is very necessary in the public interest—national as

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

well as local. The current road is really just a country lane and is extremely dangerous. There have been several fatalities.

So far as everyone is concerned, the sooner the new road is provided the better. The problem is that the financial and personal interests of a substantial number of people will be damaged. I am quite sure that, if the compensation scheme were as generous as possible, I could help to sell the project. I think I could persuade people that they would do well by withdrawing their objections—and there have been 40 major objections.

However, it is not sufficient to have a good compensation scheme; payments must be made as quickly as possible. The situation in respect of payments resulting from compulsory purchase orders leaves an enormous amount to be desired. I should be pleased to know whether the Minister has any plans to make local authorities, when they are involved, hurry up.

In south Derbyshire, many compulsory purchase orders are made as a result of property being made unfit through mining subsidence. It is typical for a compulsory purchase order to be granted and for the price to be agreed, but for the seller to have to wait several years for payment. I am currently dealing with cases in which people have waited three years for compensation, having lost their homes and been rehoused by the council. When the money is eventually paid, it will not be nearly sufficient to take account of the increase in house prices in the interim.

These poor people have been paying mortgages and have had to meet the cost of double glazing and so on. Interest has also accumulated. When the money comes eventually, it will not be sufficient, and these people will be left without homes, without a penny of equity, and with substantial debts. I am quite sure that, if compensation were paid more quickly, many of the problems would disappear. If that could be achieved by amending the Bill, I hope that my hon. Friend will consider introducing the necessary amendments.

I hope that many of the faults about which we have heard today will be put right by this legislation, into which so much effort has gone. The extent of the consultation has been admirable. If the Bill works, it will be a most sensible and worthwhile addition to our planning law.

9.17 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): It falls to me to wind up for Members on the Back Benches. I shall try to do so in the next eight minutes.

This Bill provides us with a wonderful opportunity to deal with planning law. We have not had a planning Bill for 20 years. This one is supposed to tackle the faults of the planning system, but it does not do the whole job. It is really a very modest, tinkering Bill, which increases compensation for compulsory purchase. Although it incorporates some of the Carnwath recommendations, it does not make building without planning permission an offence.

I wonder whether the Minister has any idea of the scale of this problem. In 1988, there were 64,381 complaints about unlawful development. In 1989, the number went up to 74,979—an increase from 380 to 405 in the number of complaints per authority. Where else can people cock a snook at the law and, as often as not, get away with it?

Other hon. Members have concentrated on whether it should be a criminal offence to build without planning consent. I propose, in the brief time available, to dwell on two matters that the Bill should, but does not, deal with. The first is the national scandal of vacant derelict public land. The register that was set up 10 years ago lists, even today, 82,400 acres of vacant public land—and that is just the tip of the iceberg. The register is already limited by a number of categories, and estimates from reliable sources suggest that the amount of vacant land is nearer 150,000 acres. The documentation of land in the register is as extensive as a large London telephone directory. Public authorities are not property developers; few know how to market the land, and there is little incentive for them to do so.

While all that public land lies waste, however, developers are constantly exerting pressure for the building of more houses that will encroach on green-field sites—because, they say, no other land is available. That constant pressure on the countryside causes outrage and concern in the shire counties represented by a vast number of Conservative Members, which is understandable in view of the vast tracts of publicly owned land that are lying idle in urban areas.

I know that not everyone wants to live in the inner city, but inner London alone contains 136,000 "homeless households". The damage being done to those people and their children is incalculable, and it is a disgrace that so much good land should lie idle for want of Government action.

For the past 12 years, I have campaigned for such action. I have proposed the auctioning of public land, and I have also suggested that the land should be transferred to regional property development companies which could market and sell it, in a scheme affectionately known as PLUMS. The idea is that the land bank will not be reduced without new initiatives from the private sector, with the possibility of profits to spur the companies involved into action.

Mention of the need to help the homeless brings me to the issue of housing and local plans. The Bill will make local plans compulsory everywhere in Britain. That is a welcome move: only 25 per cent. of rural areas, in regard to population, are now covered by local plans, which can enable future housing needs to be discussed and incorporated into an area's development plans. England alone contains 1·25 million "homeless households"; surely one of the chief purposes of the planning system is to facilitate the provision of sufficient homes in the right places.

Household formation forecasts are made by four people at the Department of the Environment, and are based on population forecasts provided by six people at the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. The forecasts are then handed down to the counties, which then draw up structure plans in, as it were, tablets of stone. The counties apportion the figures among the districts.

However, by the time that the houses are being built in those districts, the Department is revising its forecasts. In my county, Devon, 32 per cent. fewer households will be formed in the last five years of the 1990s than in the first five years of the 1980s; England will experience a total overall drop of 45 per cent. The earlier forecasts, however, have already been incorporated in the Devon local plans,

and the districts are already building houses to suit the earlier projections based on the 1980 figures. The entire programme has been distorted.

Surely it would be more sensible to base local house building plans on local, rather than national, figures. The district council in Totnes has a far better idea of how many houses will be needed in Aveton Gifford, in my constituency, than anyone in Holborn or Whitehall. Local plans should also take into account the state of the infrastructure: that is more important than the simple issue of development. No houses should be built unless planning applications explain how the extra infrastructure is to be provided.

It is not just sewerage but gas, electricity, water, hospital beds, doctors, police cover and so on. No new estate should be given the go ahead until the infrastructure to support the increased population is in place. In Roborough in my constituency, for example, a new estate was built but no extra school places were provided. In South Milton, so many new houses have been built that the sewage now backs up into the village. In Stokeham, so many houses have been built that the local electricity substation is frequently overloaded and the pub regularly plunged into darkness.

Not only must we get numbers and infrastructure right; it is just as important to get the houses to look right. Often it is the shape and design of buildings that offend people. There are quite a few monstrous carbuncles on the face of well loved Devon villages which caused an outcry when first built and which still appear intrusive and out of scale. When I mention design, I am always told that it cannot be regulated, that it is too subjective. That is a cop-out. Aesthetics and design must be discussed and guidance given in local plans, so that local people and local officials have at least some say in the way in which new buildings affect their area, especially when these are specially designated conservation areas.

I have mentioned some of the glaring omissions from the Bill, but they can easily be amended. With my suggestions and the good will and the drafting of the Government team, we can make positive and constructive progress. The planning system is crying out for improvements, and we have the opportunity in this Bill to put things right.

9.26 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I suspect that, when the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) entered the Chamber this afternoon, he expected a somewhat warmer welcome for the Bill. In the speeches at the various stages of consideration of the Bill in the other place, there was a much more comprehensive welcome for the legislation than we have heard today. I will come to a general welcome for some aspects of the Bill in a few moments. I will just say now that no one speech from the Government Back Benches has welcomed the Bill in its entirety; in every case, the speeches have been critical not of what is in the Bill, which we all welcome, but of the omissions from the Bill and the faults in the current system that right hon. and hon. Members feel will not be put right by the Bill as it now stands.

We generally welcome the Bill, particularly clauses 1 to 11, which improve the enforcement procedures arising out of the Carnwath report mentioned by several hon. Members. The publication "Enforcing Planning Control" was widely welcomed and well consulted on and, on the whole, we think that the Government have translated it intelligently into legislation.

There has been some discussion about criminality and whether transgressions against planning law should be criminal offences. On the whole, the suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) is a good one—that, where the development without permission is irreversible, as in the case of open-cast mine workings or listed buildings, it should be a criminal offence. There is a logic in that. In other cases it should be a matter of simply returning the site to what it was before. The Minister of State took some interest in that suggestion. If he wanted to co-operate with us in bringing in an amendment in Committee, we would want to co-operate with him on it.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Will the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) not go further than something which is "irreversible" and look at the question from the point of view of blatant breaches of planning control? They are perhaps not irreversible but, by golly, the way things are now, it takes years to get anything done, and the way in which the Government have phrased the Bill does not improve it as much as we would like.

Mr. Howarth: I am always more than happy to accept an invitation by the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith). I think that he is referring to the rate at which things can be changed. If the development can be reversed, we should concentrate on speeding up the process by which it can be reversed rather than going for criminalisation. However, if the hon. Gentleman differs from his ministerial colleagues, I have no doubt that he will take up those differences through the other channels available to him.

In response to an intervention, the Minister confirmed in his opening remarks that the Government intended to move towards a plan-led system rather than a development-led system. We welcome that. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) took us on a perambulation of the heinous crimes committed by developers in his constituency and he will also welcome the Minister's remarks. The points that my hon. Friend was trying to make were dealt with because a plan-led system is better than a development-led system.

Having uttered those brief words of welcome, I shall spend some time dealing with the issues which we feel that the legislation as drafted does not cover in sufficient detail or covers in a way which does not make the best use of the potential available.

One body of opinion feels that a general duty should be placed on local authorities to ensure that planning controls are properly and fully complied with. Certainly, the abuses mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East would be better dealt with in that context. With regard to enforcement, we accept by and large that complete criminalisation of the process would not be the best method. However, we believe that an exception should be made in the case of irreversible developments. We shall seek to deal with that in Committee.

The Bill should also increase the importance given to development plans. They should be a major consideration, especially during the appeal stage. I have some sympathy with that idea because of what I have seen in my own constituency. At the moment, the problem is often that

[Mr. Howarth]

local authorities' planning committees and the councillors who sit on them have to act on the advice that they receive from officers. That advice—certainly in my constituency—is sometimes based on the likelihood of the plan going to appeal. It is not straightforward planning advice about what would be good for the area and about what would fit in with the local plan. It often takes into account what would happen if a lawyer took the plan to appeal and if various statements were made. That is wrong—local plans should be the major consideration. I hope that the Bill will give inspectors a stronger context in which to consider recommendations and that the process of strengthening local plans can be developed more fully in Committee. That would answer some of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara).

My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) talked about the opportunities for and the justice of greater public participation in the planning process. We should like to see more thought given to how people can have more say in the planning process, not because of any NIMBY sympathy but simply because we believe that there are many vested interests in development, not least those of the people who live in the area. I should like to be convinced of the case for a third-party appeal system because it would be an obvious route for public objections.

I know—and it is fairly evident from the speeches made by Conservative Members—that although when I was first elected to the local council in 1971, planning was usually not a matter of great concern, if one wants to fill a public meeting these days, one should have a meeting about a planning proposal. On one occasion in my constituency 1,000 people, unbelievably, turned up at a public meeting to discuss a planning proposal about an incinerator. There is widespread public interest, and we must take account of that as we deal with legislation and the reform of the present system.

We believe that a new used class should be included in the planning system and we will raise that matter in Committee. We will raise especially the question of social rented housing, which could have significance in urban and in rural areas. It is unquestionably true that there is a widespread demand, which is largely recognised, for an increase in the supply of affordable rented housing. It is estimated that we require between 100,000 and 150,000 new units a year. Let us take the conservative estimate and say that the figure is 100,000.

The affordability of land is an issue in trying to achieve those objectives. We believe that creating a new class of social rented housing would identify the land available that the local authorities felt could be used for the purpose, and would stop the escalation of value which occurs when land is turned over for general housing use, which means that social rented housing has to compete with other forms of development. We hope that that issue can be taken up in Committee.

My hon. Friends the Members for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) and for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) fully covered the lack of green issues and of environmental impact assessment in the Bill. Given the shortage of time, I will not detain the House on that in detail. The potential exists for taking a more comprehensive look in the planning system, at green issues, but that does not seem to be covered in detail in the Bill. The Opposition will seek to realise that potential in Committee. There is considerable potential for green issues to be taken into the planning system, and the planning system should be used as a positive tool in that respect. We hope to use the opportunities available to us to table amendments through which to raise those issues.

In parenthesis, I want to give one reason why green issues are important, and I speak on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Benton). I invite all Ministers, before or during Committee, to look at the coal dust problem in the docks at Bootle. They would then realise the enormous problems with which people are confronted. Ministers would have to recognise that something should be done in the planning system. At present, the local residents, the Member of Parliament and Sefton borough council are frustrated in their efforts to do something about the problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South spoke about home loss payments. We accept that the Bill proposes a fairer system of payment for tenants and for owner-occupiers. In the case of tenants, the maximum payment would be £1,500. It is unjust that an owner-occupier, apart from the compensation that he is paid for the property, could expect to receive up to £15,000 whereas a tenant of any description would receive a maximum in home loss compensation of £1,500. There is little difference in the distress suffered by a tenant and by an owner-occupier. It does not justify a tenfold difference in the payments, and the matter should be considered again.

In common with my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson), I believe that retrospection is important and we will raise it in Committee. The Minister is committed to going back to 13 November which is, I accept, the publication date of the Bill, so the decision is not entirely unreasonable on the surface. However, some cases that have been going on for some time before that date remain unresolved. We should consider including some such cases in the Bill. My two constituents, Mrs. Reid and Mrs. Davidson who were thrown out of Whitefield square in Kirby, would be grateful if we included retrospective measures to help them.

The Bill's limitations have been so graphically portrayed by hon. Members that the welcome that my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith and I gave to the Bill almost pales into insignificance compared with the grievances and complaints highlighted in the debate. I hope that even if Ministers do not listen to Opposition Members in Committee they will at least listen to their hon. Friends, who feel that many grievances are as yet unresolved. I suspect that it will take a Labour Government to sort out those grievances.

9.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tim Yeo): This has been a stimulating and wide-ranging debate, which I interpreted in an entirely different way from the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth). My hon. Friend and I welcome many of the constructive and useful suggestions from our hon. Friends, and the overall atmosphere of the debate could hardly have been more positive. It is gratifying to know that the wide acceptance that the Bill enjoys outside the

House has been reflected on both sides of the Chamber tonight. Many points have been raised, and I shall try to deal with as many as I can in the time available.

I shall start with the issue of enforcement and criminalisation—making unauthorised development a criminal offence. The subject has been raised by a great many hon. Members, including my hon. Friends the Members for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle), in a ferocious speech, for South Hams (Mr. Steen), whose views are well known, and for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), most of whom prayed in aid the report of the District Planning Officers Society.

Criminalisation was opposed in the debate, not only by Opposition spokesmen, to whom I am grateful, but by some distinguished practitioners, including my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground). The issue was looked at closely by Robert Carnwath, who concluded:

"the margins between lawful and unlawful development are simply not sufficiently clear-cut to form an acceptable basis for a new criminal offence".

The Government believe that there are serious and specific objections to criminalisation. Supporters of criminalisation make two conflicting claims. They argue that planning authorities would use the draconian measure only sparingly, in the most serious cases, but in the next breath, they maintain that the deterrent effect of such a power would be widespread. If planning authorities were to use the power so rarely, how effective a deterrent would it be?

Criminalisation will not provide a quick remedy. An information may be laid quickly in the magistrates court by the planning authority, but there may then be a waiting period until the case can be heard. Throughout that period, the allegedly unlawful development would continue.

Criminalisation would impose a heavier burden of proof on planning authorities by requiring them to show "beyond reasonable doubt" that a breach of control had occurred. At present, in enforcement appeals, decisions are taken on the basis of the civil standard of proof, which is the "balance of probability".

Criminalisation does not provide any remedy. Even if an offence were successfully prosecuted, the breach of planning control would remain. Therefore, in practice, planning authorities would have to take formal enforcement action as well as prosecuting for an offence, so they would be involved in parallel proceedings in serious cases, involving considerable extra cost and complication.

Mr. Bill Michie *rose*——

Mr. Yeo: I am sorry, but I cannot give way; I have too many points to answer.

If the other provisions in the Bill were properly used by local authorities, they could prevent much of the unauthorised development to which hon. Members understandably object.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) raised some environmental issues. I should remind the House that it is already an offence to knock down a listed building. Making irreversible, unlawful development a criminal offence has a superficial attraction but involves serious problems of definition. In any event, if we could define that category satisfactorily, we would find that only a small number of developments could be classified as irreversible.

As for my right hon. Friend's question about restitution costs, existing legislation provides, under certain circumstances, for authorities to take action to enter a property and then to charge the owner for the cost of remedial action.

Many hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) when he opened the debate for the Opposition, the hon. Members for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti) and for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) and others, have mentioned environmental considerations. An environmental impact assessment is already required for nine categories of major development, as provided under European Community directive 85/337. An environmental impact assessment is also required for a wide range of developments that are likely to have significant environmental effects.

An amendment was moved in another place to enable that list to be extended. It is already pretty comprehensive and includes, for example, many projects on agriculture, the extractive industry and the metal processing industry. It includes aspects of the fruit industry such as the manufacture of dairy products, brewing and malting and infrastructure projects such as oil installations, yacht mariners and projects for hotel complexes and holiday villages. All such projects can already have an environmental impact assessment if the proposed development is likely to have a significant effect. However, we agreed to consider the amendment made in another place, and will report on our conclusions in Committee.

The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) mentioned environmental assessments for private Bills. We have just issued a consultation paper on the implementation of the recommendation made by the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure that there should be a requirement for environmental assessment for such Bills. The consultation paper was prepared in conjunction with the authorities of both Houses.

The possibility of third-party appeals was mentioned by the hon. Members for Hammersmith, for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and for Eastbourne. Allowing third-party appeals would take more decisions out of the hands of local authorities. That is exactly the opposite direction to the one in which the Government are now trying to move. We should like more decisions to be taken locally. My experience leads me to believe that, were the third-party appeals procedure introduced, a significant number of such appeals would take place. If only one tenth of the applications now granted permission went to appeal as a result of that procedure, the number of cases appearing before my right hon. Friend for determination would immediately double. Therefore, the consequences of third-party appeal in terms of the extra cost and delay in reaching decisions are horrendous.

Mr. Cohen: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Yeo: No, I shall not give way, as we are short of time, and I would rather deal with the other points that were raised.

In a characteristically robust speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) took exception to the approach outlined by my hon. Friend the

[Mr. Yeo]

Minister for Housing and Planning for a planned philosophy in terms of determining planning policy and planning decisions. There has been no weakening in our policies for the protection of the green belt. One of the key functions of the development plan process is to work out, through a process that involves wide public consultation, how the need to provide new housing and other development is best reconciled with the need to protect green belts and other vulnerable areas. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State takes account of those factors in determining housing requirements for a particular area.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove also mentioned the quality of the urban fringe. Again, I draw it to his attention that only last week my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State stressed that we need to seek ways of improving the green belt by dealing with land that is too often brown rather than green, thus improving amenity and increasing the opportunity for quiet enjoyment. I hope that my hon. Friend is much reassured.

The development plan system will be at the heart of our planning process in future. The provisions of up-to-date structure plans and local plans will guide the deliberations of local authorities and the decisions of inspectors and of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I hope that the development plan system will help to promote the consistency that was so eloquently advocated by my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) in a forceful speech.

I can also confirm to my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton that local authorities can refuse to determine identical applications that are made within less than two years of the date of the previous identical application. My hon. Friend suggested that local authorities might be intimidated by applicants. That is not an issue which is easily dealt with in legislation.

Many hon. Members, notably my hon. Friends the Members for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice), for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) and others, made it clear that they favoured bigger home loss payments. Let us be clear that our proposals in the Bill are considerably more generous than the present provision. We are increasing the maximum from £1,500 to £15,000.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks referred to the French system, but that is not as generous as it seems. Although it involves a figure of 25 per cent., it is subject to a maximum of FF100,000, which at the current exchange rate is just over £10,000. The maximum figure that can be claimed under the 25 per cent. rule is only £2,500—only one sixth of what we propose in the Bill.

Our proposals will lead to a doubling of the payments for home loss from £47 million a year to £97 million a year, as my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning said when he opened the debate. Of course, it has been difficult for us to decide on the right level for home loss payments. It is impossible to measure objectively the personal distress involved in the loss of a home, but our proposal is reasonable. We could make a choice only on the basis of a judgment of what was reasonable from the point of view of the claimant who loses his home, but we also had to take into account the burden that the taxpayer or local charge payer could be expected to bear.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South mentioned delays in the payment of compensation. Claimants are entitled to an advance of 90 per cent. of the estimated compensation as soon as they move. The precise amount then has to be negotiated. I am not aware that problems have been caused by payment being withheld after the amount of compensation was agreed. If my hon. Friend would like to draw any specific cases to my attention, I shall certainly follow them up.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) and others made a point about tenants. It seemed to us that the home loss payment for owner-occupiers should be higher than that for tenants. After all, tenants are statutorily entitled to be rehoused by the local authority. They do not face the problem of searching for another home. They also stand to benefit from other aspects of our proposals. In particular, many tenants will be eligible for the home loss payment as a result of the reduction of the qualifying period of residence from five years to one year. Many people who would previously have been excluded from the scheme will now be included.

Mr. George Howarth: The point that I made has not been adequately covered. I accept that there are differences between tenants and owner-occupiers, but the effect on home owners is not 10 times that on tenants. It is not the difference between £1,500 and £15,000.

Mr. Yeo: The home loss payment is different, but not every owner-occupier will qualify for the maximum £15,000. The majority will have a much smaller figure—10 per cent. of the value of their house, which may be only £4,000 or £5,000. The difference is much less than the hon. Gentleman suggests. In addition, a tenant or an owner-occupier can claim complete removal costs, which nowadays can amount to a substantial sum.

I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West that, under clause 53 and schedule 12, we are providing for additional compensation to be paid in future if, within 10 years of a compulsory purchase, there is further development on the land that has been acquired.

In reply to an important point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), I can confirm that the extra power contained in the Bill can be used by authorities to help in cases of hardship. In reply to his request for news of when an announcement may be forthcoming about possible compensation for the intensification of existing railway lines, I can only say that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State hopes to come to a conclusion soon.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) rightly drew attention to our important proposals regarding interim development orders. His views on the need for conditions to accompany the registration process have been noted and, as he knows, the current consultation exercise ends on Friday.

I assure my hon. Friends the Members for Wyre Forest and for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) that we have recently commissioned research on the important subject of whether performance bonds are needed to cover the cost of restoration schemes. I also compliment my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Somerset and Frome on his powerful speech; he drew attention to the impact of environmental disturbance resulting from mineral extraction in the Mendips and I assure him that my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning and I will take his

points on board extremely carefully. I am acutely aware of the sensitivity of the issues he has raised, on which he has been in correspondence with me.

I must apologise to hon. Members whose points I have not had time to answer in detail. I hope that many of them will take part in our deliberations in Committee, when I have no doubt that a number of the issues that have been covered briefly today will be explored at much greater length.

I am sure that all hon. Members receive frequent requests for help about planning applications, planning appeals and even planning decisions, and in relation to the planning process generally. Long before I had any ministerial responsibility for planning matters, I concluded that the more certainty and coherence which could be injected into the process of reaching planning decisions and the decisions themselves, the easier life would be for all hon. Members and, much more important, the happier most of their constituents would be.

The Bill is designed to promote that certainty and coherence. I know that many hon. Members and members of the public are worried about specific aspects of planning policy. Those anxieties frequently centre on the possibility that unwelcome or allegedly inappropriate development will take place. No legislation can remove such fears, but it can provide a framework within which planning decisions are made and enforced and in a way which promotes the formulation of policies designed to reflect the best long-term interests of the community. The Bill is a valuable step in that direction.

The Bill is certainly varied, as the wide range of points with which I have just been dealing shows. It is also an important Bill. On many of the issues with which it deals, especially compensation, we have had no opportunity to update the law for many years. Efficiency and fairness require that the details of legislation are carefully looked at from time to time, but that does not detract form the importance of the new measures in the Bill.

I recognise that not everybody likes everything in the Bill. Many hon. Members have suggested that, in one respect or another, they do not think that it goes far enough, but I invite the House to consider the Bill as a package of measures which together strike just about the right balance; a balance which we have to strike between the needs of applicants and those of authorities, between the interests of conservation and the interests of development, between the reasonable demands of claimants and the protection of the public purse. I welcome the general support for the Bill. I look forward to a full discussion in Committee of the many issues raised. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

PLANNING AND COMPENSATION BILL *[Lords Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Planning and Compensation Bill *[Lords]* ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment, and

(b) any sums required by a Minister of the Crown for making payments by virtue of the Act of interest on compensation payable under any enactment or of amounts on account of such compensation or interest, and

(2) extinguishing any right to recover any amount under section 148 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972, or section 133 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, including interest on any such amount.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

War Crimes Bill (Procedure)

9.59 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move,

That if the War Crimes Bill is read a Second time, no order shall be made for the committal of the Bill and it shall be ordered to be read the Third time upon a future day; and upon a motion being made for Third Reading the Question thereon shall be put forthwith and may be decided, though opposed, after the expiration of the time for opposed business.

The House will recall that the War Crimes Bill was first introduced on 8 March 1990, following debates on the principle of legislation, which had taken place in both Houses of Parliament the previous autumn——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion in the name of Mr. John MacGregor relating to War Crimes Bill (Procedure) may be proceeded with, though opposed, until half-past Eleven o'clock or the end of a period of one and a half hours after it has been entered upon, whichever is the later.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Mr. MacGregor: The House voted decisively in favour of action to implement the principal recommendations of the war crimes inquiry, and that support was sustained on Second Reading on 19 March, when the Bill was passed by 273 votes to 60, on a free vote. The Bill subsequently passed through its remaining Commons stages, and was sent unamended to another place. The House will also recall that the Bill was refused a Second Reading in another place, again on a free vote, by 207 votes to 74.

My predecessor made clear, once the Government had had a chance to consider the implications of the debates and votes which had taken place, that we would be reintroducing the Bill this Session. That decision was reaffirmed in the Gracious Speech. We concluded that it was right for Parliament to give this matter further consideration. The Government recognise and respect the strongly held views, here and in another place, on the issues raised by the Bill, but the strength of support in this House was such that we believe that an opportunity for further reflection has to be provided.

It would not be right for me to go over the issues again; that is for Monday's debate. I will deal solely with the procedure we propose.

In bringing the Bill back before Parliament, we have inevitably kept in mind the provisions of the Parliament Acts 1911 and 1949. My predecessor made plain the Government's hope that the Bill would secure the support of both Houses. That remains our clear objective. The Parliament Acts exist, none the less, as an instrument for the resolution of intractable disagreements between the two Houses of Parliament, and we believe that the possibility of their use should be preserved in this case. The view of this House was unequivocal on the last occasion, and if that remains the position this time, I believe that hon. Members will in the last resort expect their views to prevail.

But the Parliament Acts place certain constraints on the freedom of action of this House in considering a Bill the second time. To attract the provisions of the Parliament Acts, for example, Bills must not pass this House until a clear year has elapsed since the earlier Second Reading. Moreover, and most immediately relevant to the motion before the House, a Bill returned to another place on a subsequent occasion must do so in precisely the same form as before. A Bill cannot be amended beyond the purely technical changes necessary to reflect the passage of time since it was considered before. Thus, the Bill which has now been reintroduced, and to which we shall be giving substantive consideration next week, is the same Bill as the House considered last time, which it passed unamended. The House should not attempt to amend the Bill in any respect, if it wishes the Parliament Acts provisions to remain in reserve, in the event of unresolvable conflict.

The Parliament Acts make provision for the House of Commons, if it thinks fit, to put forward suggested amendments which are not actually inserted in the Bill, but which the House of Lords is required to consider. If accepted by the House of Lords, such amendments would be treated as amendments made by the House of Lords and agreed by the House of Commons, but, if not accepted, the offer of suggested amendments would not prevent the Parliament Acts from being used to secure the enactment of the Bill in its original form, should the Lords reject it.

The Government have carefully considered whether it would be appropriate to offer suggested amendments in this case and they have concluded that it would not. The Government's aim is that the Bill should implement the recommendations of the war crimes inquiry and should ensure that any prosecutions are well founded and well prepared, and that any defendants have proper and effective safeguards. We believe that the Bill, as originally presented and as reintroduced this Session, achieves that aim. As I have said, it was approved in this form by a substantial majority of this House last Session.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Although I have been a Member of Parliament for a long time, I have not often experienced this procedure. Therefore, it would help me, and perhaps other hon. Members, if the Lord President were to say what method is used to ascertain whether the House agrees with any specific suggested amendment.

Mr. MacGregor: We are not proposing any suggested amendments. However, it has to be done on a motion that is outside the normal scope of debate. In other words, amendments to the Bill cannot be tabled. In this case, however, we are not proposing suggested amendments. The hon. Gentleman was probably not right when he said that he had not been here on a previous occasion.

Mr. Maclennan: I did not say that.

Mr. MacGregor: I agree that he did not quite say that. However, we are broadly following the precedent of a previous occasion when the Parliamentary Acts could have been brought into play.

If the House of Lords wishes to suggest changes, it is open to it to do so. It would then be a matter for this House to consider, on a free vote, whether any such changes were acceptable. That is the right way to proceed —not to have suggested amendments in this case.

It is against this background that I am moving the procedural motion before the House. It is unnecessary to preserve the formality of Committee and Report stages, nor do we need a further debate on Third Reading, when the issues will already have been fully considered on Second Reading as well as last year. Thus, the motion, which I commend to the House, provides that no order

should be made for the Bill's committal, in the event of it receiving a Second Reading, that it should be ordered to be read the Third time upon a future day and that the question should be put forthwith on Third Reading.

I believe that this approach gives due recognition to the gravity of the issues raised by the Bill, while at the same time paying proper regard to the procedures of this House and the pressures of time on hon. Members. The War Crimes Bill has been exhaustively considered by this House already, but we think it is important to provide yet another full day for a Second Reading debate this as well as a further opportunity to debate the money resolution immediately thereafter. If the House remains of the view that the Bill should proceed, then I believe that this should happen as quickly as possible and without the imposition of unnecessary stages here. The important thing is to return the Bill to the other place as quickly as possible, once the statutory time limit has expired.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): My right hon. Friend said that we are in untotally unchartered seas, but will he clarify one point? What exactly, if any, are the rights of the House of Lords to amend the Bill when it comes before it? My right hon. Friend referred to suggestions. Can the House of Lords amend the Bill?

Mr. MacGregor: No. The suggested amendments would be for this House to consider, and we are proposing none. The other place can suggest any amendments it wishes and can vote, if it wishes, on any amendment. The amended Bill, if it were passed by the House of Lords in that form, would then return to this place.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Bill is very exceptional? It breaches substantial precedent and principles of justice in this country. Therefore, it is not an ordinary Bill, in terms that I understand. The other place decisively rejected the Bill on Second Reading. The proposals before us would effectively silence the view of the other place. In those circumstances, what does my right hon. Friend believe to be the point of the other place?

Mr. MacGregor: We are following the Parliament Acts, which have been followed on other occasions. It is perfectly appropriate for us to do so, if the House so decides. However, I have already made it clear that the Government hope that the Bill will be passed in a form that both Houses can accept.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): There can be little doubt that this is one of the most extraordinary measures that has come before the House. It was rejected by the other place. If I understand correctly my right hon. Friend, the other place can pass amendments, but he has already said that the Parliament Acts can be used. The measure is peculiar, and the proposed changes to the judicial system in order to deal with the issue are extraordinary. It is, to say the least, original for my right hon. Friend to suggest that the procedure should result in the Bill's passage through the House being accelerated.

Mr. MacGregor: It is not original; with one tiny technical exception, it broadly follows the procedure when the Parliament Acts were last used. We are following that precedent. The House must decide, but given the vote in this House last year, the Government felt it right to give hon. Members another opportunity to consider the Bill. The procedure that we are suggesting is the most appropriate for doing so.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): My right hon. Friend often quotes precedents. What were those precedents, what subjects did they cover and when were they?

Mr. MacGregor: The last one was the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Bill in 1976.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): What would be the purpose of the Parliament Act if it was not used when there was clear disagreement between this House and the other place, and when the Government had decided that the wishes of this House should prevail? Those who oppose the motion—they are prefectly within their rights to do so—voted against the Bill last year. They believe that those who are held to be responsible for monstrous crimes against humanity should not be brought to justice.

Mr. MacGregor: As the hon. Gentleman says, those who oppose the Bill are perfectly within their rights to do so if, for whatever reason, they believe that it is wrong to proceed with it. They will have an opportunity to vote on that next Monday.

It is right to give the House the opportunity to use the Parliament Acts if it wishes to do so, but it is for the House to decide. It will be decided on a free vote, which is why I am proposing this procedure tonight.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): I support what my right hon. Friend has said. Would it be appropriate to argue tonight or on Second Reading why the House should prevail, if necessary by using the Parliament Acts?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend can use either this evening or the Second Reading debate on Monday. It may be appropriate to advance his argument at a later stage, if it is reached.

It is important to return the Bill to the other place as quickly as possible after the expiry of the statutory time limit. I hope that it will be possible for Third Reading to be taken before Easter, thereby giving members of the other place an opportunity to reflect on the Bill. They may wish to table amendments. If so, this House will have to consider whether they are acceptable within the overall scheme and objectives of the Bill. It is important to initiate that process as quickly as possible within the time scale of the Parliament Act, and the motion seeks to achieve that.

10.13 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): The Leader of the House proposes that the Bill be introduced under the procedure set out in the motion. The Bill will be introduced without change and will not be considered in Committee. It will have a formal Third Reading and will proceed to the other place.

As the right hon. Gentleman said, the presentation of the Bill raises the possibility—almost the certainty—that the Parliament Acts 1911 and 1949 will have to be invoked. Looking back at the debates on those two Acts, I was struck by the extent to which these issues are enduring. What was said many years ago—40 years ago in the case of the Parliament Act 1949—applies to today's debate. The then Labour Home Secretary—James Chuter Ede, the Member for South Shields, said on behalf of the Labour Government:

[Dr. John Cunningham]

"I noticed from the reviews in the Press yesterday and today that it is not anticipated that anything very new will be said in the course of this Debate, but it is essential that we should fully review the circumstances in which the Bill comes before us and consider again the arguments in its favour".—[*Official Report*, 31 October 1949; Vol. 469, c. 45]

As hon. Members know, the Parliament Acts lay down special procedures whereby a Bill may be presented for Royal Assent when it has been passed by this House only. A non-money Bill, such as the War Crimes Bill, may be so presented where it has been passed by the House of Commons in two consecutive Sessions and where the Lords have failed to pass it in each of those two Sessions.

As we know, this Bill was first introduced in the 1989 Session. It received its Second Reading in this House on 19 March 1990. Its Report stage and Third Reading were taken together on 25 April. The Bill then proceeded to the Lords and was thrown out by a very substantial majority on 4 June. Its reintroduction this Session is a clear signal to the other place that the Government are determined that it should be passed, even if that necessitates invoking the Parliament Acts.

The content of the Bill is of undoubted importance. It raises fundamental questions of justice and of rights. Their Lordships rightly looked at these issues in detail and were helped in that task by two things. First, there is a great deal of legal expertise and experience among their membership. Secondly, they were able to draw upon the personal experiences of many of them during the second world war.

The issues that were so fully debated by their Lordships have been overtaken by a more fundamental question, which we are debating today—the supremacy of this elected Chamber over the other place. The writ of that question runs far wider even than the important issues raised in the Bill itself—issues such as retrospective legislation and the reliability of evidence now 50 years old, especially evidence relating to identification.

If the other place fails to pass the Bill in this Session, the Parliament Acts of 1911 and 1949 will, I assume, be brought into operation. That is, indeed, a serious matter. The Leader of the House was wrong to suggest that the Parliament Acts were invoked in 1976. That is not true. The then Labour Government accepted the amendments in the House of Lords on the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Bill and passed the Bill as amended by their Lordships. The Bill was not enacted by invoking the Parliament Acts.

The procedure that we are discussing has been used only three times—on the Welsh Church Act 1914, the Government of Ireland Act 1914, and the Parliament Act 1949. It is that issue which is of supreme importance today. The principles on which the Parliament Acts are based have been debated at length. Unlike the Conservative party, the Labour party has consistently supported the supremacy of this House over the other place. The Conservative party has consistently ducked that issue. It was a Liberal Government—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may protest, but every time a Liberal or Labour Government have invoked the Parliament Acts, the Conservative party has opposed them. That is the record, and there is a supreme irony in the position of the Leader of the House today. I do not suppose that many of his hon. Friends envy him his task in creating a little political history as a Conservative Government invoke the Parliament Act against their own inbuilt majority in the House of Lords.

Mr. MacGregor: Let me make the position clear for the sake of accuracy. I said that the procedures that we were following now were the same as those followed in 1976, with the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Act 1977. I did not say whether it was necessary to invoke the Parliament Acts, because we do not know.

Dr. Cunningham: We shall see. A Liberal Government introduced the 1911 Act, opposed by the Tories. A Labour Government passed the 1949 Act, opposed by the Tories. The principle that we support, and always have supported, was neatly summed up by, of all people, Winston Churchill. As Home Secretary in the Liberal Government of 1911, he succinctly stated:

"The House of Commons, freely chosen to represent the electors, is the power which shapes policy and makes and maintains administration. The House of Lords, on the other hand, represents nobody".—[*Official Report*, 2 May 1911; Vol. 25, c. 262.]

I could not have put it better myself.

Mr. Latham: I do not know why the hon. Gentleman wants to turn this into a partisan issue. Is he really telling the House that the Parliament Acts should be supported, and that he supports their use, whatever the merits of the Bill? I support the Bill, but surely it is exclusively a moral issue.

Dr. Cunningham: I am talking not about the Bill but about the procedure that we are following tonight. We shall come to the Bill next week. My party will have a free vote on this issue, as we shall on the Bill itself. I shall be urging my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote, if there is a vote, with the Government because we assert, and have consistently supported, the supremacy of this House.

I am sorry if the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) and his hon. Friends find the record of the Tory party a bit embarrassing, but that is a matter for them. It is important for us to be clear about the record of the Tories on this issue. I quoted Winston Churchill. He got rather carried away when he said:

"We regard this measure as territory conquered by the masses from the classes".—[*Official Report*, 15 May 1911; Vol. 25, c. 1772-72.]

He was speaking as part of a Liberal Government. Unfortunately for democracy, he soon changed his mind when, as Leader of the Conservative party, he realised the huge advantages to be gained from the Tory majority in the House of Lords. When Leader of the Tory party, he opposed the use of the Parliament Acts, although he had supported their use when a Liberal.

Opposition Members support today, as we did in 1949, the view that the House of Lords, unrepresentative as it is, should be allotted the subordinate role which must, in a democracy, be assigned to an unelected Chamber.

I said that the procedure had been resorted to on only three occasions. On the first two, a Liberal Government were having trouble with the inbuilt Tory majority in their Lordships' House. On the third occasion, the Parliament Act 1949 represented a Labour Government from being obstructed. There have been a number of other occasions within the memory of some of us when, although there were confrontations, the direct application of the Parliament Acts was not, in the event, necessary.

I am thinking in particular of the difficulties put before the Labour Government on the nationalising of the aircraft and shipbuilding industries in the 1970s following a specific manifesto commitment.

Those efforts were continuously frustrated by the House of Lords.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): And Brian Walden.

Dr. Cunningham: My hon. Friend is right.

The stark fact is that it is almost always Governments on the left who have difficulty and are frustrated or undermined by the unelected and unrepresentative upper House—until now, that is. There is a double irony in the Government's sudden favourable disposition towards the use of the Parliament Acts. The first irony is their need to use a measure which in the past they have always opposed. That gives rise to a wry Opposition smile.

There is a somewhat more bitter irony in that the Bill that the Government seek to force through is weak and fraught with difficulties and problems. Although I support the Government on the use of the procedure, I shall not support them on the War Crimes Bill itself. I hope that I make myself clear to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham).

Mr. Winnick: Why does my hon. Friend not support the Bill?

Dr. Cunningham: I have reservations about it. We shall have a free vote on the issue, as we had in the past. I did not support the Bill when it was last before the House, and I shall not support it next time. There are valid reasons for my position.

Few Conservative Members can feel pleased about the predicament in which the Leader of the House and the Government find themselves. They are creating a precedent for Tory Governments by invoking the right of this elected House to enforce the legitimate mandate of an elected Government. I support that principle without hesitation, as the Labour party has always done on such occasions, but it is a pity that that has to be done in support of a somewhat disreputable measure which, as I have said, I shall not support. I understand the arguments of those hon. Members who support the War Crimes Bill, and I appreciate that their view is as passionately held as mine.

Mr. Winnick: I entirely accept my hon. Friend's sincerity. He has as much right to oppose the Bill as I have to support it. Does he agree that, when there has been a vote on the Bill, the overwhelming majority of Labour Members have voted in favour and that much of the opposition came from Conservative Members? That should be placed on record.

Dr. Cunningham: I agree with my hon. Friend's interpretation of the record. I concede without hesitation that my hon. Friend passionately, fervently and honestly holds some views which are different from mine.

When, under a Labour Government, we debate the future of democracy in our country, perhaps we can at least hope that reform of the upper House—we can never accept an upper chamber based on the totally unacceptable principles of patronage and inheritance—will at long last be supported by Conservative Members.

10.27 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House said that the motion was about a very exceptional Bill. The motion is designed to set aside the normal process of parliamentary scrutiny. I was disappointed by my right hon. Friend's response when I asked him to quote the precedents for this legislation. He has often said that there are precedents, but in his reply he did not give one.

I asked when this device for setting aside the judgment of the House of Lords had last been used, and my right hon. Friend quoted a case in which it had apparently been attempted but had not succeeded. That is not a precedent. My right hon. Friend ought to get his tackle in order and cite proper precedents. We have had to rely upon the Opposition to provide proper precedents when the process was used to a successful conclusion. Those are precedents.

Mr. MacGregor: Tonight the point is whether the procedure that we are proposing has a precedent, and it has. There is a tiny technical difference, but the precedent —the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Bill in 1976 —is very similar. I cannot say tonight what the House of Lords will decide to do, so that part of the argument is irrelevant to answering my hon. Friend's questions.

Mr. Stanbrook: That is not the point—it is whether there has been a precedent in which the judgment of the House of Lords has been set aside on behalf of a special piece of legislation which has already been passed by this House. As we understand it, that was not the case with the 1976 legislation. One is interested to see that the cases quoted by the Opposition involved constitutional procedure—for example the Government of Ireland Act 1914 and the Parliament Act 1949, which restricted the delaying power of the House of Lords. It is self-evident that that is an important constitutional matter.

This device to set aside the judgment, decision, wisdom and expertise of the House of Lords should be used only for a constitutional matter of that magnitude. It should not be used for this Bill, which involves extending the criminal law so as to confer jurisdiction upon British courts where it had previously not existed. Certainly that is an important matter. One might say that it is a breach of the good faith that everyone should have in the criminal law of this country. However, it is not a precedent in the same sense as the other cases quoted, as they were matters of great constitutional importance.

That is why I am against the motion: in effect, it says that we should not seek to amend the War Crimes Bill ourselves. For example, we should not give ourselves the opportunity to consider how we might increase the chances of prospective defendants obtaining a fair trial, and we should not consider whether the limits set out, rather exceptionally, in the War Crimes Bill on the extension of jurisdiction should be extended.

Many people might well have said that the War Crimes Bill that was produced last Session had one main defect: that it did not extend jurisdiction generally to cases of this kind, but was restricted to events that occurred during the war, in German or German-occupied territory. Those are severe limits on the jurisdiction to be conferred on British courts. There is a great weight of opinion to suggest that, if we confer jurisdiction upon British courts, we should confer it wholly, so that anyone who committed crimes

[Mr. Stanbrook]

during the period to which we are referring and beyond, can now be tried, as well as anyone who has secured British nationality since the commission of the offence.

Those matters are worth serious consideration, not merely by the House of Lords—although no doubt it will be considering them—but by this elected Chamber. By virtue of being elected, this Chamber claims to be superior in its wisdom and responsiveness to the electorate. As I am sure Opposition Members agree, we often rely upon the House of Lords to provide expertise and experience on what might otherwise be regarded as esoteric matters, so as to assist us in coming to a correct agreement and judgment on legislation.

Many tributes have been paid to those in the other place for the amendments that they have tabled to Bills, especially to Bills involving technical matters. This is a technical matter—a matter of legal expertise. We have always been grateful to the other place for suggesting amendments of this kind, but in this case, the House of Commons, by its own motion, is preventing itself from considering any improvement. We are preventing ourselves from making any change that might make the Bill more acceptable to the House of Lords—which would be the proper way of proceeding—or more acceptable to the public at large.

This will be bad law. The motion is totally misconceived. It runs against the grain of British fairness and common sense. What is proposed would deprive us of our own power in respect of legislation. That is utterly wrong, and I am very disappointed that the Government should proceed in this way.

10.40 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I regret that the Leader of the House, in moving this motion, did not enlighten us on the procedures whereby the House might make amendments with a view to satisfying the other place. Thus, we might avoid invoking the Parliament Acts. I accept—and I believe that the members of my party, without exception, accept—that, if there is a straight clash of wills between the two Houses of Parliament, the will of the elected House must prevail. But this is a piece of legislation of great general, and of some constitutional, importance. It profoundly affects the jurisdiction of the High Court.

During the debates on last year's Bill, a great weight of the argument in another place was deployed against it. That argument deserves very careful consideration. I do not feel confident that the Government, in concluding that in this case there is a direct conflict of wills between the two Houses, have ascertained that that is the settled mind of this House. If the House of Commons is not given the opportunity to consider detailed suggested amendments, it will not be possible for it to be so satisfied.

I should have liked to hear the Leader of the House speak in his role as Leader of the whole House and not just as a spokesman for the Government, which is the role that he adopted at the Dispatch Box. I should have liked to hear from him suggestions about how we might take a course of action that would communicate to the other place the views of the House of Commons in respect of some of the matters with which the Bill deals.

There is no doubt that, when the previous Bill was debated in Committee, many matters were canvassed, and it was considered in detail. Some of the objections, including several of those to which the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) referred on Second Reading, were met. But time is very much of the essence.

Mr. Stanbrook: Does the hon. Gentleman know that the last Bill was not amended in Committee?

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Gentleman is right, but provisions were incorporated in other legislation to take account of the objections that had been raised by several hon. Members, including the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook.

This is not a matter of such constitutional moment that opinion in the two Houses should be regarded as so deadlocked that the Parliament Acts could be invoked with propriety and good sense.

The examples given by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)—especially that of the most recent invocation of the legislation, in 1949—go to the heart of our constitution, and to the conflict between the parties. A minority party in the House of Commons tried to frustrate the will of the Government in the upper House. That is not in any way parallel with the present circumstances. We must ask whether it is appropriate to judge that the time has come for us to invoke the Parliament Acts, although no hon. Member, surely, would deny that in some circumstances it would be appropriate to do so.

There is another Session of Parliament to run. The present Parliament, I understand, will not be exhausted until July 1992, and the Government surely do not consider it urgent to present their popularity to the arbitrament of public opinion at an early date. I do not see why we should not treat the Bill as a perfectly normal measure. If it meets the same fate as its predecessor in another place, the Government will be able to reintroduce it next Session, and that will be the time at which to bring the Parliament Acts into play.

Mr. Winnick: I seem to remember that, in a debate in December 1989, the hon. Gentleman was very sceptical about the Bill. When his hon. and learned Friend the Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) spoke on Second Reading in March last year, he was passionately in favour of the Bill—unlike the hon. Gentleman, and far more than me, because I recognise some limitations in it. I wonder where the hon. and learned Gentleman is now?

Mr. Maclennan: I do not think that I speak on this issue as a party man; nor, I think, did my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). Opinions were divided, as they are in the hon. Gentleman's party—almost as divided, perhaps, as the opinions of the hon. Gentleman and those of the hon. Member for Copeland.

I am dealing with what I consider an essentially constitutional question: when is it appropriate to invoke the Parliament Acts? I would say that it is only rarely sensible and appropriate to do so, and that it should be done only when there is a clear and settled view in the House of Commons that its wish and will is being frustrated by another place. I suggest to the Minister that there is no evidence that that is the case now; indeed, I suspect that, if the Bill went through the House of

Commons again, the other place would exercise a self-denying ordinance—not opposing it in principle but seeking to ameliorate and amend it.

That is the way in which the other place has operated for many years; only thus has it been possible to sustain the relationship between the two Houses—this House and the unelected House, which is so dependent on heredity and patronage. It is clearly an unsatisfactory means of composing such a House, if its authority is to be equal to that of the House of Commons.

The Minister should test the opinion of the House of Commons again—test it on the detail of the Bill, as on the principle—before invoking the Parliament Acts. He should give it another year to see whether there is a change of mind. The opportunity to invoke the Acts remains; and, if the Government are correct in their view that the House of Lords is dead set on rejecting our opinion, let them invoke the provisions of the Acts next Session.

10.44 pm

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): It seems to me that this is an occasion not to argue the merits of the Bill. There is common agreement that it raises matters of morality and conscience—I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin), who made that point in an intervention. This seems to be an occasion on which to concern oneself primarily with the question, should the will of the House prevail in a matter such as this over that of the House of Lords?

That really raises the question, what is the function in our constitution of this House and of the House of Lords? As I see it, each occasion on which the Parliament Acts 1911 and 1949 are likely to be invoked will raise different questions. For me, the role of the House of Lords is basically one in which a collection of wise old men—sometimes, not necessarily always—of experience, not only judicial but in the wider world of business and commerce and many other areas, who have acquired a great deal of intellectual acumen, offer a second opinion.

They are not required to make decisions. They can raise issues, of course, but decision making belongs to elected representatives, who are in this place. Our function is to represent, having first of all ascertained the popular sentiment. In other words, we are by definition more in touch with gut feeling than their Lordships. Ultimately, it is our responsibility to make decisions about public policy, and assessment of what is politic, necessary or expedient is not for the House of Lords but for us. Their Lordships can offer academically respectable opinions, but it is for us to reconcile practicalities. Therefore, I entirely agree again with my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare that this is a matter of morality.

The question for us to decide tonight is: whose conscience matters most in our system of government? Is it that of the elected or that of the elite? In my view, it is the job of the elite to offer advice, and the job of the elected to make decisions.

Question put:

The House divided: Ayes 177, Noes 17.

Division No. 93] **[10.47 pm**

AYES

Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cohen, Harry
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Darling, Alistair
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
George, Bruce
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hardy, Peter
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Janner, Greville
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lamond, James
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Leadbitter, Ted
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Terry
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nellist, Dave
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eashwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaz, Keith

Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wheeler, Sir John
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Bellotti, David
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carr, Michael
Haselhurst, Alan
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Maclennan, Robert
Mates, Michael
Mitchell, Sir David
Rathbone, Tim
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir Hal Miller and
Mr. Jerry Wiggin.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That if the War Crimes Bill is read a second time, no order shall be made for the committal of the Bill and it shall be ordered to be read the third time upon a future day; and upon a motion being made for third reading the Question thereon shall be put forthwith and may be decided, though opposed, after the expiration of the time for opposed business.

REGISTERED HOMES (AMENDMENT) BILL *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Registered Homes (Amendment) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment in connection with—

(a) the functions of registration authorities under the Registered Homes Act 1984, or

(b) the supply of pharmaceutical services under the National Health Service Act 1977.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

ESTATE AGENTS (PROPERTY MISDESCRIPTIONS) BILL

Ordered,

That it be an Instruction to the Committee on the Estate Agents (Property Misdirections) Bill that it have power to make amendments to the Bill extending the prohibition on the making of false or misleading statements in the course of estate agency business to the making of such statements in the course of related descriptions of business carried on by solicitors and builders.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

ESTATE AGENTS (PROPERTY MISDESCRIPTIONS) BILL *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Estate Agents (Property Misdescriptions) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of such money under any other Act.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Green Labelling

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Knight.]*

11 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): First, I thank Mr. Speaker for selecting the issue of green labelling for this Adjournment debate.

It is the responsibility of the human race to hand on our planet in good heart for future generations. That means that each of us must behave responsibly and seek to ensure that in our daily lives we do as little damage as possible to our present and future environment. I know that millions of people in Britain share that view; I am pleased that a growing number of my constituents not only share it but act on it.

Over recent years it has become clear that more and more people are seeking, where there is a choice, to buy products which are environmentally friendly. Since 1989, more and more manufacturers have tried to meet the demand for such products. Environmentally friendly products were at one time available in only a few specialist shops, but they have now moved into the supermarkets and corner shops of most of our towns.

Some manufacturers and supermarket chains have sought to produce environmentally friendly products fairly. Others have shown more interest in quick profits and protecting their share of the market than in environmental honesty. Anyone who does the shopping will see a mass of green products. On close inspection, some of the products are anything but green. It would be wrong to attribute to them the term "green" as we use it now. The most that we can do is to use the term "green" as people used to use it—to mean naive. Some "green" products are little more than con tricks.

The January edition of *Which?* set out some of the problems. It talked about exclusive claims, multiple claims, confusing claims, meaningless claims and unrealistic claims. For example, many labels say "environmentally friendly" or "ozone friendly" without giving any explanation of what the product does. One would almost think that the package smiled at the environment or the ozone layer. But in some cases, the product does nothing at all to help the environment.

Other products claim that they do not contain any ammonia or any phosphates. To the uninitiated, that sounds impressive, but when one checks up one finds that the alternative products which do exactly the same do not contain any ammonia or phosphates either. The product line may never have contained those ingredients, so the claims are spurious.

Then there are claims that products can be recycled. I am all for recycling of products, but it is somewhat disingenuous of certain plastics manufacturers to claim that their product can be recycled when they know perfectly well that in many parts of the country there are no facilities for collecting those plastics or recycling them.

There there is the question of aerosols. An increasing number of aerosol manufacturers claim that their products are environmentally friendly and do not contain any chlorofluorocarbons. No aerosol is really environmentally friendly, however, and almost all aerosol products can be replaced with a non-atomising spray which will do exactly the same thing. It may be convenient to spray furniture with a polish, but there is little difference in the end result if one uses a tin of polish and rubs on the polish. There are perfectly adequate alternatives to most of the deodorants and other products that come in aerosols, and these do not do any harm to the environment. Firm consideration should be given to not using aerosols.

There has been a great deal of criticism recently of toilet roll manufacturers who have jumped on to the environmental bandwagon and claimed that they use recycled paper. That was true, but they were using recycled high-quality papar when there was a great deal of waste paper available as a result of newspaper collections. It is desirable that that paper should be collected and that it should find its way into toilet rolls. Toilet roll manufacturers who use low-grade waste pulp in their toilet rolls should be given credit for that. I am worried that there are still products on the shelves that claim to contain recycled paper. If it is high-quality recycled paper, there is no merit in the claims.

Some manufacturers claim that their carrier bags are biodegradable. That means that some extra material is put into the bag which will later rot away, allowing the plastic to break down into small particles. I am not certain that that is a good use of resources. The alternative approach of making carrier bags that can be used for several journeys to the shops is a much better one. I could give many other examples, but I must be mindful of the time.

It is unfortunate that some shoppers have become disillusioned as a result of the problems they face. Others want to do their shopping quickly and feel that they do not have the time to study carefully all the competing claims made on behalf of the products on the shelves so as to separate the genuine from the false.

The Government, the Labour party and many pressure groups such as the Consumers Association and Friends of the Earth have all recognised that there is a problem. It is more than 18 months since the Government first consulted on the idea of introducing a Government-approved scheme of green labelling. The Germans had such a scheme as long ago as 1978. In January 1990, the then Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) announced Government approval for a scheme. He said:

> "There is overwhelming support for an official eco-labelling scheme operating on a European Community-wide basis which is simple, flexible, transparent and commends public respect."

He added:

> "We intend to work closely with the European Commission and our European partners to maintain the momentum for this initiative."—[*Official Report,* 9 January 1990; Vol. 164, c. *589.*]

I am not sure how the Government define momentum, but I am not happy that, more than 12 months later, we still do not have a system in place. Perhaps the Government's definition of momentum is a little less vigorous than I would like it to be.

In the past 12 months, the European Community has produced a document on green labelling which contains a number of proposals. It is not especially specific. It seems that the EC will not agree to a specific proposal until October at the earliest, and possibly later than that. It could be another year, or even two years, before the member states get around to introducing the labels and getting the operation going. That is unsatisfactory when Germany already has a system in operation and so have

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

Japan and Canada. Many other countries are far closer than we are to having green labels or a similar system in operation.

My aim in the debate is to try to inject some urgency into the matter and tell the Government that we want green labels now. Otherwise, more and more people will become disillusioned and confused, and all the good will towards environmental labelling and environmentally friendly products will be dissipated. Already, opinion polls show that there is a growing cynicism among the public and a drop in the number of people purchasing environmentally friendly products and showing a preference for green products.

I ask the Minister for a clear timetable for action and specific additional measures. I want the green labels quickly, but I also urge the Government, when they introduce the system, to consider a grading, starring or numbering system to show which products are extremely good, which are moderately good and which, while helpful, are not so good. That would help the public to compare the environmental effects of products, how they work, and their prices.

The Government should also take up the question of trade description legislation. One of the most worrying things is that trading standards officers cannot bring prosecutions for misleading claims about environmental labels. It is important that the Government bring forward proposals in legislation to make enforcement of descriptions possible.

It is also important that the label not only deals with the use and disposal of the product but also takes into account its manufacture. That would enable us to consider not just the impact of the product on its user and on the environment during and after use, but the nasty by-products of the manufacturing process.

We must be concerned especially about the way in which bleaches are used. There is often unnecessary bleaching of materials. The Government should include in any green labelling scheme the whole process from the conception of the product right through to its use and disposal.

I also stress that any scheme has to cover a wide range of products, including food packaging. It must address specific environmental issues such as the destruction of the rain forests, the depletion of the ozone layer, other aspects of global warming and the whole question of the efficient use of energy. All those issues have to be taken into account in developing a green labelling scheme.

No doubt the Minister will claim that there are difficulties and problems in putting forward such a scheme within the EC. I recognise that there are problems about getting uniformity across the EC. One difficulty is the different approach to containers for liquids. Several European countries—France and Denmark are examples—have a much better system than we have. They insist that liquid containers be reusable rather than recyclable. I would look for green labels commending the return of bottles, in whatever form, for various uses, rather than a container which could be recycled. The preference of our manufacturers and supermarkets is for the one-trip container which can be recycled. It may be a glass container which can be smashed to be made into new bottles, or an aluminium or tin can which can be recycled, or even a plastic container.

I recognise that there are differences of approach among member states of the European Community, but that does not excuse Government inaction. I am convinced that, as soon as one product receives the Government's official seal of approval—the first genuine green label—and as soon as misleading advertisements are banned, green labels will become extremely popular and will serve to promote green products and protect our environment.

When doing my family shopping I do not want to have to spend ages trying to read the small print on products to find out whether they are genuinely environmentally friendly, and dredging up my schoolboy science to work out whether a particular product is a safe and sensible buy. I want to be able to do my shopping quickly and take into account quality and price, but I also want to have firmly on the shelves products whose labels tell me that they are environmentally friendly and will not cause unnecessary destruction. Please, Minister, may we have a timetable for action, and can we start to take action now?

11.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I congratulate the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on securing this debate and on raising this important subject. I congratulate him, too, on his clear summary of the relevant issues. I am sure that he will be glad to know that, in the case of many of the bull points, he is pushing at an open door.

We live in an age when environmental issues affect every aspect of our lives. It is not now enough simply to ask what the Government can do for the environment. We need to find ways in which each and every one of us can do our part to protect the world in which we live. Happily, many people have woken up to that fact and want to play their part. They have realised that one way in which they can do so is by taking environmental considerations into account when making their everyday purchases.

The 1980s saw the growth of an important new force—green consumerism. As the public became more aware of environmental issues, they also showed a desire to buy goods produced by environmentally responsible manufacturers. Retailers responded in turn by highlighting environmental issues and by demanding environmentally friendly goods from their suppliers. People have begun to appreciate that the decisions that they make as individuals can collectively go some way towards alleviating environmental problems. As the hon. Gentleman said, over its life cycle, any product will inevitably have an impact on the environment. It will consume energy, use raw materials and have to be disposed of, but it is possible to identify those products that are less damaging to the environment than others.

The speed with which consumers moved away from purchasing aerosols that contained chlorofluorocarbons and other ozone-depleting substances is an excellent example of green consumerism, but there are others—the moves to lead-free petrol and to batteries without dangerous substances, such as mercury, and the increased demand for products made from recycled materials.

The consumer market for these goods is enormous. However, it is not always easy for consumers to discover

and to know which are the less damaging products that they want to buy. Manufacturers have responded to the growth in environmental concern by making a bewildering assortment of claims about the environmental credentials of their products. Some of them are justified; some clearly are not. We are disturbed at reports of manufacturers who are making misleading or frankly irrelevant claims. Claims that are factually inaccurate can always be dealt with under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968, which we intend to amend—when parliamentary time allows—to put it beyond any doubt that it covers environmental claims. However, consumers need positive and clear guidance on which claims they can trust.

We believe that an official scheme awarding labels to products on environmental grounds will provide consumers with such guidance and force manufacturers to consider the environmental effects of their products. It would be a system of positive labelling, showing which products had been scientifically assessed and found to do less damage to the environment than others of their kind. It must be easily understandable, so that it leads consumers through the maze of manufacturers' claims and therefore helps them to help the environment.

The Government have made clear their intention to introduce an official eco-labelling scheme as soon as possible, which will provide impartial and authoritative guidance on which products are enviromentally less damaging than others. Consumers have said that they want such a scheme, retailers have said that it will be helpful and manufacturers realise that it could provide valuable marketing opportunities.

An eco-labelling scheme must contain some fundamental principles if it is to meet the objectives of protecting the environment, informing consumers and encouraging the development of environmentally less damaging products. First, we believe that it must take into account the impact of products on the environment over the whole of their life cycle—from the cradle to the grave. It is not enough to consider a single factor such as whether there are CFCs in an aerosol or phosphates in a washing powder, as that could ignore the many possible serious impacts of a product. A cradle-to-grave analysis would evaluate the impact of a product throughout its production, use and disposal.

An enormous range of factors, which will necessarily vary between product groups, need to be considered, but areas for examination will include the use made of raw materials and whether they were recycled or non-renewable, energy use in production, pollution emissions during the production process, the packaging of the product, its distribution network, energy efficiency of the product in use, how it is disposed of and whether all or sections of it are recyclable.

Such information would be used to establish criteria for the product group, against which the performance of individual goods would be assessed for the aware of a label. Only such cradle-to-grave analysis can give a realistic picture of the environmental friendliness of a product.

We believe that such a scheme should be voluntary. It would simply provide information, but it would be in manufacturers' interests to apply for a label for their products, as all the available evidence suggests that, when given relevant information, consumers will choose goods that are shown to be less harmful to the environment.

If the eco-labelling scheme is to achieve genuine environmental improvements, it is essential that it is based on high standards. We are convinced that an eco-label should be awarded only to products that are towards the top end of what technology permits. We would also expect continual raising of standards and would look to revise criteria regularly to keep them in line with the state of technology.

For an eco-labelling scheme to be credible, it must be clear and easily intelligible to manufacturers and the general public. Information about why a product has been awarded a label must be readily available, and manufacturers must know the criteria against which their products will be evaluated. Consumers and manufacturers must be involved at every stage of the labelling process. There must be a mechanism to allow them to feed in suggestions for possible product categories, and they should be involved in the consultation process for the development of criteria. If industry and consumers do not believe in or understand the scheme, it will not work. For clarity to consumers, a single label is preferable to a grading system.

We do not believe that food, drink or pharmaceutical goods should be covered, as they are covered by other labelling schemes, but beyond that there is no limit to the goods that could be covered. Priority should be given to labelling products that have, relatively, the greatest environmental impact.

Mr. Bennett: I understand the argument for not including food, but will the Minister take into account food containers and packaging?

Mr. Baldry: As I have said, except for food, drink or pharmaceutical goods, there is no limit to the goods that could be covered. Concern has been expressed about the environmental impact of packaging, which is one of the reasons why we are discussing with manufacturers, retailers and others how we minimise the use of packaging.

The Government are convinced that their association with the scheme will enhance its prospects of success. It is essential that the scheme should be viewed as impartial and authoritative—and therefore clear Government involvement should improve the credibility of the scheme for manufacturers and consumers. The consultation exercise that we conducted in 1989 on eco-labelling schemes demonstrated overwhelming support for a Government-sponsored scheme. Once the scheme is up and running, I believe that the Government should take a step back to ensure that they do not influence the decisions of the responsible organisation in any way.

Introduction of an eco-labelling scheme should be an important incentive for manufacturers to develop "clean" technology. As the hon. Gentleman said, it is now more than a year since the then Secretary of State for the Environment announced our intention to introduce an official eco-labelling scheme. Since then, a good deal of progress has been made in determining how a scheme should be set up and how it could most effectively be operated. We decided that it would be sensible to involve various groups in the actual development of the scheme. The National Advisory Group on Eco-Labelling, known as NAGEL, was established last May to allow just this, and to provide the Government with valuable advice from people with an interest in, or experience of, the issue of

[Mr. Baldry]

eco-labelling. We have been fortunate to have had the help of this group, whose members are drawn from wide-ranging backgrounds.

In the environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance", the Government said that they would press the European Commission to produce a proposal for a Communitywide environmental labelling scheme at the earliest possible opportunity. We still believe that that would be the best way forward. A European scheme would facilitate trade and prevent labels of individual national schemes proving an impediment to the development of the single market. We firmly believe that the establishment of a plethora of schemes within Europe would be confusing to the consumer and would hinder the development of the single market. A common European scheme must therefore be our aim. We have continued to press the European Commission to publish its proposals for such a scheme. My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside wrote to Commissioner Ripa di Meana in January, making that point clear.

I am glad to report to the House that the Commission has now made a proposal for a regulation to establish an eco-labelling scheme, and discussions on the detail are under way. The proposed regulation will be on the agenda at the Environment Council next week. We are continuing to push for quick agreement on a proposal and will make this point forcibly at the Environment Council. Consumers want information on environmental questions —and they want it now. We would like to be in a position where the first labels could be awarded by the end of this year or early in 1992, and have told the Commission that, if agreement on the scheme is held up unduly, we will need to look seriously at the possibility of going ahead with a United Kingdom-only scheme.

However, the Commission has at last issued a proposal, and I am optimistic about the chances of reaching agreement on it quickly. All 12 member states have indicated general support for the idea of a Communitywide eco-labelling scheme and are agreed on the basic principles on which such a scheme should operate.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that the Commission's proposals are rather general and wide in outline, and that we need to get some flesh on the bones quickly?

Mr. Baldry: I am glad to tell the hon. Gentleman that the Commission's proposals accord with our view of what the basic principles of an eco-labelling scheme should be. It proposes a voluntary scheme, with criteria based on cradle-to-grave analyses and labels awarded only to products achieving high environmental standards. However, the Commission is proposing a much more centralised and complex structure for administering the scheme than we feel able to support. It suggests that much of the work on the development of product criteria should be carried out centrally, as should decisions on the award of labels to individual products. Those advising us from industry tell us that industry will not support such a scheme because it will not perceive advantages to itself in going through a time-consuming and expensive application process.

The Commission also proposes that a jury, consisting of representatives from each of the member states and of other interested parties, such as industry and environmental and consumer groups, should assess which products best meet the criteria for a label.

There is thus much to discuss, but the fact that the Commission has at last come forward with its proposals, that they are now on the agenda of the Environment Council, that there is something to discuss and a broad consensus about the best way forward is all good news. Other member states clearly share our reservations about the complex nature of the structure that the Commission has proposed and about the use of a European environmental agency in determining the criteria for the award of labels. I am confident that we should now be able to work out a scheme on which we can all agree.

The Government are therefore fully committed to introducing an official eco-labelling scheme as soon as possible. As I hope I have shown, we are working hard to get such a scheme in place as soon as possible. We have pressed the Commission to make good progress on the issue, and continue to do so. The position will become much clearer over the next month or two as negotiations on the proposed European regulation progress, but I am still optimistic that we will get a European scheme in place before too long, and that we shall have an eco-labelling scheme which is credible and which manufacturers, retailers and consumers will wish to support.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 13 March 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Ordered,

That, with effect from the beginning of the next Session of Parliament, the following Standing Order be made:—

'27A—(1) Subject to paragraph (8) below, in the case of a Bill authorising the carrying out of works the nature and extent of which are specified in the Bill on land so specified, there shall be deposited on or before 4th December in the Private Bill Office and at the Public Departments at which copies of the Bill are required to the deposited under Standing Order 39, either

(a) a copy or copies (as specified by paragraph (2) below) of an environmental statement containing, in relation to the works authorised by the Bill, the information set out in Schedule 3 to the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 (referred to below as "Schedule 3") or such of that information as the Secretary of State may in any particular case direct, or

(b) a copy or copies (as so specified) of a direction by the Secretary of State that no such statement is necessary in relation to the works authorised by the Bill.

(2) The number of copies required to be deposited under paragraph (1)(a) or (b) above shall be three in the case of a deposit at the Department of the Environment and one in any other case.

(3) Where any such works authorised by a Bill relate to two or more distinct projects each project may be treated separately for the purposes of paragraph (1) above; and the references in sub-paragraphs (a) and (b) of that paragraph to the works authorised by the Bill shall accordingly be construed, where the paragraph applies separately to each project, as references to the works comprised in that project.

(4) Notwithstanding any direction given as mentioned in paragraph (1)(a) above, any environmental statement of which copies are deposited under this Order shall contain the summary (referred to below as "the non-technical summary") required by paragraph (2)(e) and, where material, paragraph 4 of Schedule 3.

(5) Where the Secretary of State has given a direction as mentioned in paragraph (1)(a) above, a copy of the direction shall be deposited with every copy of the environmental statement deposited under paragraph (1)(b) above shall be accompanied by a statement by the Secretary of State of his reasons for giving the direction.

(6) Copies of every environmental statement deposited under this Order shall be made available for inspection, and for sale at a reasonable price, on and after 4th December, at the offices at which copies of the Bill are required to be made available under Standing Order 4A; and there shall also be made available separately on and after that date at those offices, for inspection and for sale at a reasonable price, copies of the non-technical summary.

(7) The reference to Schedule 3 in this Order is a reference to that Schedule as amended from time to time and includes a reference to the corresponding provision of any regulations which re-enact the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988, with or without amendment; and references to particular paragraphs of Schedule 3 shall be construed accordingly.

(8) This Order does not require the deposit of copies of an environmental statement in relation to any works for which planning permission has been granted.'.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

[See Mr. Bennett's question in columns 1106-7 of *Official Report*, 14 March.]

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDA

Ordered,

That, with effect from the beginning of the next Session of Parliament, Standing Order 38 (Deposit of copies of bill in Vote Office and Private Bill Office) be amended as follows:—

Line 5, at end add—

'(2) There shall be attached to every copy of a Bill—

(a) delivered under this Standing Order,

(b) deposited, delivered or sent under any of the Standing Orders following this Order,

(c) made available for inspection and sale under Standing Order 4A,

a printed memorandum describing the Bill generally and, subject to paragraph (3) below, every clause in the Bill.

(3) Related clauses may be dealt with together in the memorandum and it shall not be necessary to describe clauses providing only for the short title, commencement, interpretation, extent or costs of promotion of the Bill.'.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

COMMITTEES ON OPPOSED BILLS

Ordered,

That the following Amendments to Standing Orders be made:—

Standing Order 120 (Declaration by members of committee on opposed bill), line 10, after 'group' insert 'that I recognise my obligation to attend every meeting of the committee;'

Standing Order 122 (Absence of chairman or members of committee on opposed bill), line 7, leave out from 'House' to end of line 11.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

OPPOSED BUSINESS (CONSIDERATION AND THIRD READING)

Ordered,

That with effect from beginning of the next Session of Parliament—

A. The following Standing Order be made:

'204A. When an order of the day has been read for the consideration or further consideration, as amended, of a private bill set down by direction of the Chairman of Ways and Means at Seven o'clock, the Question, That the Bill, as amended, be now considered (Or be now further considered) shall not be put: but (unless the Chairman of Ways and Means names a future day for the consideration or further consideration of the bill, or a motion is made to recommit the bill in whole or in part), the House

(1) shall forthwith proceed to consider any amendments proposed on consideration of the bill which have been selected by Mr. Speaker; and

(2) may, if there are no such amendments or when the amendments have been disposed of, proceed to the third reading of the Bill, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing order 205 (Notice of third reading.)'

B. Standing Order 205 (Notice of third reading) be amended by inserting, in line 1, at the beginning, 'Subject to the provisions of S.O. 204A (Opposed business (Consideration and Third Reading)).'.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

OPPOSED BUSINESS (LORDS AMENDMENTS)

Ordered,

That, with effect from the beginning of the next Session of Parliament, the following Standing Order be made:

'208A. When an order of the day has been read for consideration or further consideration of Lords Amendments

to a Private Bill set down by direction of the Chairman of Ways and Means at Seven o'clock, the question, That the Lords Amendments be now considered (or be now further considered) shall not be put; but (unless the Chairman of Ways and Means names a future day for the consideration or further consideration of the Lords Amendments) the House shall forthwith proceed to consider the same.'.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

QUORUM OF JOINT COMMITTEE ON CONFIRMATION BILL OR SPECIAL PROCEDURE ORDER

Ordered,

That the following Amendments to Standing Orders be made:—

Standing Order 229 (Constitution of joint committee on confirmation bill), line 7, at end add—

'(2) If any member of the committee of this House is prevented from continuing his attendance, the joint committee may, with the consent of all parties, continue its sitting in his absence, provided that the number of the committee of this House be not less than two; but if the consent of any party is withheld, the joint committee shall adjourn and shall not resume its sittings in the absence of such member without leave of this House.'.

Standing Order 243 (Joint committees on petitions), line 51, leave out from 'two' to 'but' in line 52.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

TABLE OF FEES

Ordered,

That the following Table of Fees to be charged at the House of Commons shall apply to Bills for which petitions are deposited, Provisional Order Confirmation Bills presented, and Special Procedure Orders laid before Parliament, in the next Session of Parliament and thereafter.

I—FEES TO BE PAID BY THE PROMOTERS OF A PRIVATE BILL

On the First Reading of the Bill £2,500

Following the Third Reading of the Bill £2,500

The promoters of Personal Bills brought from the Lords may be charged one-twentieth of the preceding fees.

The promoters of Bills relating to charitable, religious, educational, literary or scientific purposes whereby no private profit or advantage is derived, and of Bills other than Bills promoted by local authorities from which the promoter appears unlikely to derive substantial personal or corporate gain, may be charged one quarter of the preceding fees.

II—FEES TO BE PAID BY PETITIONERS AND MEMORIALISTS

On presentation of any Petition relating to a Private Bill or of any Memorial complaining that the Standing Orders have not been complied with, provided that no Petitioner or Memorialist shall be charged more than once under this head in respect of any one Bill £20

III—FEES TO BE PAID BY APPLICANTS FOR AND PETITIONERS AGAINST A PROVISIONAL ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

On the Second Reading of a Bill to confirm one or more Provisional Orders, other than a Bill to confirm an Order or Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, the applicants shall be charged a fee of £2,500.

On the deposit of each Petition £20

IV—FEES TO BE PAID FOR PROCEEDINGS ON A SPECIAL PROCEDURE ORDER

On appearance before a Joint Committee on a Special Procedure Order, an applicant (other than a Minister) shall be charged a fee of £1,250.

On the deposit of each Petition or Counter-Petition, or copy of either £10

V—FEES TO BE PAID ON THE TAXATION OF COSTS ON PRIVATE LEGISLATION

For each £100 of any Bill of Costs allowed by the Taxing Officer £1—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

1. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on sanctions against South Africa.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): The international community is increasingly recognising that the continued application of sanctions will not help the peaceful abolition of apartheid. South Africa's political transformation needs urgently to be underpinned by economic growth. With the political process now irreversible—a point reinforced by the tabling of legislation yesterday—economic sanctions should be lifted as soon as possible.

Mr. Carlisle: In the week that the English rugby team hopes to win the five-nations championship and consequently the grand slam, will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to seize the initiative and abandon all forms of sporting sanctions against South Africa? Would she care to remind the electorate of Neath that the prospective Labour candidate in the forthcoming by-election used to spread tintacks on rugby pitches and made his political career by disrupting rugby matches against South Africa? The electors in that lovely part of the world, who are rugby lovers, should remember that when they vote.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend has made his point about Neath extremely well and I can add nothing to it. The Government aim to restore normal sporting contacts with South Africa as soon as possible. We believe that sporting contacts should be resumed where and as soon as the sports bodies become integrated. The key is to build on the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers agreement of 16 February that those bodies that achieve unity should be recognised by the international community. Perhaps we can then all enjoy the kind of competition in sport, particularly in rugby, which I know we shall.

Mr. Robert Hughes: While I welcome the statement of intention by President de Klerk, is it not the case that very few political prisoners have yet been released, very few exiles have yet returned home, no one has yet received an indemnity from prosecution as promised a year ago last February and that negotiations for a peaceful change have yet to start? Given all that, would not it be better if the Government continued to put pressure on the South African Government to make progress instead of resting on rather vague promises and very little real action?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman should find out what is happening. The first large groups of exiles, 97 of them, returned on 7 March. They were members of the African National Congress from Lusaka. More are due to return from Zambia and Tanzania, and other groups as well, as the process speeds up. With regard to the hon. Gentleman's other point, President de Klerk's target to remove racially-based restrictions on the tenure of land, which he announced in a White Paper and about which legislation was tabled yesterday, seems to us to be making good progress. I know from my own discussions with him that he intends it to be brought through in the months ahead, and no later.

Sir George Gardiner: Since the South African Government are acting to remove all racially based legislation from their statute book, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is in the interests of all South Africans, especially black South Africans, that we put all talk of sanctions behind us and concentrate instead on how we can build the social and industrial investment that will underpin the new South African democracy?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is right. The real inhibition to progress at the moment—it is serious—is an internal sanction—that of violence. It concerns the leadership of the ANC and of Inkatha, and they are trying very hard to get their own supporters not to follow the path of violence. As my hon. Friend says, it is vital to get new investment into South Africa so that the people there may have the benefit of it in terms of jobs, job experience and education. Those opportunities have been missing for black South Africans for far too long.

Mr. Robertson: Why is it that, despite the manifest success that sanctions pressure has had for change on the South African Government, our Government continue to remain out of step with everybody? At the Commonwealth Ministers meeting that our Government chose not to attend, the European Community Foreign Ministers and the United Nations sanctions committee believed that sanctions pressure should not be lifted until the legislation is enacted, not just tabled. Why must we be the only Government in the world to believe that the firm smack of appeasement is the way to deal with South Africa?

Mrs. Chalker: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman. He knows full well that ever since 1986 we have not been part of the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers meetings. It is not just the United Kingdom that has been saying that sanctions should be lifted and that new investment should be encouraged. The European Community was unanimous that we should lift bans on the import of iron and steel and of Krugerrands when President de Klerk tabled legislation to repeal the Group Areas Act. On the Commonwealth, the many discussions that I have had over the past three months tell me full well that the Commonwealth is anxious to restore normal relations and that the southern front-line states have upped their trade with South Africa in no small measure since February 1990. That is to be encouraged.

Middle East

2. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will meet the Secretary-General of the United Nations to discuss the middle east.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I have no plans to meet the United Nations Secretary-General in the immediate future, but we remain in close touch.

Mr. Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, although the war is now over, recent events in Iraq have shown that the peace and stability referred to in resolution 678 are unlikely to return to the region while Saddam

Hussein remains in power? Does he further agree that any peace settlement for the region must include provision not only for the Palestinians but for the Kurdish people who merely want the autonomy and democracy for which they have fought for many years?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend's first point. It is hard to see how Iraq can re-enter the international community or, indeed, reconstruct the country effectively while Saddam Hussein is in power. We should all like to see, as part of the general settlement, greater autonomy for Kurds and respect for their aspirations and rights.

Mrs. Fyfe: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that since the plight of the Kurds has been known for so many years while Saddam Hussein's power has increased, it is vital that the Government address the issue now?

Mr. Hurd: I have already answered that point.

Sir Dennis Walters: Bearing in mind that the Geneva convention is systematically broken by the Israelis on the west bank and Gaza and that, although there are encouraging signs of movement towards peace, progress will inevitably be slow, can anything be done in the meantime to protect the Palestinians from further abuse?

Mr. Hurd: The Security Council has debated that matter within the last few months following the shootings at Temple Mount. It is very much in the interests of all concerned that while we are working, as we are now working again, towards a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian problem, the conditions in which the Palestinians live on the west bank and in Gaza should be improved. I put that point strongly to the Israeli Foreign Minister when he visited me not long ago.

Mr. Kaufman: When the country is mourning our service men who were killed in the Gulf war—a war which would never have taken place if outside powers had not supplied Iraq with armaments—is not it indecent that outside powers are now poising themselves to pour arms back into the middle east once again, thus creating the potential for further wars in the region? Will the right hon. Gentleman meet the secretary-general and propose to him that the United Nations take an initiative to impose the most stringent controls on all arms imports into the middle east?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman has obviously studied this matter. As he knows, agreements and control regimes exist for the weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. We and the United Nations must ensure that those regimes are strengthened and that the loopholes and weaknesses are blocked. The issue of conventional arms is more difficult. We have our own criteria in this country, which are considerably more strict than those that others apply to the export of arms. There is a need for suppliers to discuss what criteria are reasonable to prevent a repetition of what has happened, when someone such as Saddam Hussein, with his record and clear intentions, built up an army of tanks that was nearly twice as large as those of Britain and France combined.

Kuwait

3. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government expects to post its ambassador back to Kuwait.

Mr. Hurd: Her Majesty's ambassador returned to Kuwait on 28 February.

Mr. Batiste: Will my right hon. Friend express to the ambassador and his staff the considerable admiration that is felt in this country for the professionalism and courage that they displayed during the occupation of Kuwait? Turning to the future, my right hon. Friend will be aware that Yorkshire people and Yorkshire industry played a considerable part in the liberation of that country and would like to participate in its reconstruction. Is he satisfied that the embassy is now staffed up to the levels necessary to assist British industry during what might be an exceptionally busy period?

Mr. Hurd: I am sure that business men in Yorkshire and elsewhere are turning their minds ingeniously and energetically to playing a part in reconstructing Kuwait. Yes, the embassy is now staffing up. I suggest that business men from Yorkshire who are thinking of visiting Kuwait should get in touch with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office/Department of Trade and Industry task force under my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, because it may be a little time before visitors who do not have firm contracts can obtain visas to go there.

Mr. Leighton: Will the Foreign Secretary discuss with the British ambassador last night's worrying report on "Newsnight" by Mr. Charles Wheeler, which showed that foreign workers who were resident in Kuwait but had been abducted by the Iraqis and who are now attempting to make their way back in the most difficult and appalling circumstances are not being allowed back, but are being kept in the open desert for weeks on end, and that the Kuwaitis are denying food to foreign nationals who are resident in Kuwait? Is that what British service men died for? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is appalling? Will he take up this matter immediately with the British ambassador to get things changed?

Mr. Hurd: The ambassador has instructions, which he is carrying out daily, to urge upon the Kuwaiti authorities that they should deal with foreigners—I am thinking especially of Palestinians—equitably. There are bound to be problems in restoring ordinary conditions. Of course, there is a vacuum and it is not reasonable to expect normal conditions to return quickly. The hon. Gentleman is fair minded and he will accept that. However, from the beginning—indeed, before the liberation of Kuwait—we have been in contact with the Kuwaiti authorities and have urged them to bring the country back to normal conditions, especially in relation to justice and law and order, as soon as they can.

Middle East

5. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with countries in the middle east.

12. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in the middle east.

Mr. Hurd: The coalition forces suspended hostilities against Iraq on 28 February. Security Council resolution 686 sets out the conditions which Iraq must fulfil for a definitive end to hostilities. We and our coalition partners will continue our efforts to achieve this and to restore peace and security to the area.

Mr. Home Robertson: That answer is welcome. Notwithstanding the incomprehensible public stance of the Palestine Liberation Organisation on the invasion of Kuwait, does the Secretary of State acknowledge that private pressure from the PLO led to, among other things, the release of British and other foreign hostages by Saddam Hussein back in December? Will he further acknowledge that there can be no security in the middle east until a just settlement is achieved for the Palestinian people? Will he join me in welcoming the acknowledgment by Secretary of State Baker of the continuing role of the PLO? Can we expect the British Government to start holding conversations with members of the PLO in the near future?

Mr. Hurd: It is certainly true that there cannot be a settlement of the Arab-Israel problems without a just settlement for the Palestinians. Unfortunately, it is also true that the present leadership of the PLO substantially weakened the authority with which it can speak on behalf of the Palestinians by supporting Saddam Hussein's aggression. That is a fact with which the Palestinians have to wrestle. I welcome the meeting that Secretary Baker had with Palestinians yesterday. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have our own contacts with Palestinians, both in the occupied territories and in Tunis.

Mr. Butler: I am sure that the whole House welcomes the sending of a United Nations team to investigate possible Iraqi atrocities in Kuwait. Will the remit of that team be extended to cover any possible subsequent atrocities?

Mr. Hurd: Like my hon. Friend, I welcome this sending of the secretary-general's team. I believe that it is investigating atrocities in Kuwait. I urged the Kuwaiti authorities some time ago that one of their actions when they returned to Kuwait should be to start drawing up an authentic catalogue of stories of such atrocities so that it can be made available to the United Nations.

Mr. Alton: On the third anniversary of the atrocities against the Kurds and the deaths of some 5,000 Kurds in one town alone, does the Foreign Secretary agree that perhaps the most fitting commemoration would be for the British Government and other allied Governments to take a more active role in seeking self-determination for the Kurdish people? What information does he have on the present Kurdish resistance in Iraq and the success that it is having?

Mr. Hurd: It is not realistic to suppose—nor does the hon. Gentleman ask for—an independent Kurdish state when one considers that Kurds live in four countries. What we are talking about and what my hon. Friends were talking about earlier, is a degree of autonomy and respect for Kurdish rights and practices. I agree with that.

We have reason to believe that there is a substantial uprising in the northern parts of Iraq in which the Kurds are playing their part in an attempt to overthrow the regime in Baghdad.

Mr. Nelson: Now that many countries in the Gulf region—especially Kuwait—are back to the political drawing board, does my right hon. Friend accept that Britain has a historic and influential role to play in any political reconstruction? Does he share the view of some that there is little prospect of more enlightened and democratic government simply through transferring power from ruling families to other pairs of hands? Does he agree that what is probably needed is the democratic check of some representative councils along the lines of those set up in other Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman, which have worked well to defend the interests of their people against excessive autocracy of government.

Mr. Hurd: I believe that Arab states, like countries in South America and black Africa, will find their own way towards greater involvement of their people in the processes of government. I hope very much that that will happen in Kuwait.

Mr. Ernie Ross: In an earlier response, the Secretary of State suggested that the PLO had somehow blotted its copybook. Yet he knows as well as I do that in recent attempts by western nations to find out who represents the Palestinian people, such as the visit of the troika of Ministers last week and that of James Baker yesterday when he met Faisal Husseini, Hanan Ashrawi, the mayor of Bethlehem and the ex-mayor of Hebron among others, who are the leaders of the Palestinians on the west bank and Gaza, all delegations made it clear that the one group which speaks for them is the PLO. I hope that the Secretary of State will not go back to the old game of simply putting off discussions on the pretext that he does not know who represents the Palestinians. They have made clear who their representatives are, and unless and until we talk to them, there can be no moves towards peace.

Mr. Hurd: I accept that, because the Palestinians must be an essential part of the answer to the Arab-Israel problem, there must be representative Palestinians, as opposed to Palestinians selected by the occupying forces. But it is important that the PLO leadership should, when organising themselves and deciding what to say and do in the near future, reflect on the harm that has been done by elements of that leadership during the recent Gulf crisis.

Germany

6. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Anglo-German relations.

10. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the Anglo-German summit on 11 March.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and others of us had excellent talks with Chancellor Kohl and his colleagues in Bonn at the summit on 11 March. The

subjects discussed included the Gulf, the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, and issues affecting the European Community and the NATO alliance.

Mr. Knapman: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his comprehensive and reassuring reply, but is it not the case that our new-found friends the Christian Democrats, are keen on federalism and a single currency? In those circumstances, what is to happen to our vision of a group of sovereign nation states co-operating together to achieve their mutual targets?

Mr. Hurd: If my hon. Friend is thinking of ties between parties, that is not strictly a matter for me. However, there is a lot to be said for coming together with like-minded parties against any socialist dominance in the European Parliament or anywhere else.

On the governmental point to which my hon. Friend referred—our approach to the two intergovernmental conferences is based on the guidelines established last year and set out most recently by the Prime Minister in his foreword to the Foreign Office White Paper on the Community.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: While welcoming the development of a good working relationship with Germany, as described by my right hon. Friend, will he assure the House that the economic strength of a new united Germany should be regarded as an opportunity rather than a difficulty or threat?

Mr. Hurd: I think that my hon. Friend is right. I believe that there is everything to be said, partly due to the reason that he gave and partly due to the natural political weight of a unified Germany in the Community, for ensuring that we take every opportunity to make ourselves better acquainted with their ideas and make them better acquainted with ours.

Sir Russell Johnston: Did the Prime Minister take the opportunity to tell Chancellor Kohl to ignore any political Scud missiles emerging from Cirencester or Finchley and assure him that there would be no more peculiar conferences to examine the German psyche?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman bases his question on some lurid press accounts of that occasion, which I attended and which was noted for its sobriety and good sense.

Sir Peter Blaker: Is my right hon. Friend aware that it is not only people of the Prime Minister's generation, but those who are so old that they actually took part in the second world war, who want the closest possible relations between the United Kingdom and Germany? Is it not natural and sensible that the leadership of the European Community should be in the hands of the United Kingdom as well as those of Germany and France?

Mr. Hurd: As I have said, I am sure that it is right that we should be closer than we have sometimes been to the ideas of others, and that they should be closer to ours. That is happening in the Community, not just among the three member states that my right hon. Friend mentioned, but among other smaller states such as the Netherlands, Portugal and Belgium, with which we are increasing the intensity of our contact.

Mr. Radice: In welcoming the improved climate in Anglo-German relations, may I ask the Foreign Secretary whether he agrees that the fears about Germany expressed in the United States by the former Prime Minister are groundless? In any case, is not the best safeguard against an over-mighty Germany a strong European Community?

Mr. Hurd: We are fortunate that the German leadership is determined to use the strength of a united Germany within the Community and within the Atlantic alliance. Long may that continue. If we can help to make sure that that German policy is permanently routed for the future, we will have done a good turn to the alliance and to the Community.

Mr. Kaufman: Following the talks with the German partners, will the Foreign Secretary give a clear and specific reply to the question which his right hon. and dithering Friend the Prime Minister dodged at Prime Minister's Question Time yesterday: do the Government now support a European central bank and a single European currency, or was the visit to Germany just another example of the style of this Prime Minister—empty words and no action?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is adapting his familiar platitudinous question about the community charge. It is as much nonsense in one context as it is in the other. As I said in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman), the guidelines on which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is approaching the intergovernmental conference on economic and monetary union were set out last year and were spelt out most recently by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in his foreword to the White Paper.

European Community

7. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure the European Community speaks with one voice against tyranny, oppression and international terrorism.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): The European Community is the largest free market in the world. As my hon. Friend knows, market economies are underpinned by democracy, and democracy is the enemy of tyranny, oppression and international terrorism. Through the intergovernmental conference on political union, we hope to strengthen European political co-operation and thus enable the Community's voice in these matters to be strengthened even further.

Mr. Evans: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Who does he think behaved worse over the Gulf—the Belgians who would not supply weapons to an ally in war or the Opposition who did not support the Government in the Lobbies and who, in other words, did not support our troops?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am glad to say that I do not have any responsibility for the conduct of Opposition Members. My hon. Friend asked about one of our European partners. I remind him that the Community has no responsibility for defence, nor in our view should it have. The Belgian Government have offered a contribution of £25 million towards our costs in the Gulf war, and we are grateful for that.

Dr. Godman: By way of the IGC, will the Minister make every attempt to ensure that the member states of the European Community speak with one voice in denouncing tyranny and oppression in Turkey? Will he also ensure that the Community will never seriously consider Turkish membership of the Community until tyranny and oppression are obliterated, and until the annexation of part of Cyprus is ended?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Community partners have agreed that no applications for membership of the Community will be considered until 1993, and that applies also to Turkey. We frequently make representations to our Turkish friends about human rights in Turkey. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that, within their sovereign territory the Government in Turkey have been subjected to considerable terrorist activity.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Although I accept that my hon. Friend is obviously right to say that the Community has no responsibility for defence, none the less it seeks to speak with a common voice on foreign affairs. One of the outcomes of the Gulf war must surely be the realisation that it is unrealistic for us to expect the Community to do that in the foreseeable future. Will my hon. Friend confirm that it is Government policy to maintain the right to an independent stance, whatever happens to the Community in terms of political co-operation?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance but he will be aware that, when the Community speaks with one voice, it does so under European political co-operation, which is outside the remit of the Commission and the treaty of Rome. We believe that it is right to continue to work with our partners to find ways in which we can arrive at common positions, because when we can do so, as we did over the Gulf, it works remarkably successfully. We want to build on that.

Drugs

8. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on international co-operation concerning the war against drugs.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): We attach great importance to fighting the drugs trade and are continuing to promote effective international action, both in multilateral forums and through our bilateral contacts.

Mr. Vaz: What progress has been made in implementing any of the 33 paragraphs that form the declaration of intent issued at the end of last April by the world ministerial conference in London? Does not the fight against drugs remain one of the highest priorities for this country? Can the Minister tell us of one initiative taken by his Department in the past year that will enable us to show the rest of the world that we took the conference seriously?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes, I can give many examples. I shall give a few now.

Mr. Graham: Give one.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I shall give one straight away. This coming February, the demand reduction task force is visiting Belize and the British Virgin Islands. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry: immediately. It has made its visit. Furthermore, we have continued with substantial aid to the Caribbean area. We have sent £8·5 million to Colombia and £6 million to the Caribbean over the past two years.

Mr. Rathbone: When will Britain be in a position to ratify the United Nations convention? Will my hon. Friend commit the British Government to continued support of the Pompidou group efforts under the new chairmanship of the Norwegians?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes, we shall be ratifying the United Nations convention soon. We give great support to the Pompidou group. As my hon. Friend knows, there will be a meeting in Oslo later this year, in which contacts with east European countries in the fight against drugs will be developed further.

EC Intergovernmental Conferences

9. **Mr. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress at the two European Community intergovernmental conferences.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The United Kingdom continues to play a full and constructive role in both intergovernmental conferences. The conference on EMU met most recently on 25 February, attended by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State attended a meeting of the political union conference on 4 March. Ministers' personal representatives meet about weekly to examine the issues in more detail.

Mr. Robertson: When the Prime Minister on Monday in Bonn said,

"I want us to be where we belong. At the very heart of Europe. Working with our partners in building the future",

could he have been referring to the social charter? All other 11 countries in the Community subscribe to the social charter, as does the Christian Democratic Union of Germany. Why cannot we, too, not take on board such progressive European legislation? Is it because the Prime Minister's speeches and words are simply a symptom of, or a smokescreen for, the chronic indecision that lies at the heart of Government in this matter?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The United Kingdom fully accepts the social dimension of the Community, but there is no question of changing our course on the social charter. We opposed it in 1989. The Rome European Council rightly reaffirmed that the Community solution to social issues should take account of subsidiarity, creating and developing employment and the need to respect the different customs and traditions of member states. That is the United Kingdom message.

Mr. Cash: Can my hon. Friend give us an assurance that there is no question at the intergovernmental conference of our conceding a single currency, a central bank or political union along the lines proposed by Chancellor Kohl?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Government have frequently made it clear that there is no question of our accepting the imposition of a single currency.

Mr. John D. Taylor: What is the Minister's reaction to the suggestion at one intergovernmental conference that, on a rotational basis, Germany and the other European countries should replace the United Kingdom on the Security Council of the United Nations?

Mr. Garel-Jones: There has been no such suggestion. My reaction is that it is not a good idea.

BBC World Service

11. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the role of the BBC World Service during recent periods of international crisis.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The BBC World Service has been of enormous value both during the events in eastern Europe last winter and in the Gulf crisis. Its accurate and timely reporting has been widely welcomed, and its audience has increased.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Does my hon. Friend agree that the BBC World Service should be congratulated on the emphasis that it gave to getting the allied message across to Arab countries?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes. The primary duty of the BBC World Service is to enhance Britain's standing abroad. I am happy to agree with my hon. Friend that that is precisely what it managed to do during the recent crisis. The Arabic service was increased from nine hours to 14 hours a day, and there was and will continue to be 24-hour coverage in the middle east as long as British forces remain in the area.

Mr. Foulkes: Why are the Government so half-hearted about the BBC world television service which started on Monday? Will the Minister now pledge the Government's full support, both practical and financial, which is necessary to ensure the success of the service so that people around the world may have a real alternative to Cable News Network?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are delighted to wish the BBC project success, but the hon. Gentleman should be aware that ITN started a commercial world television service without the need for public funds. We believe that that is the way forward.

Mr. Rhodes James: Is my hon. Friend aware that the BBC world radio service is superb and is deeply honoured and respected throughout the world? Will the Government realise that my hon. Friend is not right? What he says is the way forward is not. The way forward is for the BBC World Service to receive strong governmental support.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The BBC will receive strong Government support, but when it comes to financial support, we have to recognise that several companies with substantial British ownership, including ITN and BSkyB, operate in the market.

Thailand

13. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has made any representations to the military Government in Thailand; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We deeply regret the replacement by military rule of Thailand's democratically elected Government. We will make clear to the National Peace Keeping Council and to the interim civilian Government our desire to see the early lifting of martial law, the release of all detainees, and the speedy restoration of democracy.

Mr. Illsley: I am grateful for that reply. Will the Government ensure that they make early representations to secure an early return to democracy within Thailand? Will the Minister urge the intervening Government to distance themselves from the Pol Pot regime and Khmer Rouge?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We greatly regret the displacement of democracy and regret that the Military Council has not confirmed its initial commitment to restore democracy within six months.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the great causes for regret at the fact that the regime has taken over is that it appears to be very close to Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge people who are living in comfort inside Thailand? Will he persuade the Government and people of Thailand to hand this man to justice, because Pol Pot and his regime committed crimes under the genocide convention every bit as bad as the war crimes of Saddam Hussein?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have repeatedly called for an end to all arms supplies and all support to all the Cambodian parties of that kind, but we are assured by the Foreign Ministry in Thailand that it continues to support the comprehensive settlement proposals for Cambodia.

Middle East

14. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had about the establishment of a comprehensive middle east peace conference.

Mr. Hurd: Since the ceasefire in the Gulf, I have talked to the Americans, the French, the Twelve and most recently with the Israeli Foreign Minister on 5 March. We are also in touch with other countries in the region. We remain committed to an international conference on the Arab-Israel problem at the right time, but there is a great deal of preparation to be done first.

Sir David Steel: While I entirely accept both that answer and what the Foreign Secretary said earlier this afternoon about the authority of the PLO leadership having been weakened, will the right hon. Gentleman accept as a basic principle of such a conference that no other participants can be allowed to dictate who should represent the Palestinians, and that they themselves are entitled to choose their representatives?

Mr. Hurd: Indeed that is right, and the representatives must be representative, or there is no point in having a conference; but equally, everyone else has to attend—Israel has to attend—if it is to be worth while. That is what I mean when I say that a good deal of preparation must be done first. However, that preparation is in hand. There is now a visible effort by the United States, by the troika of the Twelve and to some extent also by the parties to make some real progress.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is no question of a comprehensive conference of this sort while Saddam Hussein remains in power in Iraq? It is essential that Iraq be represented at any conference, and that evil man cannot represent his country at this sort of conference.

Mr. Hurd: I think that is right. Iraq is not of course a main party to this dispute, although Saddam Hussein thrust himself forward as if it were. That claim has now been rejected by everybody, and by events, so I do not think that the search for justice for the Palestinians and security for Israel need wait on events in Iraq.

Mr. Galloway: The Secretary of State said earlier that the Palestinian representatives must be representative. He is not seriously suggesting that the position of the PLO has been weakened within the ranks of the Palestinian population, is he? We may disagree, as his Government certainly do, with what the PLO said—I thought that he caricatured the PLO position on Saddam Hussein's aggression—but he cannot seriously be saying that the PLO no longer represents both the two thirds of Palestinians who live outside Palestine and 99·99 per cent. of the Palestinians who live inside. Let us not turn the page back to all those years when the Secretary of State was forced to pretend that the PLO does not comprise the people we should talk to. It is indispensable to the peace process, and the Foreign Secretary should say that to the Americans, who are listening to what the British Foreign Office says.

Mr. Hurd: I did not caricature the PLO attitude. There was no need. Many of us have seen Mr. Arafat creating that attitude on television. There is no doubt about that. The hon. Member is right to say that the PLO continues to enjoy very wide support in the occupied territories and among Palestinians dispersed across the world, as was illustrated again at Mr. Baker's meeting; the difficulty is that what they have weakened is their acceptability to those with whom they must talk, who include some of the most important of their former Arab friends.

Israel

15. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had recently with the Israeli ambassador regarding the Palestinian question.

Mr. Hurd: I discussed the Palestine question with the Israeli Foreign Minister on 5 March. The ambassador was present. I stressed that stability in the region could not be achieved without progress on this question.

Mr. Hayes: Does not my right hon. Friend agree that it is very important that, before there can be any sensible or speedy resolution of the Palestinian question, there should be a peace treaty between Israel and all Arab countries? Does my right hon. Friend also agree that it is important that any negotiations involve a true, democratically elected representative or representatives of the Palestinian people? The question that we must all ask ourselves is whether, in the end, the PLO can really deliver.

Mr. Hurd: It is not realistic to imagine negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbours being successful unless, at least in parallel, there is discussion between Israel and representative Palestinians. It would be a mistake to create the impression that we believe that it is possible. The two things have to go together. The encouraging thing about my talk with Mr. Levy was that he accepted that, although obviously the basis on which the Israelis are prepared to talk to the Palestinians is not the same one as we think would be most fruitful.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Secretary of State recognise that one of the great injustices of modern times is the treatment of Palestinian people by Israel? Will he impress upon the Israeli Government the fact that, for there to be peace and stability within the middle east, the Palestinian people must have the right of self-determination, and that that opportunity will exist if and when they are prepared to talk to the PLO and come to some settlement with it?

Mr. Hurd: Palestinians have a right to self-determination, as Her Majesty's Government have long accepted. That will be achieved only through the kind of discussions that the hon. Gentleman rightly mentioned. We and friends of the Palestinians in the House, of whom there are many, should do our utmost, particularly at this critical stage when everything may be a bit more flexible and a bit more promising than in the past, before the mould sets again, to impress upon the Palestinians and on Arab states which have not yet attained peace with Israel, the fact that Israel's anxiety about her own security is real, not fictitious, and it has to be met if there is to be a lasting settlement. The two things must go together.

The Gulf

16. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the prospects for future peace and security in the Gulf.

Mr. Hurd: We warmly welcome the initiative taken by the Foreign Ministers of the Gulf Co-operation Council states together with Egypt and Syria, to discuss future security arrangements for the region. We will be ready to play our part if asked to do so.

Mr. Arnold: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the peace and security of the Arab Gulf states would not be enhanced by putting in danger the peace and security of the long-suffering people of Israel? Will he join me in rejecting the unashamed apologists on the Opposition Benches for that repulsive man Yasser Arafat?

Mr. Hurd: In the past 10 minutes, I have chosen my own words, which were slightly different from those of my hon. Friend, to make essentially exactly those points.

Mr. Graham: Bearing in mind the fact that we stepped back and fed Saddam Hussein arms which eventually led to the elimination of 5,000 Kurds, does the Secretary of State realise that there will never be peace in the middle east without a solution to the Kurdish problem? When will the Government back the Kurds' right to be an independent nation?

Mr. Hurd: I have already answered several supplementary questions about the Kurds, and I shall not repeat what I have said. Realistically an independent Kurdish state is highly unlikely. What is realistic is that Kurds

within the borders of the states in which they live should have a decent existence and be able to exercise political rights.

Mr. Churchill: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the persistent and disturbing reports that Saddam Hussein's forces might once again be using chemical weapons against his own population, and would not that be a matter of the utmost gravity? If such reports were to be true, would my right hon. Friend immediately consult the other members of the Security Council to see what positive measures could be taken to protect the Kurdish and other Iraqi civilian populations?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right to say that there have been such reports. We have not been able to confirm that they are true, but he rightly states what we would have to do if such reports were confirmed.

Middle East

17. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards negotiations between Iraq and Kuwait to resolve their differences in conformity with United Nations resolution 678.

Mr. Hurd: The first step towards any negotiations must be to secure a definitive end to hostilities—a proper ceasefire—in the Gulf. Security Council resolution 686 sets out the conditions that Iraq must fulfil for this to come about.

Mr. Barnes: Should not action be taken to establish links with Arab nations following the Gulf war? I refer, for instance, to moves towards the establishment of a Palestinian state and to the adoption of United Nations resolution 666, which concerns humanitarian assistance for Iraq and for Kuwait, as well as support for the democratic forces that associate themselves with change inside those two countries.

Mr. Hurd: Those are three rather different questions. I think that I have answered the question about Palestinian self-determination. As regards humanitarian help, I should say that the sanctions committee of the United Nations is examining quite a large number of requests for permission, within the sanctions framework, to allow food to go through to Iraq on a humanitarian basis—that is of course happening—in addition to medicines, which are not covered by the embargo. I have answered questions about how I see the movement towards greater popular involvement in government in the Gulf proceeding.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that talks are progressing between the Gulf Co-operation Council countries and Kuwait, as well as Egypt and Syria, which performed on the allied side during the Gulf war, to ensure that stability may return to Kuwait? Kuwait still faces danger from the uncertainty in Iraq. The priorities must be to make sure that Kuwait has stable government and that the people are well looked after.

Mr. Hurd: Of course that is right. I very much welcome the fact that, quite soon after the liberation of Kuwait, the six GCC states, including Kuwait, sat down in Cairo with Egypt and Syria. Contact was resumed in Damascus last week and a declaration was issued. There is a long way to go, but we have the core of Arab co-operation on security and other matters. Those countries will have to work out a peaceful relationship with Iran and will have to deal with other important matters that have not yet been tackled. However, a good start has been made.

Shrines (Damage)

20. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his latest information about the damage or alleged damage to the shrines at Kerbala, Najaf and Sammarra.

Mr. Hurd: We are not aware of any damage caused to shrines at Kerbala, Najaf or Sammarra. I reiterate that allied pilots and instructions to ensure minimum civilian casualties and to avoid damage, wherever possible, to cultural and religious sites.

Mr. Dalyell: At a length impossible in the context of answers to Foreign Office questions, may I ask the Foreign Secretary to brief the Environment Minister who will reply in the debate on Friday 15 March on this country's attitude to the Shia who may be fighting Saddam in Najaf; on the use of chemical weapons, possibly in Kerbala, in the inter-Iraqi struggles; and on any damage and contamination that may have occurred at the Iraqi chemical factory at Sammara. Also, why, in the last 48 hours, was it necessary to bomb the Basra road? May we be given a full explanation of these matters on Friday?

Mr. Hurd: It sounds as though it would be prudent if I were to give my hon. Friend some briefing on these matters for the purposes of the debate on Friday. However, some of them go well beyond the range of that debate. I have already answered a question about the use of chemical weapons by the Iraqis and I have dealt with the hon. Gentleman's main point about damage to the shrines that he has mentioned. There does not seem to have been any such damage. Given the habit of President Saddam Hussein of locating very important industrial and other plants close to shrines, it is a tribute to the allies that there has not been such damage.

Sir Bernard Braine: As the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) referred to chemical weapons capacity, may I ask my right hon. Friend to reconsider the answer that he gave my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) a moment ago? Whether or not there is evidence that Saddam Hussein has used chemical weapons against his own people in the present situation, it is a fact that, two years ago, he murdered 5,000 Kurds with chemical weapons manufactured in Iraq. Surely this is a matter that should be raised at the United Nations now.

Mr. Hurd: That matter was raised—and by whom? It was raised by the British. We were the first people to do so at that time. It is partly in the memory of that that we are now proposing that among the measures to be taken by the United Nations should be the verified destruction of all such weapons and the missiles that could deliver them.

Cambodia

24. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit Cambodia to discuss the political situation in that country.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Mr. Wareing: Is not it disgraceful that no Minister has visited Phnom Penh to discuss with the Government—who are at least in control in the capital of Cambodia—the position in that country? Does not that give a wrong message to the Khmer Rouge that the Government are still soft on Pol Pot? Should not we make a clear declaration to the world that we are not on the side of terrorism, whether in Iraq or Cambodia?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This Government are not soft on Pol Pot, whom we condemn unhesitatingly. The way forward is through a comprehensive political settlement that has been endorsed by all the parties and by the United Nations. That is the way forward, and that is what should be impressed on the Phnom Penh regime.

GP Fund Holding Scheme

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. William Waldegrave): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the implementation of the general practice fund holding scheme from 1 April 1991. The House will recall that the purpose of the scheme is to give those practices which wish to do so the opportunity to manage their resources for staff, prescribing and a specified range of hospital services. Practices are free to decide how they wish to spend money within those categories in the best interests of their patients. The general practice fund holding scheme is designed specifically to draw on the experience and expertise of general practitioners. It will encourage innovation in the health service and give the general practitioners concerned more freedom to determine the best use of resources within an overall framework of public accountability.

The general practitioner fund holding scheme is an entirely voluntary one. Eligibility is restricted to larger practices with more than 9,000 patients, or to smaller practices that group together to achieve this total. Since the details were first announced in December 1989, there has been a lively interest in the scheme, with almost 1,000 practices initially contacting their regional health authorities for further information. Regional health authorities have held detailed discussions with individual practices to ensure that they have the management capability to enter the scheme.

I am pleased to announce to the House that the names of 1,720 general practitioners in England in 306 practices are going forward to regional health authorities for approval as participants in the first wave of fund holding practices from 1 April 1991. The practices concerned embrace a total list size of 3·6 million patients, or about 7·5 per cent. of the total population. Regional health authorities are announcing the names as they give approval to the applications.

I should like to pay tribute to the practices which have chosen to participate in the first wave of the fund holding scheme. Like any pioneers, they have had to cope with difficulties which their experience will resolve for their successors. Everyone who has met the fund holders, as I and my ministerial colleagues have done, has been greatly impressed by their obvious determination to use the new scheme to raise the quality of services for patients and to explore more innovative methods of providing health care.

The House will equally wish to know that there is substantial further interest among practices in joining the scheme for future years. Practices will need to apply to regional health authorites by 1 April 1991 to participate in the second wave of fund holding practices to start on 1 April 1992. I am pleased to report that about 350 practices have already expressed an interest to their regional health authorities in joining the second wave of fund holding practices.

There has also been a significant interest among general practitioners in extending the fund holding scheme. In particular, I know that many practices with fewer than 9,000 patients would like to be able to join the scheme in their own right. In addition, many first wave practices have asked if the scheme could be extended to cover a greater range of services. I am very sympathetic to both those requests. Equally, I need to be sure that the expansion of the fund holding scheme does not outstrip the capability of the NHS as a whole to meet its needs, particularly as regards information systems and information technology.

I am therefore proposing to run from 1 April 1991 a series of demonstration projects to explore the possibilities for the development of GP fund holding. Approximately £250,000 will be made available for this purpose in 1991-92 by my Department, and additional support will be provided by regional health authorities.

We will be funding a number of practices with a list size of fewer than 9,000 patients to undertake a two-year project to establish how fund holding would work in smaller practices. Six projects in South-West Thames, Mersey, South-East Thames, North-West Thames, Oxford and Wessex regional health authorities have been selected. In addition, Bradford family health services authority will undertake a project looking at the role of the GP fund holder with regard to community-based health and social care services, and a similar project will be undertaken in two fund holding practices in Trent regional health authority. The latter project will also explore the possibility of including in the scheme a wider range of hospital services.

I emphasise to the House that general practice fund holding is not the only vehicle for allowing general practitioners to exercise more influence on service provision to reflect the particular needs of their patients. In particular, the new role of district health authorities as purchasing authorities requires them to work closely with local GPs. I look forward to this closer relationship developing further in a positive and constructive fashion. In taking GP fund holding forward, we will wish to learn from the development projects I have announced today, from the experience of the first wave fund holders, and from discussions with the representatives of the medical profession.

There is no doubt that empowering general practitioners directly as purchasers of care will be one significant means of improving the quality of services to patients and ensuring that those in daily contact with patients play a full role in discussions on service provision. This confidence has been fully borne out by our experience of the preparation for the scheme made in 1990-91 by the first wave of practices. I know that we have a secure foundation on which to start fund holding and clear enthusiasm for the future progress of the scheme.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): The Secretary of State was good enough to refer to these practices as "pioneers". First, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman about those GPs who fell by the wayside on the trail west? Will he confirm that last March 850 practices expressed an interest? Will he comment on the statement by the GP who has since withdrawn from the scheme, saying:

"I'll be surprised if budget holding does not collapse in the first year";

and that of the GP who withdrew, saying:

"The NHS is heading for a disaster"?

Is not the Secretary of State left with only a third of the starters because the rest came to share those fears? Is he aware that agreements have not yet been reached with even the 300 who remain? May I advise him that this afternoon I spoke to representatives of a practice on his list who informed me that they still do not know how much they will get or how they will spend it? How does the right hon.

Gentleman expect budget holders to be more businesslike if he cannot tell them their budgets a fortnight before they start?

May I offer my congratulations to the Secretary of State on his caution in running pilot projects before he offers budget holding to practices of fewer than 9,000 patients? In view of that sensible precaution, why did his predecessor always refuse to run any pilot projects for the practices which take this leap in the dark today?

The Secretary of State promised that this measure would raise quality. Has he received the simulation of the scheme carried out in East Anglia? Does he know that it shows that pressure from budget holders tended to reduce the standard of treatment to what they could afford on a fixed budget? How can he hope to raise the quality of GP care by putting a cash limit on what GPs can spend?

If the Secretary of State really wants value for money, will he come clean on the cost of this scheme? Will he confirm that each of these practices will cost £32,000 more in administration? *[Laughter.]* I am glad that the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) finds that amusing. This statement will cost another £10 million for more managers, when what the NHS needs is more nurses and more doctors.

I invite the Secretary of State to comment on where his statement today leaves the patients of the other 10,000 general practices. May we have an assurance that there will be no double standards on the waiting list? What guarantee can the right hon. Gentleman give that budget holders will not be able to buy a fast track for their patients to jump the queue? *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Harlow is at least 24 hours behind the times. There is no debate.

Does the Secretary of State agree that his statement today confirms that, although his party has changed its leader, it is still following the same health policies? Has he not yet grasped the fact that at the election his party will pay for its drive to change a public health service into a commercial business?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman made a number of small but significant factual errors, which seemed to show that he does not have a great grasp of the subject. The number of practices was not 850 but 950. The reason that many of them dropped out was that they were below the 9,000 patient limit. If the hon. Gentleman will investigate the matter, he will find that there is also a difference between units and practices. One of the main reasons they dropped out was that they were below the 9,000 limit.

The hon. Gentleman has once again underestimated GPs. He did it last year, spectacularly, when he said that they would not hit the targets in the contract—and they have. He is yet again underestimating them. We are already seeing in those GP fund-holding practices the winning of better quality care for their patients, and that is what they are about. It is entirely characteristic of the Labour party that it immediately says that, if somebody is better off, that must mean that someone else is worse off, so it is against the whole thing. GP fund holders are exploring with their own skills and energy how to get better deals for their patients. We should welcome that.

The hon. Gentleman raised the prospect of pilot schemes. The whole of the GP fund holding scheme as a voluntary scheme is, if one likes, a pilot scheme. We are talking about further investigations before the third wave. As I said, I hope that we will have about 750 practices in the first two waves. A sum of £33,000 is given to GP fund holders for the scheme's administration. That is entirely well spent to gain the kind of service improvements that we are seeing in GP fund holding schemes.

I must warn the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) that quite a lot of the schemes that I have visited —though perhaps a minority—are supporters of the hon. Gentleman's party, but greatly regret the bone-headedness of its response to the scheme. We should be looking at the possibilities for patient gains.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, although GPs' pay fell by some 14 per cent. under Labour, it has increased by about 36 per cent. under the Conservatives? Are not more doctors working today than ever before, and do they not have more staff in their practices? Does not the new contract mean that they have more money for night visits and for those aged over 75 on their lists? Will my right hon. Friend elaborate on the excellent service that this will mean for patients?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is entirely right. There are more GPs, more practice nurses, and smaller list sizes in every region and every county. I am sure that, in their hearts, Labour Members welcome that as much as we do. It would be generous of them occasionally to acknowledge it.

The benefits that we are already seeing from GP fund holding include the development of the idea of consultants attending GPs' surgeries to hold clinics; improvements to a whole range of non-clinical quality—for example, limitations on waiting times, and GP direct access to services; and thoughtful and sensible improvements to services, which we shall now see imitated by the districts when they purchase their services, and by other GPs, whether or not they are fund holders.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I acknowledge the fact that the health professionals to whom I have spoken welcome the much more accommodating tone of this Secretary of State for Health in comparison to the tone of some of his predecessors. I particularly welcome the idea to pilot the proposals for budget holders below the size of 9,000.

Is the Secretary of State aware of the concern about the lack of certainty about the level of budgets to be fixed for the start of the new year and the uncertainty about the item costs that GP fund holders may be charged by hospitals? Will the right hon. Gentleman also elaborate on central costs? I assume that a statement will be made about equivalent matters north of the border in Scotland.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am happy to re-emphasise that I am taking forward a policy that was invented, and carried into legislation, by my predecessor. I am proud to be doing that, because it is a very good policy.

With regard to budgets, regions are at present announcing their fund holders. I foresee no difficulties with the budget agreements. I would not have come to the House today if we believed that there would be any problems in that respect. Next year's budgets are based on this year's spending and referral practice and, in addition, allow some service development. There will be no problems about that.

[Mr. Waldegrave]

However, the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) made a good point when he said that, as we know, some of the disaggregated information is not yet available from hospitals. That is why most of the improvements in services that GP fund holders are winning for their patients are related to quality of service and not so much to costs. However, that is also very useful.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I thank my right hon. Friend for his useful and informative statement and for his constructive and sensitive attitude to the health service. Does he accept that GPs have a major—perhaps the major—role to play in health care? Will he assure the House that, under this new scheme of budget holding general practices, GPs will not be inhibited when prescribing the best possible medication and drugs for their patients in accordance with their clinical judgment or when recommending a patient to the best possible consultant in the best possible hospital for the treatment that that patient needs?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's kind words. I give him the assurance that he seeks. If a GP fund holder were to find that a patient or a group of patients, in the event perhaps of a local epidemic, were to take him above his budget, he would have the right to go back to the region for additional funds.

With regard to the more general point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), one of the main strengths of our health service is that we have a national system of quality GPs which other countries very much envy. Some of the most interesting developments in health care in the years ahead will probably come from the much closer integration of primary and secondary health care in the way set out in the management executive paper which I know my hon. Friend has seen.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): What will happen if the money runs out after GPs have penetrated the maze of additional administration? What will happen if the money runs out after GPs have difficulties having prescribed according to medical needs and requirements instead of according to financial constraints? If that money is medically required, will the GPs be guaranteed the money?

Mr. Waldegrave: I have already answered that question in replying to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield. The region will maintain reserve funds to deal with such problems. As usual, the Labour party is imagining difficulties where none exist. The GPs, who know a great deal about this, are queueing up to join the scheme. If they believed that the dangers described by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) existed, they would not be doing that.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Is not my right hon. Friend greatly encouraged by the fact that so many GPs are applying to participate in the scheme and by the fact that so many more are interested in the second wave? Is not that good news for GPs but far better news for patients? Is it not entirely predictable that all those things are completely anathema to the Labour party, which wants to abolish the scheme? Will he warn Labour Members that the electorate will not forgive them if there is another campaign cynically to manipulate the elderly, infirm and the vulnerable by telling them that they will not receive proper treatment?

Mr. Waldegrave: I strongly endorse what my hon. Friend has said. After the obvious and demonstrable falsification by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and his predictions about the contract—no doubt made in good faith but demonstrably false—any campaign would carry little weight in any case.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Is there not some irony in the fact that the Secretary of State commends the reforms on the basis of what health professionals say, given that they come under the heading "Putting patients first"? How many patients have supported the reforms?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman will find that, as patients have demonstrated to them the gains that their GP fund holders have won for them, there will be strong patient support. On the whole, GPs, as the closest representatives of patients, are the health professionals on whom it is wise to rely when we are seeking to introduce patient demands into the system. That is one of the strengths of our GP system.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Do not the figures that my right hon. Friend has given demonstrate not only a misjudgment on the part of the Labour party but some doubt about the validity of the campaign that was run by the British Medical Association about a year ago? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that one result of GP fund holding is that GPs and their patients will have more choice in the consultants and hospitals to which they can be sent and that that is to the benefit not only of the patient but of the health service generally, because there will be shorter hospital waiting lists?

Mr. Waldegrave: That is exactly the gain for patients that the scheme will produce. I do not intend to rake over the coals of past anxieties on the part of the BMA. Many leading GPs, in all parties is so far as they have political affiliations, are now part of the scheme. That shows that it is a well-based scheme which many of the best doctors regard as worth while supporting.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The Secretary of State said that about 1,000 were in the first wave of applicants. I gathered that many of them dropped out because they had fewer than 9,000 patients. May we have the proportion? How many dropped out, and how many were not accepted by the Department? In the next wave of 350 applicants, how many were from the first wave? In the background papers, it is suggested that GPs may be limited in sending people to various hospitals if there are compelling reasons. What must those compelling reasons be, and who should decide what they are?

Mr. Waldegrave: Of the original contacts from those who wished information about the scheme when it was announced, many were ineligible. I am not sure whether we have the detailed breakdown of the reasons why some have since either not been eligible or have withdrawn. I shall examine that matter and write to the hon. Gentleman about it.

Judgments about where a patient should go must rest with doctors, and they will remain with them. Of course, the first-year budgets are based on existing referral practices, so I doubt whether there will be much change in

the first year. However, if doctors wish to change, any effect will be taken into account in their costs in the second year because there will be further negotiation on their budget at the end of the first year.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): My right hon. Friend will be aware of my concern to improve management in the national health service. Is not the significance of making general practitioners fund holders the fact that they are put in a position better to manage their practices, thereby putting authority and responsibility into the same pair of hands?

Mr. Waldegrave: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I have visited a good many proposed and actual GP fund-holding practices. What impresses one most is the closeness of the team work between health professionals and managers in those practices. We shall see an expansion of the work done in local health centres. We shall also see perhaps a wider range of services available to patients. For example, there is no reason why a GP fund holder should not buy services for his patients in the private sector if he believes that that would be better for his patients. There will be wider patient choice as well as the other benefits.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will a record be kept to show whether such practices increase their referrals to hospitals? If a general practice is continually over budget, what effect will that have on the thinking of those involved; and if it does not have any effect, why have a budget in the first place?

Mr. Waldegrave: On the hon. Gentleman's second point, as I have said, there will be a renewed negotiation each year about the budget based on the outturn of the preceding year. The point of the budget is that the GP fund holder can shift resources between different heads, which he cannot do at the moment, and thus will have much greater freedom to spend.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether there will be an increase or decrease in referrals. I expect—several practices have told us this—that there will be a decrease in referrals because a number of minor surgical procedures, for which GPs are now paid, may well be performed at the practice surgery, which is often what patients want. Therefore, there will not necessarily be an increase in referrals. The opposite may well be the case.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): Are not the Government to be congratulated, not least on the extra money that they have made available for computerisation? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, many doctors who feared the advent of computerisation have now had computers installed and cannot understand how they ever managed in the past without them?

Mr. Waldegrave: I know that my hon. Friend is well briefed on such matters. The coming of a proper information base for the health service is an absolutely vital investment for the future and is enabling not only GPs but the rest of the health service far more powerfully to manage resources for the benefit of the patients.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does the Secretary of State agree that, when calculating the budgets for the necessary administrative costs in both rural and semi-rural practices, which, because of their nature and catchment areas, are much smaller, great care should be taken to ensure that the appropriate administrative costs are built into the budgeting scheme, so that patients in rural and semi-rural areas are not disadvantaged?

Mr. Waldegrave: I thoroughly accept the hon. Gentleman's point. We shall be sensitive to that.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Included in my right hon. Friend's statement is a leading health centre in my constituency, which has been pioneering preventive and community health care but which is concerned about reports that the drugs budget will be based on 1989 figures rather than on 1990 figures. Will my right hon. Friend confirm what he said to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), and that drugs are included in what he said?

Mr. Waldegrave: Certainly. The most up-to-date figures will be used, whatever they may be at the time. I confirm what I said—that if the outline budget does not cover clinically necessary prescribing, that expenditure can be met from regional health authority reserves.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Is the Secretary of State aware that there have recently been problems when GPs have refused to prescribe high-cost drugs because of their fears that that high cost will have to be met from their budget? Will he implement any further safeguards in relation to the prescribing of high-cost drugs, especially child growth hormone? The right hon. Gentleman might be aware of the recent refusal by a Chester GP to prescribe such a drug. Will he make sufficient funds available to ensure that GPs do not refuse to take on to their lists patients who need high-cost drugs?

Mr. Waldegrave: With respect, the problem is not quite as the hon. Gentleman has stated it. In certain instances, there is a problem of hospitals wishing to pass on to GPs the cost of prescribing high-cost drugs. Some GPs are rightly, in clinical terms, refusing that, because the patient is not under their direction. We have no plans to change the arrangements in that respect. General practitioners remain uncash-limited in their prescribing.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in retrospect, the reform of general practice will turn out to be one of the best things that this Government have done? Will he encourage GPs in Derbyshire, who have been a little hesitant, to take on board the reforms that he has announced today on the basis that if one wants to improve immunisation rates, one must immunise children; if one wants to do something about heart disease, one has to take blood pressure readings and encourage people to give up smoking; and if one wants the better management of resources, the GPs should be willing to do that themselves?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree strongly with my hon. Friend. I have noted that there are now useful leaflets in the surgeries of a number of practices with which I am familiar setting out the improvements that have been made in the practice and in the services available to the patients. I note also the irony that many of the things for which GPs are now rightly taking credit are the things about the relative merits of which GPs expressed a certain amount of scepticism when we first asked for them.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On at least two occasions, the Minister has been asked what would happen

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

if the money ran out in a budget-holding practice. He answered to the effect that it could get the money from the regional health authority. On occasions, regional health authorities run into debt; they have no balances. If the region is in difficulties, what guarantee will the Secretary of State give that the money will be paid? One thing is certain: if the Tories are lucky enough to win the next election, this statement is a prelude to charging patients for going to the doctor.

Mr. Waldegrave: One thing that is certain is that that is not the case. I have answered the question twice already. If procedures or costs arise which were not predicted when the budget was set, the GP fund holder can go to the region for the cost.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a ten-minute Bill after this. I shall allow questions to continue for a further five minutes. If hon. Members ask brief questions, they will all be called, after which I shall call the Front-Bench spokesmen.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Budget holding will be an essential element in making the internal market work. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is probably aware that none of the practice budgets that he has approved today is in my constituency, as my constituency is predominantly rural. My constituents are deprived of the improved opportunities of budget holding. What is the average size of the practices which are in the pilot study? In future will practices with 6,000 patients or fewer have budget-holding status?

Mr. Waldegrave: Of course, a route is available to smaller practices in rural areas to seek fund holding. They can group together. A number have done so in rural areas. I recommend that route to GPs in my hon. Friend's constituency. As I said, we shall examine several studies of practices of the size to which my hon. Friend referred to determine whether it would be sensible to reduce the threshold level overall.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that GP fund holders on the Isle of Wight have one of the highest percentages in the Wessex region, if not the whole United Kingdom? Does he agree that that shows that the anxieties expressed by the doctors were misplaced and that budget holding will promote a dialogue between district health authorities and GPs which will be to the benefit of all patients? What assurance can he give to that tiny minority of luckless patients who are on the lists of doctors who are more interested in politics than in patients?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can give one example. It is a small matter but it happened to arise in my hon. Friend's constituency; it shows how the scheme is working on more important matters. The GP fund holders asked that if patients were kept waiting for more than half an hour they should be given a cup of tea. The hospitals said, "What about the other people?" The district health authorities said, "In that case, we shall give everybody a cup of tea." That is exactly how GP fund holding is working. Practices suggest improvements—my example was a small but not insignificant matter—which are then adopted more widely.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that budget practices will receive £16,500 in grant towards preparation and up to £33,000 for management costs and that the cost of the computer hardware will be completely reimbursed, including training and maintenance costs? Does he agree that that means that resources are following the ideas of the Government?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is entirely right. My predecessor won the resources to make the scheme work well. It is working well, and it will bring benefits to patients.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the announcement that he is prepared to consider allowing practices with smaller patient lists to qualify for this excellent scheme is particularly welcome? Will he bear in mind the fact that not only rural areas have the problem? In inner city areas such as mine, with a moving and changing population and a high turnover in patient lists, if doctors are to meet the other targets which they have rightly been set, they cannot take on additional patients to qualify under the present scheme.

Mr. Waldegrave: I confirm what my hon. Friend says. There are smaller practices in inner urban areas to which the same route to GP fund holding is available. I know that many of them are exploring that option.

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Labour party, which is supposed to care about the health service, gave up an opportunity to debate it this afternoon? Is it not a fact that under the Government——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must ask a question about the statement.

Mr. Evans: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, under this Government, there are more GPs, more nurses, more patients—more everything? We are the party of hot money and the Labour party is the party of hot air.

Mr. Waldegrave: I could not have put it better than my hon. Friend, although I must admit that there has been a cut in one thing—the size of GP lists, which is good for patients, who receive more attention from GPs.

Mr. Robin Cook: As the Secretary of State chose to query my figure of 850 GP practices having expressed an interest last March, may I advise him that I took that figure from a press release issued by his predecessor, which was no doubt unwise? Will the Secretary of State advise the House whether he got the figure wrong today or his predecessor got it wrong last March? Will he also confirm that each of those 850, or 950, practices received £16,000 for the start-up cost of becoming a fund holding practice? As two thirds of them have withdrawn their interest, what value for money did he get for the £9 million that went to those that have withdrawn?

Mr. Waldegrave: This is not a tremendously important point. I was trying to help the hon. Gentleman by showing that there were more initial telephone calls of interest than he said. Many of the applicants dropped out because the threshold meant they were ineligible. I am advised that the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is that, when the press release was issued, another 100 practices applied.

BILL PRESENTED

MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS

Mr. Jimmy Hood, supported by Mr. Alan Meale, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Martin Redmond, Mr. Jerry Hayes, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Mr. James Wallace, Mr. John McAllion, Mr. Ian McCartney, Mr. Frank Haynes, Mr. Thomas Graham and Mr. Jimmy Wray, presented a Bill to make provision for an annual report to Parliament on matters relating to myalgic encephalomyelitis, including progress made in investigating the causes, effects and treatment of the disease, diagnostic practice and information derived from national epidemiological surveys: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April and to be printed. [Bill 110.]

Statutory Instruments &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on two motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Houses in Multiple Occupation (Charges for Registration Schemes) Regulations 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Dangerous Vessels (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Education (Publication of Examination Results)

4.6 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require schools and certain further and higher education establishments to make available for publication in common form all public examination results.

I have much pleasure in moving this ten-minute Bill, which will require schools to make available for publication in common form all public examination results. It is a modest measure which, if passed by the House, would make a further contribution to the Government's successful step-by-step approach to the reform of education in Britain.

One of the most important aspects of those reforms has been to help switch the emphasis of education away from the providers, the educationists and education authorities, towards the consumers—the parents and children. That important change is at the heart of our reforms. It is noticeable how often outright provider resistance to change has softened as public support and approval has grown. The Bill takes that reform process one small step further forward. It will lead to local papers publishing some form of league table to show that some schools have better academic and vocational results than others.

Before I explore the reason why opposition to the proposal among some educationists is bogus, wrong and thoroughly patronising to the vast majority of parents, I shall give the central reasons why the full publication of exam results in schools is necessary and will be welcomed. First, the chances in life for children—what they do and what they achieve—are, in considerable part, determined by their academic and vocational results. Their GCSE and A-level results determine whether they go on to further and higher education. Academic and vocational achievement opens doors to opportunity, the lack of it closes those same doors. Parents and children have a right to know what sort of results a school achieves in comparison to other schools in the district.

While individual testing gives a parent an objective answer to the question, "How is my child doing?", the publication of examination results gives an objective answer to the question to which every parent should receive an answer and which he or she has an absolute right to ask: "How good are the academic and vocational results achieved by this school?".

A further reason for publishing in aggregate the examination results of each school is that we need to go back to the first purpose of education in our schools—academic and vocational education, literacy and numeracy. Schools may have different values and emphases. Some may place particular emphasis on music or art, but their first purpose must be academic and vocational education.—*[Interruption.]* This emphasis on standards is important to us, but clearly it is of no interest to Opposition Members who are muttering.

To deny such education is a betrayal of the opportunities that our children deserve to receive and which they need to equip themselves for the real world after they leave school. Such a transparently obvious truth may have been discredited during the pink liberal fads and fashions of the 1960s, but mercifully that is no longer so.

[Mr. Andrew Mitchell]

The first argument against the Bill is that parents cannot be trusted with such information. That argument is advanced by some academics and educationists lurking in their ivory towers. More recently, it was advanced by the chairman of the education committee, in a letter to the Nottinghamshire *Evening Post* which covers my constituency. We are fortunate that many of our schools in Nottinghamshire are of a high quality. That has everything to do with the hard work and commitment of the vast majority of our teachers, staff and parents, and rather less to do with Nottinghamshire education authority.

In his letter, the chairman of the education committee states:

"Raw exam results unrefined for socio-economic factors give a false impression of performance."

That is absolute nonsense. The whole point is that they do give a precise impression of performance. As I have said, the argument has been advanced that parents cannot be trusted to interpret examination results. Most parents do not want excuses for under-performance. They do not want to know why the socio-economic make-up of their school means that it is not as good as a neighbouring one. They want the best for their children.

If a school is under-performing, we need to look at ways of improving it, not at ways of excusing it. The argument that parents cannot be trusted to read examination results aright, to place them in their correct context and to weigh up school's academic merit alongside its other achievements in sport or art or whatever, is complete nonsense. It is also odiously patronising to the good sense and concern of parents for their children's success at school, qualities which characterise the vast majority of parents whom I meet and speak to in my constituency.

The second argument against the Bill is that downtown areas cannot compete with better areas, that low socio-economic grouping must mean under-achievement in class. Of course, in some inner-city areas, teachers face desperately difficult problems in educating children, but equally, there is no correlation between home background and intelligence. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) has made clear, the Gujerati community in this country achieves higher academic results than practically any other group in the host community. Social mobility follows educational mobility, and we must promote and extend opportunity for as many children as possible, rather than looking for excuses to explain bad education.

When we ask an educationist whether standards in our schools are rising or falling, we tend to receive a witheringly patronising reply. We are told that that is a naive or simplistic question. But it is a most important question, and it should be at the centre of our national debate on education. The claims by some people that examinations and testing are divisive are simply wrong. Such tests identify children who may have fallen short of an acceptable educational standard, so that prompt action can be taken where it is needed and before it is too late.

I hope that the House will accept the Bill as a minor but helpful measure, which will assist in identifying schools that need help. It will give to parents and local communities further useful and additional information by which to judge how schools are doing and it will help to extend choice and opportunity by leading to an improvement in standards in all our schools.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Andrew Mitchell, Sir Rhodes Boyson, Sir Giles Shaw, Mr. Julian Critchley, Mr. George Walden, Mr. James Pawsey, Mr. Robert G. Hughes, Mr. Anthony Coombs, Mr. Dudley Fishburn, Mr. John Bowis, Mr. Michael Brown and Mr. William Hague.

EDUCATION (PUBLICATION OF EXAMINATION RESULTS)

Mr. Andrew Mitchell accordingly presented a Bill to require schools and certain further and higher education establishments to make available for publication in common form all public examination results: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 22 March and to be printed. [Bill 111].

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it possible to make it clear that the Bill that has just been presented is supported by Robert G. Hughes, not Robert Hughes?

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that *Hansard* will pick up the point that the Bill is supported by Robert G. Hughes.

Opposition Day

[9TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Poll Tax (Abolition)

4.15 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I beg to move,

That this House believes that the poll tax is beyond reform and must be abolished immediately; condemns the Government's dithering and delay in carrying out yet another review and its reluctance to face the fact that the poll tax must go; warns against any attempt to retain the essential elements of the poll tax in another guise, either alone or in combination with another tax: and urges the Government to replace the poll tax with a property-based tax, linked to the ability to pay, along the lines of Labour's Fair Rates proposals.

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. A large number of hon. Members wish to participate in this most important debate. I have no authority to limit speeches in a half-day debate, but if hon. Members will confine their speechs to not more than 10 minutes each, a large number of them will be called. Perhaps the Front-Bench speakers will take only a little longer.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: What possible point of order can there be in that?

Mr. Oppenheim: The point of order relates directly to the motion. I shall be brief, but I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that, on 17 July 1811, your illustrious predecessor, Speaker Abbot, ruling on the debate on the Gold Coin and Banknote Bill, said this:

"If hon. Members open their journals they will find it established 200 years ago, and then spoken of as ancient practice, that a personal interest in a question disqualified a Member from voting."

"Erskine May" has clearly interpreted that ruling as follows:

"No Member who has a direct pecuniary interest in a question is allowed to vote upon it; but, in order to operate the disqualification, this interest must be immediate and personal."

Mr. Speaker, you will be aware that many Labour Members who are top rate taxpayers are none the less laying extra burdens on people who are far less well off by not paying the poll tax. Surely nothing could be more clear than that they should be disqualified from voting on the motion.

Mr. Speaker: I have seldom heard anything more spurious. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that we are all subject to paying the community charge and if I ruled as he seems to be suggesting, nobody would be able to vote.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I have already said that this is not a point of order.

Mr. Ross: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Not everyone in the House is liable to pay the poll tax. Are we to infer from the point of order that the only people who can vote on the motion are hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies?

Mr. Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that this is not as bogus as the first point of order.

Mr. Hughes: This is a different but related point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you reconsider your view? On Monday night, when Lambeth council discussed the community charge that it was to set, two councillors who had not paid their community charge were debarred from voting because they had a pecuniary interest in the matter. Therefore——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not Lambeth council.

Mr. Hughes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue this point, he should reflect on what I said to the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim). If I ruled as he wished, no hon. Member would be able to vote, except those representing Northern Ireland constituencies.

Mr. Hughes: This is relevant because we make the Standing Orders by which the House works and we make the standing orders by which Lambeth council works—*[Interruption.]* That is true. With great respect, that is the local government law. We make those standing orders and we make these Standing Orders. On page 84 of the 21st edition of "Erskine May"—this is a separate reference from that made by my hon. Friend——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have heard enough. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that he is not making a good point. If he seeks to be called in the debate, let him make the points then.

Mr. Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that it is legitimate.

Mr. Tracey: It is a serious point. On Monday night, Lambeth council——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not legitimate.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I hope it is not about Lambeth council.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I am not referring to Lambeth council, but to the fact that you, Mr. Speaker, are unable to hear the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) because of the noise from the Opposition Benches—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I heard clearly enough.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I spy strangers from Lambeth council.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that is a joke.

Mr. Gould: We have just seen evidence, if further evidence were required, of how the poll tax issue has turned the Conservative party into an undisciplined rabble. *[Interruption.]* I see and hear that a large number of Conservative Members wish to clothe themselves in the cloak of Lambeth council and are chanting that name, presumably as a justification for their disreputable behaviour.

It was Marx who in 1852 observed that history repeats itself, the first time as tragedy and the second time as farce. The Government's difficulties over the poll tax show that on that issue, as on others, Marx did not get it right. We have had the tragedy and the farce, but they have not followed the one after the other; the tragedy and the farce have been running side by side.

The tragedy is epitomised by the misery of one of my constituents, an elderly widow, who broke down in tears in front of me a couple of weeks ago because she was so worried about being unable to pay her poll tax. That was a personal tragedy which has been repeated on countless occasions all over the country. That personal misery, created for so many people, is one of the worst consequences of the hated and unfair tax.

The tragedy is there, too, in the closure of day nurseries and luncheon clubs for the elderly, in the cuts which go deep into education and social services, and in the assault made on local government independence and on the blighted life chances of those who depend on local government services.

At the same time there is a long-running farce. All the familiar ingredients are there: an improbable plot, deep-dyed villains, the hero as nincompoop, all the major characters—in this case Ministers—at one time or another with egg on their faces, Ministers caught with their trousers down, Ministers coming and going with bewildering rapidity, Ministers misunderstanding each other and at cross-purposes. The pity of it all is that this farce prompts not laughter but disbelief and despair.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre) *rose*——

Mr. Gould: No, I will make some progress first.

The farce has reached a new intensity in recent days. Not a day goes by without some new idea, each more ludicrous than the last, being floated from Government sources. We have had the head tax, the floor tax, the skull tax, the bed-and-breakfast tax, the capital values tax and the bedroom tax. In their anxiety to do something, to tax something—anything, as long as it is not the poll tax—it has seemed at times that there is not a single architectural feature or part of the anatomy that the Government have not considered taxing. It would not be surprising if someone had come up with the brilliant idea of a thumb tax, simply because it sounded vaguely familiar. We are now told that the most likely option is a return to a property tax. One could call it a head tax followed by a "stand on your head" tax.

The source of many of these ideas is, I believe, the Secretary of State himself. His problem has never been a shortage of ideas—they keep flowing ever more ludicrously—but that his ideas are immediately dropped, usually by himself. Indeed, he drops them as fast and as frequently as Bryan Rix used to drop his trousers.

At least the Secretary of State is in a stronger position than the Prime Minister, a political leader—sadly, absent this afternoon—who on all these matters seems to take as his motto:

"They tell me I must be more decisive but you'll have to be patient for a little while I think about it."

This is the Prime Minister who was a staunch supporter, and one of the principal architects, of the poll tax, but who confirmed on the subject of the poll tax as he moved into No. 10 that he did not know what they could do and nor did anyone else.

With what relief must that Prime Minister, bereft of ideas himself, have handed the whole task over to his Secretary of State—a case of the blonde leading the bland. How disappointed he must have been at the Secretary of State's failure to bring forward a single idea which commands majority support even in his own party, let alone in the country as a whole. So the Prime Minister has at last decided to take a hand.

Last Friday we had the announcement that the Clark Kent of No. 10 had finally decided to wear his underpants outside his trousers. The announcement was startling in its directness. The Prime Minister was reported as saying, "My mind is moving." But there was more, much more. The Prime Minister went on to say:

"I think I know which way it's moving."

But before we all got carried away by this display of decisiveness came the bad news: he would not tell us where it was moving to.

This is an amazing spectacle. A Government who have been in office for 12 years, who have made the so-called reform of local government finance a major plank of their programme, who have arrogantly rejected advice from all quarters and who have carried out three fundamental reviews of their own policy, are now reduced to mumbled incoherence, unable to offer a single sensible word on the subject.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): If we can return to reality from oratory, will the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) simply state, for a constituency which he knows I know very well, what the occupier of an average semi-detached house in Dagenham will pay under his proposals this year or next?

Mr. Gould: I will gladly come to that question—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] In this House we make our own speeches. Let me answer the hon. Gentleman. My constituents, as those elsewhere, would pay less under our proposals than under the poll tax.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: This is a Government who apparently pride themselves on their competence. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer".] Never fear, I shall come to the question and I shall enjoy explaining, not just to the rabble opposite, but——

Hon. Members: Answer.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I remind the House that this is a short debate and that interruptions inevitably prolong speeches.

Mr. Gould: I shall enjoy answering that question when I come to the appropriate passage in my speech.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has been asked a question which he has not answered.

Mr. Gould: We see illustrated yet again the desperation on the Conservative Benches.

This is a Government who apparently pride themselves on their competence, but who have wasted £10 billion of taxpayers' money on an ill-fated poll tax experiment which they are now prepared to abandon but which they cannot summon up the courage to dismiss.

Mr. Bowis: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No, I am sorry. If the hon. Gentleman can persuade his colleagues to behave themselves, I might be more generous in giving way.

This is a party which professes to be pragmatic but where those prepared to die in the last poll tax ditch are taking their stand on purely ideological grounds. This is a party which has a legendary reputation for unity, but which is now, before our very eyes, cracking up along fault lines which run deep and damagingly, and every statement on the poll tax is contradicted by another member of the same party.

Mr. Bowis: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: This is a party whose members, including the hon. Gentleman who is so anxious to intervene, are queueing up in the television studios to contradict each other and argue the toss. Each new leak of Government intentions is accompanied by threats of resignation, although not yet, I see—or hear—from the Minister, or refusals to go through the Division Lobbies.

The Secretary of State's problem is that there is clearly a majority——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: I am sorry, but I am not giving way.

The Secretary of State's problem is that there is clearly a majority in the Cabinet against the poll tax, but he is unable to produce a majority for any alternative. That is presumably why he is so vulnerable to the rearguard action that is being so fiercely fought by the poll tax ideologues. That is why the danger is that he will feel the need to throw a sop to his poll tax opponents which may lead to the survival of the poll tax with all its disadvantages and unfairnesses, even if under a new guise.

Those ideologues defend their position by calling in aid a number of propositions which simply do not stand up to examination. First, they assert that the problems of the poll tax are entirely the result of high spending by local authorities, and in particular by Labour-controlled local authorities.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Gould: Let me develop the point.

That cannot be sustained for a single moment. It has been consistently rejected, to their great credit, by Tory councillors throughout Britain, not least by the Tory-controlled local authority associations—the Association of District Councils and the Association of County Councils. Even this year's figures give the lie to that false proposition. They show that the Conservative councils have overshot their assumed or target poll tax figures fixed by the Government by more than Labour councils have done—by 13·9 per cent., compared with 12 per cent., by £44·72 compared with £43·93. Moreover, Tory councils have, on average, gained £30·70 per head from the new safety net arrangements, whereas Labour councils have suffered a net loss of 59p per head. That difference alone—not any difference in spending commitments—has apparently allowed Tory councils to set increases lower than those set by Labour councils.

When it comes to exceeding the capping criteria, the picture is very similar. Not only have Tory councils, like those in Warwickshire, Somerset, Berkshire, and even Langbaurgh, found it impossible to budget within the capping limits that have been set, but dozens of smaller Tory district councils have been saved from capping only by the fact that their budgets fall below the £15 million threshold.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Wandsworth council is held up by Conservatives as a paragon of virtue. Is my hon. Friend aware that that council receives a total of £843 per adult in revenue support grant, whereas for St. Helens the figure is £357—a difference of £468? Is not that corruption?

Mr. Gould: My hon. Friend will know very well that that point is made not just by hon. Members on these Benches but by our political opponents throughout the country, including those in London itself, who are very clear about the special treatment that has allowed Wandsworth to fail to take account of local government matters and to go in for a prolonged bout of political posturing. There is no comfort there for poll tax supporters.

To find out what has gone wrong, we do not need to go much beyond the high administrative costs and the low collection levels, both of which are attested to in the very bleak report published today by the Audit Commission. We need not go beyond the Government's deliberate attempts to pretend that local government spending commitments are lower than they actually are. The differences are there. That is the problem with the poll tax. Those problems do not arise from party differences.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for having mentioned Langbaurgh. He may have given the House and everybody else the impression that the local authority there is Conservative-controlled. It is not. No party has overall control. Every measure of fiscal prudence that the Conservatives sought to introduce has been outvoted by a combination of Labour and Liberal councillors, who have a majority. This year, Conservative-administered Langbaurgh council has reduced its expenditure by £16 per head. By contrast, Labour-controlled Cleveland county council has increased its expenditure by £83 per head. That is the problem from which my people are suffering.

Mr. Gould: I am not at all surprised that the hon. Gentleman should try to get out of his difficulties. One can see why the Tories cannot command a majority—and thank heavens for that. Nevertheless, the council is run by the Tories, and it is their budget that has exceeded the capping level.

Those vociferous hon. Members who continue to support the poll tax make great play of the supposedly great and essential principle of the tax—that everybody

[Mr. Gould]

should pay something. Whatever is done to present the poll tax in a new guise, we are told that that principle is sacrosanct. It is time to debunk that so-called principle for the nonsense that it truly is. The claim is often made that the merit of the poll tax is that it catches 36 million payers, whereas only 18 million people paid rates. That point has never been more effectively rebutted than by the Secretary of State himself when he pointed out that rates were paid by many more people than the 18 million ratepayers, since many households treated the rates bill like any other household bill—gas or electricity—and made their own informal arrangements to share it out.

Let us face the argument head on. Is it really claimed as a virtue of the poll tax that it seeks to squeeze blood out of a stone, that it demands that people with literally no income—people such as pensioner wives—should pay? On closer examination, it is clear that that supposed virtue is the principal defect of this hated tax. Not only is it immoral and unfair, not only does it cause untold misery and worry; it is simply and wildly impracticable.

As the Audit Commission made clear in its report of 11 January, the costs of trying to extract payment from those with little or no income cannot be recouped from the pitifully small revenue thereby raised. For that reason, the Audit Commission recommends that, on practical grounds, the principle should be dropped. The supposedly great and ineluctable principle, for which it is said that all other deficiencies of the poll tax must be forgiven, is thereby revealed as a moral fraud and a practical nonsense.

In the last resort, we can be sure—and especially sure in view of the rabble that we have heard this afternoon—that the defenders of the poll tax will have recourse to that false proposition, which has served this Government so well over the years, that terrible though their policy may be, there is no alternative. That proposition is false—there is an alternative. We published our "Fair Rates" proposals in July last year——

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Pieces of paper have been produced and are being waved by Labour Members. Perhaps my eyesight is becoming a little dim, but those papers appear to be blank on the front. Is any information available about detail and money?

Mr. Gould: The blank is in Conservative party policy and in the hon. Gentleman's mind. The proposition——

Mr. Bowis: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No. I have been pressed to say what is in our document, and I intend to do so.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for hon. Members to bring final poll tax demands into the House and wave them in the air?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order, it is a point of debate.

Mr. Gould: The House will understand that we have had to endure so many false points of order that it would be stretching my generosity were I to allow any further interventions.

The proposition that we have no alternative to the poll tax is false. We published our "Fair Rates" proposals in July last year. We sent copies to the Prime Minister and to the Secretary of State. So real and workable an alternative do our proposals provide, so difficult have they been to challenge, that our opponents have not dared to attack them. They have been reduced to pretending that they do not exist. They do exist, and they set out the only practicable way in which we see the back of the poll tax within the coming year.

Our proposals follow a course that most observers have concluded to be the only way forward. They offer a solution which *The Times* last Monday described as "mildly progressive . . . a modest disincentive to extravagance . . . an encouragement to sub-let, a lever"——

Mr. Bowis: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In last month's *New Statesman and Society*, the hon. Gentleman mentioned that his policy was a policy for——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is clearly a point of debate, not a point of order.

Mr. Gould: I must repeat the point——

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall, of course, take genuine points of order, but not bogus ones. This is a short and important debate. I hope that the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise a genuine point of order.

Mr. King: I think that it is genuine, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has introduced into the debate a document that is being waved about by Opposition Members. If a document is to be introduced into a debate, should it not be made freely available to all hon. Members? Is it not correct that, if a document is introduced in the manner adopted by the hon. Gentleman, it must be described in detail—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. As hon. Members have crossed the Floor to give the hon. Gentleman a copy of the document, he appears to have his answer.

Mr. Gould: When the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) can finally bring himself to read the document—I am sure that Conservative Ministers have read it, as they appear to be aiming at a similar solution—he will find that what we propose is set out in considerable detail, and that it is very much supported by all those who have commented on the issue.

The Times last Monday described our solution as "mildly progressive . . . a modest disincentive to extravagance . . . an encouragement to sub-let, a lever of local democratic accountability, hard to evade and cheap to collect".

What we propose is, indeed, a modernised rates system, with all the advantages of an existing system—a tried and tested system that we know works. We propose a modernised rates system, brought up to date and made fairer by being related to ability to pay.

Our proposals have the merit—I invite Conservative Members to listen carefully—of benefiting seven out of 10 families. They promise, and will provide, lower bills than could ever be the case under the poll tax for at least five good reasons.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I draw your attention to the motion on the Order Paper and the amendment in the name of my

right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Is this debate about the community charge throughout the United Kingdom, and as it applies to Scotland? If so, in what way can we relate Scottish matters to either the motion or the amendment?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is nothing out of order, and Scottish matters are relevant to the debate.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As there has been a clear and sustained attempt to disrupt the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) by an organised rabble on the Conservative Benches, and as Conservative Members have already been set a bad example by a Secretary of State who waves the Mace, and as they are clearly upset at the prospect of being obliged to stand on their heads within the next few weeks, could you guide us on how we should behave when the Secretary of State makes his speech? Should we adopt the same disruptive tactics? If so, can we have your assurance that you will be as liberal with us as you have been with them?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let us get on with the debate.

Mr. Gould: I am amazed that Conservative Members, most of whom have been here for some time, have not yet discovered that the performance that they are putting on this afternoon does them far more damage than it does us.

Our proposals have the merit of benefiting seven out of 10 families. They promise, and will provide, lower bills than could ever be the case under the poll tax, for at least five good reasons.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No. I am sure that the hon. Lady is anxious to hear the detail of our policy.

First, the rates—a property-based tax—are cheaper to collect, and, on independent judgments, lower administrative costs will save between £300 million and £400 million a year. Secondly, the rates—a property-based tax—are hard to avoid and are undeniably more widely accepted, which means, on all the evidence, that higher collection levels would produce up to £1·4 billion over the very low collection levels for the poll tax. Thirdly, rates are broadly progressive. All those on average and lower incomes, who were hard hit by the flat-rate principle, will automatically benefit from reversing that process.

Fourthly, our extended rebate scheme will help those who traditionally have been disadvantaged by the rates, such as widows living in their family homes. Fifthly, the billions of pounds that the Government have had to spend on poll tax sweeteners could, under the rates system, be applied to achieving a better balance between central Government grant and local revenue-raising, thereby reducing bills across the board.

Mrs. Currie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No.

The great advantage of what we propose is that it offers the only route to the immediate abolition of the poll tax. No one else and no other option on offer can deliver that outcome.

Even if the Government were to summon up the nerve to abolish the poll tax altogether, in a fit of unprecedented decisiveness, any replacement which involved new administrative arrangements, new income tax rules or a new valuation register as a precondition for action, would ensure that we were stuck with the poll tax for the next two or three years.

Unless the Government are prepared to bite the bullet and concede that we must go back to the existing valuation register, at least as a first step, poll tax bills will keep on coming—not just this year, not just in 1992 or in 1993, but possibly even in 1994. That is the prospect that we now face. It hardly bears contemplating.

Mrs. Currie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No. Will the hon. Lady please resume her seat as I shall not give way—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has made it quite clear that he is not giving way.

Mr. Tracey: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To make this debate meaningful the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) must give comparative statistics for Dagenham.

Mr. Gould: The Conservative party—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I appeal to the House once more. This is a short debate. The hon. Member has made it quite clear that he does not intend to give way again and the House must respect that.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No.

Mr. Gould: The prospect of the poll tax being in place for the next two or three years hardly bears contemplation. I speak not merely on behalf of millions of poll tax payers, who will view with dismay a Government who say—at least by implication—that the poll tax was a terrible mistake, but a mistake with which poll tax payers must live for another three years, but fearful for the future viability of local government. All the evidence shows that, with each successive year, the poll tax becomes less and less workable.

Today the Audit Commission has produced a report which is sober in its language but chilling in its conclusions. It is really saying that we are on the brink of a further and catastrophic descent down the vicious spiral of high costs, leading to high bills, leading to low collection levels, leading to yet higher costs, higher bills and fewer people who are willing or able to pay.

Imagine that drama played out against the backdrop of a Government who have conceded that the poll tax is no longer tenable and that it must be abandoned. How many people will feel like paying a hated and unfair tax for three years when even its supporters have denounced it and abandoned it? The prospect is truly horrifying.

Even a Government preoccupied with their immediate problems must spare a thought for the future viability of government in this country and for the chaos that they are on the threshold of creating. If the poll tax is to go—as I fervently hope it will—I implore the Government to recognise that it is best done quickly. We have just one chance to ensure that this year's poll tax bill will be the last. To take that chance will require the Conservative party to eat large quantities of words, hats and humble pie, but no

[Mr. Gould]

matter. If we are to rid ourselves of the poll tax with the minimum of damage, we must take the chance now. Delay at this stage would plunge us further into disaster.

That is why we offer the Government—my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition wrote to the Prime Minister yesterday—co-operation in legislation to overcome the poll tax. If the Government will agree to introduce a Poll Tax Abolition Bill and to adopt the staged approach that we have recommended so that we turn to rates as a first, and essential step to abolishing the poll tax, we shall be glad to sit down with the Government to discuss drafting the details of such a Bill. We promise co-operation to get that Bill speedily through the House this Session. This is a serious offer. It is the only chance of extricating ourselves from the poll tax mire and it offers the chance of doing so without doing further and terrible damage.

If the Government refuse the offer, they must take the responsibility for prolonging the poll tax for years to come and for plunging all of local government into unprecedented crisis.

Mr. Wilshire: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Gould: The Government have committed a crime —*[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Wilshire: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not taking any further points of order.

Mr. Gould: The Government have committed a crime against the people of this country. The Government have refused to listen. They have insisted, against all the evidence, that the poll tax would work. The Government have run out of excuses, out of ideas, out of time and, on the evidence this afternoon, out of common sense.

The Government have a last chance to redeem themselves—a last chance to lance the festering poll tax boil. We offer the Government that chance, and I implore them to take it.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been a Member of the House for almost 21 years and I have never—*[Interruption.]*—and I shall be here longer. I have never witnessed such disgraceful scenes as I have seen today.

We can accurately describe the behaviour on the Government Benches as that of a rabble. What is more important, there have been between 10 and a dozen—*[Interruption.]*—it is the truth—there have been between 10 and a dozen bogus points of order. Conservative Members have trampled on the normal rules of debate and defied the authority of the Chair.

We are entitled to demand an examination of conduct on the Conservative Benches, which was witnessed by the Government Chief Whip, although he made no attempt to stop it. In the interests of the good name of parliamentary democracy, I ask you to report these matters to Mr. Speaker and to ask the Select Committee on Procedures to carry out an investigation into these matters so that we shall never have to tolerate them again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We all realise that this is a highly charged debate, but the House does itself no good by trying to debate serious matters against the background of noise.

4.58 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes the fact that the Government is undertaking a thorough review of local government finance, structure and functions; looks forward to a statement when that review has reached the appropriate stage; and in the meantime notes that, on information published to date the average community charge actually set by local authorities in England will be £393, and welcomes the generous provision made by the Government, by way of the community charge reduction scheme, community charge benefit and income support, the combined effect of which will be to reduce the average net charge actually payable next year to under £275.'.

I listened with great interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), because it is my responsibility to conduct on behalf of the Government the review of the functions, finance and structure of local government. It has been a disappointment to me that I have not been able to engage the Labour party in detailed discussion of its proposals. It is important that the country and the Government should, in reaching their judgment, be able to know how Labour calculates its way forward and what ideas it has.

I thank the hon. Member for Dagenham for taking us a stage further than before. Until now, we have had only the document "Fair Rates", which has attracted some publicity. One of its many characteristics is that it contains absolutely no references or any facts whatsoever, from one end of it to another. It was materially helpful when the hon. Gentleman told us that the basis of Labour's proposals is to ensure that seven out of 10 people will be better off. I believe that was the basis of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. I do not want in any way to put words into his mouth, but I heard him say that seven out of 10 people would be better off under Labour's proposals. —[HON. MEMBERS: "Households."] Very well. I willingly accept that the hon. Gentleman was referring to seven out of 10 households.

That was an extremely helpful observation, because it can only be made if the calculations have been done. I would find it extremely helpful to know, and would perhaps be influenced by, the underlying calculations that the hon. Gentleman has obviously made, to be able to make the statement that he did this afternoon.

I want to help the House a little further, and perhaps even the hon. Member for Dagenham. In fairness to him, he made one important substantiation of his claim. He referred to the collection of the community charge, and I do not want in any way to pretend that I am not looking at that aspect. It will not come as a surprise to the House if I make some observations later about the collection of the community charge by Labour authorities.

I want to share with the House the fascination of the review that we are undertaking. The hon. Gentleman's one substantiation was that there would be a saving of £1·4 billion. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that the hon. Gentleman is able to introduce a system of local government finance that is so much more effectively

collected—[HON. MEMBERS: "It is called rates."] I am conceding for the hypothesis all the points that the hon. Member for Dagenham made.

Let us assume that the hon. Gentleman can actually achieve a saving of £1·4 billion. That would reduce the community charge by an average of £38—but if one takes the aggregate of all Labour authorities in the coming year, they have, on the latest evidence, increased their community charges by an average of £61. By what conceivable piece of naivety can a saving of £38 be turned into an economy, when Labour authority community charges are to increase on average by £61? That is the fascination of the review process.

The more that one examines the facts behind Labour's statements, the more one realises that either it has figures that it will not reveal, or, to quote the Leader of the Opposition, it thinks that the way to solve the problem is to shove the whole thing into a computer and hope that will deliver a solution.

The hon. Member for Dagenham, who so extensively suggested that we have not worked out the details, may like to tell the House whether he knows the figures. If he does, will he tell us what they are? If he does not know the figures, how can he claim that seven out of 10 households will gain from his proposals? Does the hon. Gentlemen know the answers? [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."].

Let us assume from the hon. Gentleman's silence that he does not have the figures, and refer again to the Labour document, "Fair Rates". Perhaps it is possible to understand from that publication why the hon. Member for Dagenham does not have the figures. For all the clarity that the hon. Gentleman suggests we should bring to the matter, the House will want to know the degree of clarity that Labour has brought to revaluing its property tax.

Page 3 of "Fair Rates" sets out for all who wish to read it the basis on which, and the precision with which, valuers will be instructed to do their job, and upon which the country at large will be able to understand, merely by glancing at the bills that come through their letter boxes, exactly how the calculations have been made. There can be no question that I am not quoting correctly this time, because I will quote directly from the document:

> "We will allow valuers to use a range of relevant factors to help in that task. Of course market price should be one of those factors, but as well, we will require them to take account of rebuilding costs, maintenance and repair costs, and private rents, in order to calculate a rateable value."

Does anyone seriously believe that such a formula will produce a system of local government that is comprehensible, let alone fair?

Labour has no idea. Those words could only have been devised to obfuscate the issue, and could only have come from a party that has been in opposition for so long that it has forgotten what government is all about.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I share the right hon. Gentleman's view that Labour's alternative has no credibility, because the document offers no figures, and Labour has never adduced figures for any constituency—be it Dagenham or anywhere else. Perhaps that is why Labour came third in the Ribble Valley referendum, not second. Does the Secretary of State accept that any system that entails collection costs in London of £500,000 per day is one that no Government can justify for a minute longer? Whatever else may come out of the Government's thinking and the right hon. Gentleman's deliberations, are he and the Government clear that the poll tax must go?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his view that he shares my approach to many matters. I believe that more and more people will come to see the position from precisely the same viewpoint. I have made it clear that we are considering as part of the review the question of collection—just as we are taking into account the Liberal Democrats' helpful suggestion that the problem would be more effectively dealt with by 7p or 8p on income tax. That would not pay the bills.

At least the Liberal party has come forward with a constructive alternative which has a price tag. We will address that when we conclude our review. I wholly respect the Liberal party's position. We know what the Liberal party stands for and we know the costs. However, the Labour party's position is different. Labour Members have used language to obscure what they stand for and they either do not know the costs or will not tell us what they involve.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Will the Secretary of State at least concede that, in view of the clear shift of opinion among Conservatives, in the press and among expert opinion, a property-based alternative to the poll tax is a real runner, with strong arguments in its favour? Will he also take from me a piece of mature advice? When he listens to the advice offered to him during the review process, will he not give too much weight to the opinion of the Secretary of State for Scotland, who does not speak for any significant body of opinion in Scotland on the poll tax and whose desperate efforts to preserve a tax which no Scot can abide is causing deep distress and resentment among his fellow countrymen?

Mr. Heseltine: If the hon. Gentleman believes so powerfully in the concept of a property tax, for which his party claims to stand, why will Labour Members not come and talk about it, so that we can understand the basis of their options?

Mr. Squire: I appeal to my right hon. Friend for assistance. With the entire resources of the Department of the Environment, can my right hon. Friend answer the very simple question that I posed more than half an hour ago, but which, for some reason or another, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) failed to answer, despite saying that he would answer it? How much will the Labour party's proposals cost the average semi-detached or terraced household in Dagenham this year or next?

Mr. Heseltine: I must disappoint my hon. Friend. It is not within my Department's capacity to put accurate figures on the Labour party's proposals, because those proposals are deliberately designed to ensure that no one can do just that. The moral of the story is clear. The Labour party will not talk about its proposals precisely because we might ask about the costs and implications.

I want to remind the House of the fact that, from the very beginning, we set out to review the structure, functions and finance of local government. I do not believe that anyone can misunderstand the scale of the opportunity implied in that commitment. People with experience of local government have longed for such a commitment for many decades. There had been profound

[Mr. Heseltine]

concern that local government had been compartmentalised in terms of finance and structure, without those compartments being brought together. We have begun to bring those aspects of local government together.

I have made it quite clear to the House that, by early April, I hoped that we would be able to narrow the focus of discussion and give an indication of the way in which the Government's mind was moving. The Labour party has constantly refused to take part in that process or to become involved in the wider issues affecting local government. Anyone who travels this country will be aware that the quality of service delivery, in the environment, in the state of much of our housing, the quality of education results, in unemployment levels and in the condition of our inner cities demands the kind of approach that the Government are bringing to the issue: asking fundamental questions about the ability of local government to deliver the services on which people depend.

It is self-evident that more and more people in all parties are worried about the ability to attract men and women into the service of local government. It is fundamentally important that we judge how we can give people local government within which quality of service can be delivered. After all, local government costs us about £40 billion a year. Yet all the Labour party does is try to reduce the issue to selective quotations or a non-dialogue on the vital issues involved.

We will continue with our review and with the timetable that we have proposed. We are determined that the matter will be conducted thoroughly and comprehensively. Listening to the Labour party, one would conclude that Labour Members have no problems with the delivery of the quality of service or the quality of councillor in their local government machinery. It is extraordinary that this debate should take place in the shadow of Lambeth's decision to set a record community charge of £590.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No.

Do Labour Members genuinely believe that the hapless citizens of Lambeth are getting the highest quality of service for the highest community charge? Can anyone believe that, whatever system of local government is suggested by the Labour party, it can bring a sense of responsibility to Labour councillors in Lambeth? The Labour party must answer those questions if it is to have and credibility in its arguments.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): If the Secretary of State is narrowing his focus onto Lambeth, is he going to cap Lambeth's poll tax? He will know that Lambeth's poll tax was based on an estimated collection rate of 82 per cent. When he comes to make his capping decision, what will he assume the collection rate to be?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman asks various questions about services in Lambeth. I remind him that on 29 January he said:

"The borough's institutions are beginning to break down entirely."

The Labour party must address that point. The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) also asked about capping. It might be helpful if I make my position clear not just in the context of one authority, but in regard to all the authorities that may come within the capping regime.

I have made it perfectly clear that I will not hesitate to use my powers to cap any authority that sets an excessive budget. Last year, authorities complained that they could not set their budgets with certainty, because they did not know what criteria we would use for capping. This year, we announced provisional criteria in advance. Perhaps not surprisingly, many authorities previously subjected to capping have suddenly found that they can make the necessary economies to allow them to budget just below those levels. There are of course a small number of exceptions. According to our present information, 17 authorities have set budgets above the provisional criteria. Among those is Lambeth, which yesterday set the highest community charge in the country, at £590·25.

Clearly it is a matter of concern whenever authorities choose to set budgets which, under the intended criteria, are excessive or represent an excessive increase. I can tell authorities that it is not too late for them to look again at their budgets, to re-examine the scope for savings and improving value for money and, in the light of that reappraisal, to set a new lower budget if they so wish. I should also make it clear that my present intention is to apply the criteria announced last October. Those intentions are, however, necessarily provisional until I take my capping decisions. I will take those decisions as soon as practical, taking account of all the appropriate considerations.

Mr. Fraser: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No, I shall not give way.

It was a part of the opening speech of the hon. Member for Dagenham that the broad issue of the setting of the community charge had no relevance to the political control of the authority concerned. Last year, we know that, whichever class of authority we dealt with, Labour authorities set significantly higher charges than any other political party, particularly the Conservatives. Based on the latest information available to me—that is, today—the same pattern exists. I am able to give the House the best information available at the moment, which clearly indicates that no matter which class of authority we deal with, where the Labour party is in control, charges will be significantly higher than where Conservatives are in control. I can understand that the Labour party does not want the figures, but it is important that they should be made available.

If we consider inner London and strip away the safety net so that we can see exactly what an authority is determining, Conservative inner-London authorities have set an average charge of £235. In Labour authorities the charge is £501. In outer-London boroughs, the Conservatives have set a charge of £369, and Labour £447. If one takes all of London, the Conservatives are £343, Labour at £478. If we take metropolitan districts, the Conservatives are £368, the Labour party £431. If we take the shire districts, the Conservatives are £364, the Conservatives £447—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry. That will be the day, but it is unlikely to dawn. In the shire districts the Conservatives are £364, Labour £447. If we take England at large, all Conservative-controlled areas have set a community charge of £367 on average. All Labour-controlled areas have set an average charge of

£445. Never let it be said that a Labour vote does not cost money. On average it costs £78 to vote Labour in terms of increased community charge.

The position remains as we have always known it. Opposition Members will not talk about their proposals. They will not cost their proposals. They just go on charging people more and more. We will conclude our review. We will do it in our own time. We will do it thoroughly, and when we produce it I believe that we will command the support of the country.

5.23 pm

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): I have been trying to hear the speech of the Secretary of State for the Environment. It was very difficult to do so, but certainly not because I was interrupting him. His speech seemed to consist not of an explanation of what he will do to help my constituents who are struggling to pay the poll tax, or even an apology for all the stress that he has put them through. He bellowed at the top of his voice a series of meaningless figures that are of no consequence to my constituents—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House must be fair to the hon. Gentleman. It is very difficult to hear what he is saying.

Mr. Lamond: I was hoping to hear something that I could take back to my constituents who have been coming to my surgery and who have been writing to me about their difficulties with the poll tax. However, we have heard nothing that will be of assistance to them. Indeed, taking the Secretary of State's speech at face value, he thinks that all that is required of him is to defend the present position. One could almost imagine that he is content with what is happening and intends to carry on in the same way. If that is the impression that he intended to convey, he will be faced with a series of by-election results of the same order as his party had in Ribble Valley. The people are totally fed up with the poll tax.

The Secretary of State's comments rang ironically in my ears when he told us that he is examining the function, structure and financing of local government. As I have told him before, in the early 1970s he and I served on a Committee that examined the structure of local government in England and Wales. We pressed hard for local government financing to be included in our examination, but we were told time and again that that was a separate matter.

The right hon. Gentleman, who was a Minister at the time, did much work on the Committee, but he made as big a mess of the reorganisation of local government in England and Wales as he has made with the poll tax and in attempts to reorganise local government finance. Nineteen years later we are still talking about the changes that are needed to try to bring local government back to the state it was in before the right hon. Gentleman tampered with it. At that time, the trick was to begin the White Paper with the statement that the organisation of local government was discredited.

When the White Paper was published, I was a Labour councillor in the city of Aberdeen. All parties on the council sent me to express my opinion to the commission that was examining the matter. I said, "The White Paper states that everybody agrees that something must be done about local government. I do not agree. Why do you print that? I speak for all councillors in Aberdeen who have experience in such matters." The same blind obstinacy and refusal to accept advice was apparent when the Government pressed ahead with the poll tax.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Does my hon. Friend share my disappointment and that of other Scottish hon. Members that, despite his high profile in the review, the Secretary of State for Scotland is not present? Many Scottish Members hope to say a great deal about Scotland.

Mr. Lamond: I understand my hon. Friend's disappointment, especially in view of the stance that the Secretary of State for Scotland has been reported as taking in the matter. He is reported to be one of the few remaining Cabinet Ministers who are prepared to defend the poll tax.

We have now been told that the rating system was discredited. I take the same stance on that matter as I took 19 years ago. I am a former treasurer of the city of Aberdeen. The rating system was not discredited. There was nothing wrong with the rating system. All the criticism that was aimed at it—about elderly ladies paying the same amount in rates as the half a dozen fully grown adults in the house next door, often earning exceptionally high wages, did not apply because if the elderly lady was genuinely in need, she was the recipient of generous rates rebates. Those rebates did not leave her with 20 per cent. of the bill to pay, as happens with the poll tax, because under the rating system the rebate could be 100 per cent.

When we raised with the Conservative party the question why a wealthy person should pay the same poll tax as, say, a gardener living in a small cottage when those two people clearly did not have the same financial status, we were told that a proportion of local government costs comes from centrally raised income tax. We were told, "The rich man is paying a lot more in contributions to central taxation than the gardener, so indirectly the rich man is paying a lot more towards the cost of local government." Did not the same argument apply to the half dozen adults who were working full-time and who lived next to that old lady? Of course it did.

I shall be brief and simply tell Conservative Members that they need not search high and low for an answer. If the rating system was so unfair, so blunt and hit the poor so badly, why did the Government gradually but tenaciously over their 11 years in office move the burden of local government finance from central Government to the local rating system? When they came into office, 60 per cent. of the costs of local government were met from central taxation. Anyone who believed that the central method was the fairest way of raising that finance would not have reduced its proportion to 45 per cent., as the Conservative Government have done over the years; they would have increased it from 60 per cent. to, say 70 per cent. so that the greatest burden was placed on the shoulders of those most able to pay. However, the Government did not do that; they shifted the burden and when, as a consequence, the rates had to rise, they then said that the rating system was discredited.

Scotland had revaluations at regular intervals, but the same did not happen in England and that, too, distorted the rating system. We understand that, of itself, a revaluation does not increase rates. However, as the years go by, it redistributes the burden more fairly.

[Mr. Lamond]

The Government should bring back the rating system as an emergency measure, if nothing else. The valuation rolls exist.

We must do something to help the people who cannot pay. I am not speaking about those who can pay but who will not; the folk who concern me are those who come to my surgeries, such as pensioners, who cannot afford to pay but who wish to stay within the law. They are in tears about this. When Conservative Members howl and try to make fun of this debate, I wonder whether they realise the anxiety in the hearts of our constituents. They must because they have constituents of their own. So, let us look at the valuation roll. Let us bring back the rating system——

Mr. Wilshire *rose*——

Mr. Lamond: No, I shall not give way again.

Let us shift the burden once more from local to central Government in the fairest possible way. Let us go forward in that way. From my experience as a city treasurer I can tell the Secretary of State, who has now left the Chamber, that people complained about the rates. Everybody complains about taxes of one sort or another. However, those complaints were nothing like as serious, loud, long and strong as the complaints about the poll tax. The Secretary of State should take my advice. Never mind looking at the poll tax for another six weeks, bringing his proposals before the Cabinet and all the rest of it. He should get on with abolishing it quickly and I can promise him that the Labour Front Bench will assist him in every way.

5.34 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): I must advise the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) that one of the main reasons why so many people are deeply upset about not being able to pay the community charge is that the bills they are receiving are wickedly inflated by the people who are refusing to pay, including Labour Members of Parliament and Labour councillors. The result of the Labour party's unwillingness to get to grips with that issue is that more and more will be added to the bills each year to take account of non-payment, and more and more people will be in tears. That is because of the policy of the Labour party.

Having said that, I address my main comments especially to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. If we are not careful, I believe that, as a party, we are in danger of indulging in what I can only call collective madness. We are in danger of being panicked by the Labour party and the media into throwing away the community charge without giving it another moment's thought. Having thus thrown it out, we are in danger of clutching at whatever comes past in the hope that it will do the trick. However, if we do that, we will have to have this debate all over again in two or three years' time. One of the most serious flaws when we introduced the community charge was that we did not think it through properly——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The hon. Gentleman served on the Committee.

Mr. Wilshire: I shall come to that in a moment.

If we panic now, we shall grab at something else that we have not thought through. Having said that, I am not about to make a defence of the community charge—*[Interruption.]*—and for one simple reason: because I understand—I am sure that all Opposition Members would like my right hon. and hon. Friends and me to understand this—that the message from Ribble Valley must be heeded. However, there is a grave danger of misunderstanding that message. If I understand it correctly, that message is that many people consider that the community charge is too high and many people perceive it as unfair. The message from the by-election was not about what the electors of Ribble Valley wanted instead; the message that came across loud and clear was simply people's view on the community charge. We as a party would be foolish not to respond to that.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that those of us in Scotland who have had a year's more experience of the community charge or poll tax know that the problem does not get better; it gets substantially worse as the level of resentment increases and the local authorities' difficulties in providing services become more aggravated? Can he explain why the Conservative party is now locked into the panic that he is now trying to head off, but cannot address the fact that a local income tax meets all the positive objectives that the community charge was said to meet, as well as providing local authorities with a buoyant source of revenue, and meeting the criterion of fairness? The people of Ribble Valley voted for the candidate who advocated that.

Mr. Wilshire: I do not believe that the people of Ribble Valley voted in favour of a local income tax: they voted against the community charge. Although the hon. Gentleman's party has been fair and reasonable about saying what it would do—I respect that, because it is one way of going about things—he is also making another mistake by putting the cart before the horse. He is trying to redesign local government finance. He is attempting a quick fix, which is impossible, as I shall show later, and which is the wrong way round. The message from Ribble Valley is absolutely clear, and we must respond to it.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I wonder whether my hon. Friend saw the exit poll that showed that just 3 per cent. of those who voted Liberal Democrat wanted a local income tax. In my constituency, a local income tax would come out at between £800 and £900 per taxpayer, and would take at least three years to introduce.

Mr. Wilshire: I entirely accept what my hon. Friend says, but if I go down that track, the debate is in danger of getting locked into the very thing that I am arguing against—the attempt to go for a quick fix when seeking the best way of financing local government. That would be dangerous.

Immediately and on a temporary basis, we must respond to the twin objections about the community charge of "too high" and "unfair". The relief scheme that is being introduced will go a long way towards dealing with the "too high" objection. Many people in Britain will pay less in a few weeks' time than they pay now. That will make a tremendous difference. It does not matter that the charge is increasing notionally: they will pay less. If that is

not adequate to meet the demands of the British people, that temporary relief scheme will have to be improved even further. However, it must remain temporary.

As for unfairness, the starting point is to listen to council treasurers—the people who collect the money. They know only too well where the real unfairness and difficulties lie. They lie with the very young, students, the ill and the very old. Council treasurers up and down the land will tell us, if we listen, that it usually costs more to collect little bits of money than the amount collected. If we started by addressing that unfairness, we might save money rather than cost ourselves more.

Sir Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Wilshire: No. Other people wish to make speeches.

If we do the two things that I mentioned on a temporary basis, we shall respond to Ribble Valley. Then we must refuse to be panicked and take our time to get our fundamental review absolutely right. Otherwise, we shall be back where we started. In order to get that fundamental review right, it must be carried out in the correct order.

There is no point in trying to answer the question, "What is the long-term way of financing local government?", until we can answer the question, "What will local government look like in future?" Long before we come to the permanent financial solution, we must decide what the boundaries will look like, whether there will be one or two tiers of local government, and what the structure will be. We must get that right first. Secondly, we must redesign the services. Until we know which services are to be provided where, how in heaven's name can anyone—even the Labour party—get the financial package right?

Thirdly, before we come to finance, we must sort out the changes that we intend to make in local democracy. When we have sorted out our boundaries, services and local democracy, we can ask, "What does local government look like and what is the best way to finance it?" When we come to that question, we must remember that simply how we raise local income is not the only matter of local government finance to be dealt with. We cannot say how we should raise local income in the long term until we have considered expenditure and the point made by the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) about whether 60 per cent. or 45 per cent. of local government income should come from the centre, until we have decided how we intend to divide up the money according to the need for or lack of resources in local areas.

All that is part of the financial debate and all that has to come—[HON. MEMBERS: "How long?"] We shall take as long as is necessary. I do not believe that the British public are stupid. They will not be taken in by a party which puts up bits of paper without a single figure in them. After the experience of the community charge, they will not believe the Labour party when it simply says, "Here is a quick fix for finance." The public will not fall for that. They will accept honesty, provided that we first address the problems of the community charge on a temporary basis.

I accept what Opposition Members say about the messages from Ribble Valley—

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wilshire: No, I will not give way.

If we ignore the messages from Ribble Valley completely, we shall be heading for disaster. We must respond to them on a temporary basis, and then take as long as is necessary.

If Opposition Members really believe in local government as they claim, they will join us in seeking the long-term solution. If we redesign, get the boundaries, services and local democracy right, and if we improve grant arrangements, the result will be that raising money locally will become consequential. It will become less confrontational. If my colleagues and my party accept that we must keep calm and make a temporary change, the long-term solution will be the better for everyone. It will be respected by the British people, and at the end of it all we may even have a choice of what local system of fund raising we use.

5.44 pm

Mr. Michael Carr (Ribble Valley): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me so soon after my election but, given the circumstances, it is appropriate that I should make my maiden speech in this debate.

I am only the second Member of Parliament to represent Ribble Valley. The constituency came into existence in 1983 and, until his recent elevation to another place, had been represented by David Waddington.

David Waddington was a well-liked and respected Member of Parliament—a native of north-east Lancashire who, despite achieving high office, was first and foremost Ribble Valley's Member of Parliament. He was a gentleman. I recall that both the previous general election campaigns were robust and hard fought, but fought without rancour. I mention also his personal kindness, and I pay tribute to the service that he gave to the people of Ribble Valley.

The Ribble Valley constituency is an area of great contrasts. It straddles two local government districts. One is the whole of the Ribble Valley borough, the heart of which is the ancient market town of Clitheroe, looked over by its castle and set in some of the most beautiful countryside in England. The other part comprises some of the borough of Preston, including the whole of Fulwood, a large and expanding suburb at the western end of the constituency.

In many ways, Ribble Valley is like two constituencies rolled into one, and some of the concerns that people expressed during the by-election clearly reflect that. In the Preston area, more than 17,000 people are employed by British Aerospace, but in the next two years, more than 3,000 jobs will disappear. As a result, over £37 million will be taken out of the local economy. The human cost for those who will lose their jobs will be devastating and cannot, of course, be quantified in the same way.

In the long term, British Aerospace must diversify further in producing civilian aircraft, but in the short term, all must be done to firm up Saudi orders for the Tornado aircraft, the performance of which we have all witnessed recently, and to persuade the Germans to commit themselves to the production phase of the European fighter aircraft.

There are two other concerns that I would like to highlight before turning to the poll tax. During the by-election I met many farmers who were facing great difficulties, especially hill farmers. Not only are they facing

[Mr. Michael Carr]

the consequences of high interest rates, like all other businesses, but they have experienced a sharp drop in incomes. Sheep farmers will suffer further losses as income from wool falls in the next 12 months. The importance of agriculture is still not taken seriously enough by the Government.

A second group who deserve special mention are the many young people growing up in Clitheroe, Longridge, and the villages of Ribble Valley, who wish to stay in the area, but cannot find affordable housing to buy or rent. Allowing young people to remain in their communities must become a far greater priority.

Turning to the subject of the debate, there are three additional reasons this week for stating that the poll tax is finished and must be abolished. First, the Audit Commission report today shows how unworkable it has become. The average poll tax collection rate for shire districts was 82 per cent, for metropolitan districts 73 per cent., for outer-London boroughs 77 per cent. and for inner-London boroughs, 66 per cent. The expectation at the start of the financial year was 90 per cent.

Today's list of charge-capped authorities is a sign of the second reason—the system was supposed to make capping redundant. Some of the councils, such as Lambeth are wilfully incompetent, others are on the list due to lack of fair funding. Either way, the list is a sign of failure. Above all, the electorate of Ribble Valley have spoken for the country as a whole. Their rejection of the poll tax was so overwhelming and so self-evident that it cannot be ignored.

To the Prime Minister, when he talks of dustbin votes, we say only, "Some rubbish, some dustbin." He should also remember that, when ignored, dustbins can fester. If anyone doubts the need to abolish the poll tax, let me remind them why it is so hated. During the by-election campaign, we received hundreds of letters from pensioners who have been clobbered by the poll tax. One case epitomises their plight, shows the difficulties that pensioners face and tells us loud and clear why the tax must go.

I canvassed a house where an old lady of 87 lived. She came to the door unable to walk properly and invited me in. During her life, she had done everything that the Government have encouraged people to do. She was self-reliant and thrifty, she had saved and bought her own house. She supported her family during the 1930s, when her father could not get a job and her brothers were too young to work. After the war, she bought a small house and continued to support her family. On the day she retired from work, her father died. He was not insured, because he did not have a job before the war. She continued to pay the mortgage out of the little that she had saved when she was at work.

Eight years ago, unable to keep the house because it was too much for her, she sold it for the princely sum of £20,000 and moved into sheltered accommodation. Due to her little nest egg of £20,000—which last year would have been worth £90,000 because of property inflation—she has to pay full rent, rates and poll tax. That example is not unique—it is typical—which is why the tax must go.

The Government must not forget that the electorate were given different options to replace the poll tax. Conservative Members who advocate a form of property tax or a combination of property tax plus poll tax should remember that the electorate were offered a similar choice by the Labour party—although, to be fair, it proposed a property tax plus a local income tax.

The Ribble Valley by-election shows that there is no support for the return to the rates, however modified. Property taxes are unfair, would be costly, slow to implement, would require regular revaluations and would not enhance accountability. Many Conservatives will find that, if they abandon the poll tax for a property tax, they will be out of the fat and into the fire.

The Liberal Democrats proposed a local income tax. The detail and cost of our alternative featured strongly in the by-election. We campaigned vigorously on our proposals, as did the Conservatives, although we did not always recognise their interpretation.

I hope that, even at this late stage, the Department of the Environment will finally give serious consideration to a local income tax. The only objections to such a tax have been political, or based on misapprehension of how it works or what it would cost. A serious review in which "nothing is ruled in or out" should have given serious consideration to an alternative which was backed by the Layfield inquiry and many other interested parties.

The undeniable strength of a local income tax is that it is fair and can be seen to be fair, because it is related to ability to pay. The Secretary of State for the Environment will recognise that strength. In April 1988, he spoke in favour of the attempt of his colleague, the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) to make the community charge more directly related to ability to pay by banding it. He said:

> "I shall vote for him . . . I shall do so not from any sense of enthusiasm for the detail, but from an unswerving allegiance to the principles upon which it is based".—[*Official Report*, 18 April 1988, Vol. 131, c. 624.]

Those principles were fairness and ability to pay. They are what a local income tax is about. We believe—it is yet to be contradicted—that a local income tax could be introduced within one financial year, provided that the decision to proceed is taken six months before the start of that financial year.

The Inland Revenue would produce a formal statement setting out how much taxable income there was in each district, based upon a random selection of a fifth of taxpayers in that district. Using that information, the local authority would set a rate of local income tax that met the spending needs of its district. Each taxpayer would be told how much he would be expected to pay by the end of the year. However, a standard rate would be collected through the pay-as-you-earn system and allocated to the local authorities. At the end of the year, each taxpayer would receive a rebate or extra tax demand, depending on how their authority deviated from the standard rate, with the bill arriving just before the local elections.

That system is simple, easy to understand and much cheaper to administer, and everyone makes a contribution to local services that they can afford. Along with the introduction of fair votes, it is also the most accountable system. The cost to households will, as in any system, depend on the level of Government grant and an equalisation system between authorities, but we know from a parliamentary question answered last month that, on the Government's own figures, an average rate of 5·5 p would be needed next year.

Liberal Democrats are not afraid of saying that some people will pay more than they do with the community charge. In the by-election, a Conservative leaflet highlighted one family that would lose—their combined income was £46,000—but even that family would pay only £600 more than they do for their poll tax bill. If it were possible to ask that mythical family, I believe that they would appreciate why it is that they should contribute more than their poorer neighbours.

As a maiden speech should be uncontroversial, I shall leave the last word on the subject to the Minister for Housing and Planning. In the debate on the Local Government Finance Bill in April 1988, he said:

"With a dismissive sweep of the arm, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that any attempt to raise local revenue by a form of local income tax was inherently impossible—ignoring the fact that it is exactly how the vast majority of civilised countries fund local government and that not one civilised country funds local government in the way proposed by the Bill".—[*Official Report*, 18 April 1988; Vol. 131, c. 608.]

The people of Ribble Valley will hope that the Minister does not allow the current Secretary of State to be equally dismissive of their verdict.

5.57 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): This is the first time in my almost 21 years in the House that I have had the honour and privilege of following a maiden speaker. May I be the first to congratulate the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Carr) on his victory, his fluency, his cogency and, particularly, his generosity to his predecessor Lord Waddington? Those of us who knew him know that the hon. Member for Ribble Valley spoke nothing less than the truth when he spoke of Lord Waddington's deep concern and affection for, and empathy with, his constituency.

I had the pleasure of visiting Ribble Valley during the by-election. I can confess in the privacy of the House, that it was not unconnected with the fact that my wife and I had previously visited a small hotel in Slaidburn, which we thoroughly enjoyed—*[Interruption.]* It was not a Holiday Inn.

I agree with the hon. Member for Ribble Valley that the northern part of his constituency contains some of the most beautiful and desolate countryside in England. I could say that I hope that he will soon have much more time to enjoy it, but that would be unkind. I hope that the hon. Gentleman enjoys his sojourn in this place. As he will have discovered, it is a privilege to be here and, notwithstanding the occasional arguments across the Floor of the Chamber, most of us spend much of our time in easy personal friendships with colleagues in all parts of the House. Perhaps I could take up that theme at this point in the debate. I am sorry that the Dagenham boy piper, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have left.

There was some noise from this side of the Chamber during the speech by the hon. Member for Dagenham, but I do not agree with the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) that it was the worst behaviour that he had ever seen or heard. To say that was extremely insulting to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and other hon. Members, because events during the passage of the European Communities Act 1972, the Housing Act 1988 and the Industrial Relations Act 1971, to name but three, made today's performance pale into insignificance.

From the beginning, I have consistently voted against the community charge, and nothing that I have heard today or in the past two or three years leads me to believe that I was wrong. My hon. Friends will not mind my saying that some of them who were making noises as if they were friends of the poll tax sounded like people who were friends of the dinosaur when that was going out of fashion.

We all know that the Government have made a mistake. They were elected in 1979 and re-elected in 1983 and 1987, and they should be allowed to make an occasional mistake. This has been a serious mistake, but the Government have had the courage to recognise it. The Labour party is entitled to its fun, but Opposition Members should occasionally remember that we all have a duty to try to put right the problems that have been created by the Government's attempts to improve the rating system. We must put it right by coming up with a better system of local government finance. That is all that we are trying to achieve. Some of my hon. Friends regard the community charge as a sort of totem, but it is not worth dying in the ditches for what is after all a system of local government taxation.

I hope that all hon. Members will agree that Government revenue is not raised for the benefit of the Government and that local government revenue is not raised for the benefit of local government. The beneficiaries of any form of taxation must be the electorate at large. That should be our guiding light. If we can all agree on that, surely to goodness we can find a solution which does not owe its parentage to party political dogma.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Adley: No, because I have said that I shall be brief; I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me.

The problems with the community charge or poll tax, as we are supposed to call it, are so well known that they do not need to be repeated. I seek agreement, not disagreement, and invite hon. Members to agree with the following propositions. We should keep to a minimum the cost of raising and collecting any tax, because the more we spend on raising and collection the less there is to spend. Do we agree that most people accept that income tax is a fair tax? We rarely hear people complaining that the principle of income tax is unfair.

Perhaps the system advocated by the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Carr) for a local income tax would be just as fair and no more expensive to collect than national income tax. His timetabling was slightly optimistic, but I agree with him, because he agrees with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that nothing is ruled in and nothing is ruled out. I plead with the Labour party to recognise that, in the end, there are no bonus points in this for anyone. We must all try to devise a system with which hon. Members and our people can live. The Opposition have had their fun, and are entitled to enjoy themselves.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): It was not funny.

Mr. Adley: The hon. Member says that it was not funny. When he reads the start of the speech by his hon.

[Mr. Adley]

Friend the Member for Dagenham, he will find that it contains a certain amount of fun. I do not complain about that, but I am trying to look forward and not backwards.

I seek agreement across the party divide on another proposition. I shall say it slowly, because it may be contentious. Accountability is not related to who collects the tax, but to how it is spent. If we can agree on that and on the other propositions that I have advanced, we shall begin to get somewhere.

My final proposition pushes at the margins of agreement. As we all know, hypothecation of taxation is an unacceptable principle. We do not believe, for example, that a Government who earn money from gambling taxes should spend it on building more casinos. As we believe that hypothecation of taxation is unacceptable, why must we live with the assumption that there must be a permanent and unchangeable relationship between what we call local tax and the provision of local services?

Are we not trying to find a way to raise money as painlessly and as fairly as possible, and as cheaply as possible, to spend on the provision of services that should be administered by locally elected people? If we can agree on just some of the propositions that I have advanced, we may make progress towards working together without preconditions to finding a new form of local government taxation.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities, who is on the Front Bench, and I have had many disagreements about the community charge, and I do not propose to seek an argument with him now. Will he think about how much money we have had to spend on rebates and collection, and then consider non-collection and the cost of new local authority buildings in which to house new staff to collect the community charge? If that total could be spent, not on the administration of a tax but on the provision of services, all our constituents would be a great deal better off.

I shall finish as I started. The Opposition have made their point, and I plead with them to accept the offer made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. The Opposition are putting a precondition on discussions, because they want us to announce the abolition of the community charge and accept their system. That is not what the people of this country expect. The offer is still open, and the Opposition should recognise that all we seek is a fair and honest form of local government taxation.

6.7 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I also congratulate the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Carr) on his maiden speech. It was eloquent and sincere, and we wish him well during his time in the House.

I should have liked to expand on the theme of a local income tax, but time would not permit that. When I was in local government I had the opportunity to give evidence to the Layfield committee. Its report is still well worth reading, but it does not give much support to the idea of the introduction of a local income tax in the short time that some hon. Members suppose.

I should like to speak about the situation in Scotland. I regret the absence from the Chamber of the Secretary of State for Scotland, or, indeed, of any Scottish Minister, especially in the light of what has been said in today's press about how the review will affect Scotland. I do not think that I am overstating the matter when I say that Scotland is enraged about the representations about the review made by our Secretary of State.

It would appear from what we read in the press that the Secretary of State for Scotland, far from campaigning in the interests of Scotland to get rid of the hated poll tax, is doing his best to retain it. Our Secretary of State is not the sort of man who normally leads campaigns, so we in Scotland are astounded that he is campaigning to retain the most unfair, inequitable, unjust and unpopular measure that we have seen for many a year—the poll tax.

Mr. Home Robertson: I am a scarred veteran of the Standing Committee that considered the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Bill in 1987. Does my hon. Friend accept that it is rather bizarre that the Government intend to repeal the poll tax on the strength of one by-election loss when the Tory party lost half its seats in Scotland in the last general election? The Secretary of State for Scotland appears to be prepared to sacrifice the other half of those seats to keep the tax going.

Mr. Clarke: As always, my hon. Friend makes an excellent and well-informed point.

We are told in *The Guardian* today:

"Minister fights to save poll tax".

When I saw that, I thought that it might be some obscure Minister whose constituency was the unusual one that would benefit. The article continues:

"'Dithering' Major put on the spot by Scottish Secretary's intervention."

Incredulously, I read this:

"Mr. Lang has made no secret that he has been fighting in the Government's poll tax review group to keep the community charge in some form".

Nobody in Scotland would regard that as fighting a campaign for a measure that is widely supported by the Scottish people. The truth is that in every test of opinion —local elections, by-elections, opinion polls and the rest —the people of Scotland, including some who benefit from the poll tax, regard it as being utterly repugnant and would expect the Secretary of State for Scotland to reflect their views. How could they feel otherwise? Now that we have seen the poll tax in operation, we realise that it is a tax that is unwanted and unpopular.

We are seeing in Scotland—and we saw it a year earlier than the rest of the country—a tax that has caused divisions, including divisions within families, and that has led to an average increase in Scotland in the past year of 29 per cent., irrespective of the political colour of the councils. Non-payment is a staggering 14 per cent., and if the Chancellor is looking for ideas for his Budget next week, the introduction of a new tax with such a high level of non-response would not be one to recommend.

There has been a 50 per cent. change in the register in local areas. In Scotland we are seeing clear and undeniable evidence of hardship and poverty as a result of the poll tax. We have seen an amazing 1·25 million warrants served, more than 700,000 cases brought before the sheriff officers, 30,000 poinding visits, 8,000 wage arrestments, 10,000 bank arrestments and even 70,000 income support deductions. The latter figure shows clearly that it is not a question of ability to pay, as some of the poorest are being treated in that way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamont), in an excellent speech that reflected

his local government background, rightly outlined some of the administrative problems in local government. It is not simply a case of inability to collect a tax, important though that is. We are seeing an administrative nightmare. It is costly, and what it yields is not being applied to the services that local authorities of all political complexions want to provide.

I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House could tell us of appalling surgery cases. A few weeks ago, in my constituency, in a surgery in Waterside, a man showed me a letter telling him that he would be fined £50 for not having arranged to pay his parents' poll tax. They had both died more than four years previously. Equally, there are serious implications for the provision of services. The poll tax is inefficient everywhere. If the Government have to cap poll taxes to an extent that they did not anticipate when they introduced the idea, then education, social work and other services will not be provided to the standard that local communities rightly desire.

Much of this is happening to disguise one of the most important issues of the past decade. It is the simple fact that, subtly, the Government have quite deliberately restricted the funding and resources from central Government available to local government. In Scotland, we have seen a 12 per cent. reduction in real terms compared with 10 years ago. In the face of that overwhelming evidence, why is the Secretary of State for Scotland apparently taking the view that he is reported as having taken in the discussions on the poll tax? He may have been influenced by the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth).

Mr. Home Robertson: What about the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart)?

Mr. Clarke: I shall come to him in a minute.

Nobody would disagree about the hon. Member for Stirling who, it might be said, is a person of principle. In the next few weeks, we shall see whether that person of principle will accept a policy based on property valuations, and perhaps more. Last year, he was taking a leading role in an advertising campaign, featuring vultures and other such creatures, aimed against such policies. His principles will be tested if he goes along with what appears to be the policy that the review body has adopted.

It would be unkind not to remember the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). Eastwood has many qualities, and one would not take away from them, but it is not entirely representative of all of Scotland. The hon. Gentleman would be mistaken if he thought that even those who benefit from unfair policies and taxes were prepared to vote for them. That message will apply to Eastwood as well.

The Government, the Secretary of State and seemingly other Ministers in the Scottish Office are haunted by failure. They are obsessed with the need to defend the mistakes of the past. The Scottish people expect honesty. Tory Members of Parliament representing Scottish constituencies should know a great deal about lost causes, as there are so few of them. However, they should not be influenced in this important matter by false pride and a failure to admit that they were wrong.

In the 1930s, Winston Churchill said of the Tory party:

"They were resolved to be irresolute."

The people of Scotland are not prepared to wait until the Government think they have got it right. There are so many injustices that the patience of the British public, including the people of Scotland, should not be overestimated. The people of Scotland want once again local government services that reflect local needs.

We are appalled that, for example, in community care the needs of the elderly are affected. Organisations like Crossroads, which have done so much to help carers, have suffered in some regions through lack of money because of poll tax capping. Given the unemployment rate in Scotland, we are appalled that training in several regions is being cut because local authorities cannot meet vital training needs. We are appalled that elderly people will lose, for example, the services of home helps, which any civilised society would want to make available for them.

All the evidence of the past few years shows that people are appalled by the poll tax itself. It is unworthy of the House, people expect decency and fairness in taxation policy, especially as it applies to local services. They are not getting that under the poll tax. If the Secretary of State for Scotland does not recognise that, it is time he went, and took the poll tax with him.

6.20 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): It is clear from what we have heard in the debate from my hon. Friends and from Opposition Members that there is no quick fix for the difficult and intransigent problem of the community charge. Hon. Members who visited Ribble Valley during the by-election campaign will realise that the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Carr) sits among us today, on the Liberal Bench, for one reason and one reason only—the community charge. Lancashire spoke with one voice, a voice that I warned my hon. Friends they were likely to hear because of the deep unpopularity of the tax in the north of England.

The people of Ribble Valley basically told the Conservative party that it has to do something about the tax, which needs fundamental change and which has to be seen to be more fair. That lesson was driven home firmly and strongly. It is interesting to note from the exit poll that, if it had been a general election, 44 per cent. would have voted Conservative, 31 per cent. would have voted Liberal Democrat and 16 per cent. would have voted Labour.

Two questions were being asked on the street. The first was: what would Labour charge under its proposals? I listened to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) with disbelief and anger, which are shared by my hon. Friends. Having said that seven out of 10 households in Britain would benefit, the hon. Gentleman told us that he has not got any figures and cannot say what the average household, living in a semi-detached house in his constituency, would pay. We are being deceived. For the hon. Gentleman to make such a statement, he must have worked out how much would be spent on local government through central Government, how much would be raised from local taxpayers, and how much Labour expected each authority to spend. If that information is available, the House and the public have a right to have sight of it so that they can evaluate it.

The second question was: what changes would the Government make to the community charge? It will take time. The hon. Member for Dagenham wants a quick fix from the Government in three months, yet it took ages for the Labour party to come up with proposals. I could count probably 10 alternatives and various policy documents

[Mr. Kenneth Hind]

before it brought forward proposals. Therefore, it is dishonest of the Labour party to expect the Conservative party to find something speedily.

There can be no substitute for the abolition of the single charge poll tax or community charge as it stands. I support its abolition. I am not ashamed to say that I voted in favour of it. At the beginning, I voted in favour of a charge of £175 per head, but I have seen the charge escalate until it is far too high for vast numbers of people. It has resulted in the erosion of the standard of living of people on low incomes.

The community charge has been destroyed by high-spending Labour councils which have used its introduction to screen vast increases in expenditure far and above the increase in inflation. They have used big increases as an excuse to help to destroy the tax. At every turn, they have worked against it to prevent it from succeeding.

Of most importance has been the effect of the tax on the public. I am not prepared to listen in my advice surgery to sad stories from constituents, some in tears, pensioners with small occupational pensions, people with young families and young people just starting work, whose standard of living and livelihood are being undermined by the tax. We must do something to help those people.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): My hon. Friend has mentioned how unfair and high the charge is. Can he confirm that it is most unfair in Lancashire, which we both represent, for a local authority to keep within the guidelines and then see the county bring in a huge increase of £80 per person per year?

Mr. Hind: I fully endorse what my hon. Friend has said.

I will support the Government this evening, because I recognise that many elements are covered in the review. The first lesson is that it is not just an examination of the structure of local government finance. The Government must examine the whole of local government and decide on its structure. If there is to be more than one tier, they must decide which services will be provided for the public by each tier. That will take time. Royal commissions and previous inquiries which made recommendations about local government reorganisation all took time. Allied to the review of local government structure is a need to examine local government taxation.

The Opposition have talked about interim measures. The clearest interim measure that has been introduced is the community charge reduction scheme. In my constituency, 30,000 of 40,000 households will benefit from the scheme. Every household which paid rates of £600 in 1989-90 will benefit. They include pensioners, single people, people on low incomes and single-parent families—the very people my hon. Friends want to do all they can to assist.

My right hon. and hon. Friends who are reviewing the community charge must consider the structure of local government and decide how much central Government should put in. We have heard justified criticism that the amount put into local government by central Government has been reduced since 1979. By giving benefit to community charge payers through transitional relief and the community charge reduction scheme, the Government are giving money back to local government.

The starting point is how much central Government will give to subsidise local government, and how they will raise it. Will it be raised by indirect taxation, by direct taxation or by taking a service such as education out of local government and putting it under central Government? I do not necessarily support a change in the funding of education, but such measures have to be examined carefully.

Those factors have to be taken into account before the Government consider capital value rates, a local income tax or a property tax plus income tax. From what I heard on the doorsteps, I remind the hon. Member for Ribble Valley that the people there did not vote for an increase in income tax of 8p in the pound to get rid of the community charge. They voted against the community charge, and they voted against the Government that brought it in; they did not vote for the Liberal Democrats or for their proposals. Do not let anyone go away from here thinking that they did.

I ask my right hon. Friends to ensure that their new tax, whatever it is, is based on three overwhelmingly important principles. It must be easy to collect; it is monstrous that we are asking people to pay this year for last year's non-payers. It must be seen to be fair. It must reflect the ability of the payer to meet the bill; ability to pay is paramount. The public will support any proposals that meet those criteria. With all due respect to the hon. Member for Ribble Valley, I am sure that, if my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) gets his proposal right, we shall be sitting on the Government Benches after the next general election.

6.30 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I should like to add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Carr) on his maiden speech. It is never an easy task, and it was delivered on a day when we are debating a subject which has aroused a good deal of heat and which, since the beginning of the afternoon, has also begun to reveal a little light as well. Not one hon. Member has yet spoken in favour of either the principle or the practice of the poll tax.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): A number of us were not called.

Mr. Blunkett: An hon. Member on the Conservative Benches has said that he was not called. It is a great shame, because we on the Opposition Benches want to hear what Government Members want to say in defence of the poll tax. We are pleased to hear that these hon. Members want to make their voices well and truly heard, because I must tell the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) that appeals to us to abandon the poll tax as a key domestic political issue for the general election are a little rich.

This shambles is not of our making. This fiasco did not emerge from the Labour party. It was invented and implemented by hon. Members on the Government Benches. They voted it through—I accept that the hon. Member for Christchurch did his best to vote for amendments and alternatives that were rejected out of hand. Those opportunities were given and were not taken, so we are in our present position entirely because the Conservative leadership continued, against all advice and

all the evidence placed before them year after year—not over the past few months—to argue in favour of the poll tax.

Conservative leaders said that it was fair, that it would work, that it would bring accountability. They said that it would change the way in which local government operated. I expect that not one of the hon. Members on the Government Front Bench tonight will have the temerity to defend the tax. What we have seen over the past few weeks is a display and an acknowledgement of incompetence and indecision. What a set of clowns we have in the Government—a face for every day, a different answer for every journalist and a different head to stand on every time we kick the feet from under them.

Everything that happens is a shambles. Resignations are in the offing, although so far we know only about Parliamentary Private Secretaries of whom no one has ever heard; but no doubt change will come. Hippocratic oaths have been swallowed by the bucketful. Ministers who have defended the poll tax find themselves in untenable positions. Ministers who have talked about abolishing the rates have talked about doing away with the

"terrible unfairness that afflicted us".

Also:

"Rates were about as fair and rational as Russian roulette."

We have even heard the classic statement:

"the level of rates bore no relation to council spending".

The poll tax, of course, bears no relation either.

The coup de grace was:

"A return to the rates plus revaluation!"

It is a cynical about-turn which would leave anybody speechless. I hope that the Minister of State, who made those statements in a press release on 11 October last year, will stand up tonight to break his Trappist vows and agree that what he said is no longer tenable; he will therefore have to admit that there is a decision that some remaining poll tax will be seen alongside a new property tax, or else the position that he finds himself in, given his honourable and ideological defence of the poll tax, will lead him to resign. He has no alternative. Every statement that he has made has ridiculed the rates and a property tax. He is an honourable man and believes in what he is saying; I think that he will find that his position has become untenable.

So let us be clear: nobody who has spoken—I agree that there are others on the Government Benches who have not been called—has spoken in favour of the poll tax or of retaining any part of it, but Ministers are in a difficulty of their own making, because the simple answer to their dilemma is to accept our alternative.

There is only a certain number of options. We know that because, without the benefit of the civil service and its computer facilities, we went through them night after night, weekend after weekend. My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and I trawled through them, sometimes without even the benefit of a calculator to help us do the job, but in the simple knowledge that, if 28 million people had lost under the poll tax, it did not take a genius to see that 70 per cent. of families would gain by going back to a rating system, especially one which was made fairer, and especially with all the money poured into it that has been poured into the present system by the Government.

We know that, under our system, the abolition of the poll tax will begin immediately to bring relief. We must ask what sort of changes we need to make it fair, progressive and acceptable. We must therefore ask questions about the nature of the property tax that is to be introduced.

What sort of valuation system will we have? Is it to be a floor tax, where occupants of large terraced houses pay more than those of a small penthouse suite, where those living in penury pay more than Lady Porter or some hon. Members on the Government Benches? What an absurdity. In any case, people would start building false walls in their houses to reduce the space. Or we might have a different system, under which people went round the outside of the house with a tape measure. What about a bedroom tax, with people getting a do-it-yourself kit to knock down dividing walls?

Mr. Adley: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) for one or two kind things that he said about my speech. He is having a bit of fun, like his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham, knocking down propositions that have not been put up, except in certain organs of the press. Does he not agree with me that what the country wants is a bit of co-operation across the party divide on this?

If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has, as he has done yet again today, invited the Labour party to participate, will not the time shortly arrive when the Labour party will reckon that it has quite properly rubbed the noses in the dirt of those who can see nothing but glory from the community charge, and that we should now work together to try to find a solution to this problem? Will he please soon drop his preconditions for working, all of us, together as Members?

Mr. Blunkett: We have only one precondition—that the Government say that they will abolish the poll tax and settle for the only alternative, the only one that can remove the poll tax in the next three years. My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham spelled it out clearly this afternoon. There are no alternatives to what we propose which would not mean the poll tax remaining for a substantial period, with impossible problems of tax collection and mounting debt.

Already today, the Audit Commission has told us something scandalous—that 7·5 million people have had summonses laid against them for non-payment in the past 12 months. Those 7·5 million people have been made to feel, and to be, criminals because of this tax. That is a scandal for any Government.

There is no easy way out. By all means let the Government apologise to the British people and ask their forgiveness for the money which has been spent on their behalf in trying to make the tax work. But they should not ask the Opposition somehow to hold out a hand and say: "We forgive you. We will abandon our general election pledges in order to make sure that you win at the polls." What nonsense. What a farce.

That all started when the Secretary of State made his great announcement. He stood at the Dispatch Box and asked the Opposition to capitulate and allow the Government to be forgiven by the British electorate for all the pain, misery, cuts in services and deprivations that the Government have inflicted on them as a result of adopting the principle of a flat rate tax.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blunkett: No, I shall not give way. I want to continue my speech by dealing with the form of valuation.

Only a few valuation proposals are workable. Capital values are workable, but they were ridiculed by Conservative Members, who described them as a roof tax. They said—wrongly, in most cases—that capital values would crucify people in the south of England. They said that their own voters in the marginal seats of the south-east would be irrevocably damaged by capital values. We have it in writing from Conservative Members right across the spectrum.

We are left with one other option—graduated rateable values. That happens to be close to my heart, because I played a significant part in suggesting it. It is not clever; it is just common sense. A number of key valuation factors are put together, and if the professional valuers agree that they can be weighted correctly and say that it will work, common sense says, adopt that option. The only reason the Government will not adopt it is because the Opposition already have. It is as simple as that. Anything that the Government cobble together will be a dog's dinner.

Mr. Bowis: One point that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) made clear in his interview in the *New Statesman and Society*, although he was described as saying it "unguardedly", was that the Labour party's policy

"will pauperise millions of people."

Can the hon. Gentleman tell us today who those millions are who will be pauperised, so that we can pass on the glad tidings to them?

Mr. Blunkett: We agree with the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), who has had a sudden about-turn on the workability of the poll tax; suggesting that an extension of rebates and the ability to pay a property tax makes some sense. He has adopted it as a philosophy for making the poll tax work. Having rejected banding and progressivity, he now believes in it; and we believe in it in terms of a sensible and workable property tax.

But there is one other solution which the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) has advocated—total transfer. The Secretary of State for Wales calls it a pool tax. Conservative Members are welcome to dive into it if they wish. A variation on it which has been mooted is to transfer teachers' pay, further education, police and the fire service. The cost of that would be £6·5 billion.

I do not know whether the £5 billion for which the Secretary of State is asking is part of that, but where will that £6·5 billion come from? Where has the £8 billion to £10 billion come from which has already been spent on introducing, setting up and operating the poll tax, dealing with non-collection and extending the community charge reduction scheme? That money is not available for services to protect the elderly, children in school or those in need, or to extend the rebate system to make it fair and equitable and based on ability to pay. That money has been spent on a system adopted to keep the Government in office. That is what has happened during the past two or three years.

It is clear, and the British people will recognise, that the amount that has been spent is a scandal. The Government have squandered our money in an act of gross negligence and culpable, indictable incompetence. If the voters were shareholders, they would have sacked the board long ago. If the voters were the Audit Commission, they would have surcharged and disqualified the Cabinet long ago. When the voters are voters, they will eject those who squandered their money and inflicted the pain and misery of the poll tax on them, and they will swiftly vote in a Labour Government who will abolish the poll tax.

6.45 pm

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. Michael Portillo): I congratulate the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Carr) on his maiden speech. I echo the tribute paid to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), particularly for paying such a generous tribute to his predecessor. He took us on a tour of his constituency, but I am bound to say that for many of us it was superfluous because so many of us have visited his constituency in recent times.

As the hon. Gentleman spoke, I was reminded that his constituency has two districts, both of which struggle with Labour-controlled Lancashire, a vastly overspending county. The difference is that Ribble Valley, a Conservative-controlled authority, still manages to set a community charge which is £41 less than that set by Preston, a Labour-controlled authority.

The hon. Gentleman explained why it was urgent for him to make his maiden speech so early. I entirely accept his explanation, or one might have thought that he was trying to get his speech in fast for fear that he would not be here for long. All I will say to him is that, with all my heart, I wish him a very late general election.

I begin by talking about the timetable which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has set out. My right hon. Friend has said consistently from the beginning of the review of local government finance, structure and functions that we want to narrow the options by about the beginning of April. There has been no change in that. That has consistently been the Government's position. However, what might not have been expected is that, during our review, we have already taken the important decision to introduce the community charge reduction scheme.

I can genuinely say—I have the figures to prove it—that the community charge reduction scheme benefits seven out of 10 households in many constituencies. I suspect that, in Ribble Valley, close on seven out of 10 households benefit. I have the figures to prove that, and I am not afraid to produce them. My figure of seven out of 10 benefiting is a genuine figure, whereas the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) could in no way back up his sham figure of seven out of 10 benefiting from his plan.

The community charge reduction scheme will give hundreds of pounds off to people who live in low rateable value properties, and those properties are to be found in every constituency. Next year, what they will be paying in community charge will be approximately their old rates bill plus £104 for a couple, plus the difference between this year's and next year's community charge. As my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) said so eloquently and correctly, many families will be paying very much less in their community charge in the coming year than they are paying this year.

Sir Timothy Raison: The reduction scheme has been of enormous value, but as it will be some time before we have a major new reform, will my hon. Friend acknowledge that one group of people still suffering considerable hardship are those who did not pay rates? They are mainly young,

they are now paying the community charge, and they get no relief. There is real hardship, particularly when one or other member of the family is not working.

Mr. Portillo: It has been a matter of priorities, and we thought that the most important thing was to bring relief to those people who might be retired, whose rates bills were low and whose community charge bills turned out to be higher, particularly those who live in Labour-controlled authorities where the community charges have been set at such a high level.

My hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne wanted to know whether we were considering structure and functions as well as finance. I can reassure him on that point. We are considering all three matters.

Early in the debate, the Labour party was graced with a speech by the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond), who said that, in the past, many people did not disagree with the rates. The hon. Gentleman is entitled to that view, but I should point out that his hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) has said that Labour agrees that the rates system was flawed, and that his right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) described rates as the most unjust of all taxes. If the hon. Gentleman has a different opinion, he is in disagreement with his own party.

I was pretty impatient when the hon. Member for Dagenham talked about the suffering of people who are unable to pay the community charge. Like me, the hon. Gentleman knows that in many places the reason for the inability to pay is precisely that Labour authorities have been so profligate and have set such high community charges.

I shall give some examples. Last May, there was a change in control in a number of places. In Ealing, where the Conservatives gained control, the community charge was reduced by 9 per cent.; in Southend, where the Conservatives gained control, the community charge was cut by 17 per cent. In Bradford, where Labour gained control, the community charge went up by 32 per cent.; in Kirklees, where Labour took control, the community charge went up by 31 per cent.; in Merton, where Labour took control, the community charge went up by a staggering 47 per cent. People have had their just reward for voting for the Labour party.

Mr. Gould: The Minister put Ealing at the top of his list. He above all others will know that Ealing has had the benefit of a gift of £5 million from his Department and has put up rents by no less than £28 a week. Does he stand by that sort of performance?

Mr. Portillo: The performance to which the hon. Gentleman alludes is the performance of the Labour administration from which we have just taken over, and the people of Ealing know that perfectly well.

Let me repeat a point that I have made again and again. Whatever the system of local government finance, the situation will always be the same. The Conservatives will always offer good, efficient local government and will be able to set lower community charges—indeed, lower taxes of any sort. By contrast, the Labour party will always drive up the community charge, as, previously, it drove up the rates, pauperising people.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): In my constituency, the Tory-controlled Broadland district council held its community charge this year, whereas Labour-controlled Norwich city council allowed its charge to rise to such an extent that it has been announced today that the authority will be capped. Does not that show that it is Labour-controlled councils that impose high community charges?

Mr. Portillo: When I was in Norwich on Monday evening, I heard precisely that story about the contrast between Labour and Conservative authorities. It is a contrast that would exist whatever the system of local government finance was in force.

There is another way in which Labour has pushed up the community charge.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart) *rose*——

Mr. Portillo: As the hon. Gentleman has not been present, I shall not give way to him.

The Labour party has pushed up the community charge through non-payment. We have often drawn attention to the 28 or 30 Labour Members who have signed early-day motions in favour of non-payment. Today, I can add the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran), who told a meeting of civil servants:

"A number of my colleagues have refused to pay, and I support them in every way."

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) said:

"I want the Labour party to lead a non-payment campaign."

Most tellingly of all, a Labour party newspaper carried an advertisement headed, "Don't register; don't pay". Thus, apparently, the Labour party officially supports non-payment of the community charge.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Portillo: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, who, I believe, supports non-payment.

Mr. Nellist: As the Minister is so keen on facts and figures, would he like to comment on a reply that was given to the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) on 26 February?

The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment—the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key)—referring to the average poll tax in England for 1990-91, said, as reported in column *421*, "It was £357." When asked what the average poll tax would be were the Government this year to give the same amount, in real terms, in support of local councils as was given in 1979, the Under-Secretary said that it would be £152. Is it not a fact that the biggest non-payers are the Government, who are failing to pay £205 for every person in this country? That is why services are so poor and poll tax figures so high.

Mr. Portillo: Almost the biggest non-payer in the country that I can think of is the hon. Gentleman himself. He has asked his constituents who are not as well off as he is to pay what he is not paying. Even at today's level of Government support for local authorities, there are Conservative authorities that are able to set community charges below the amount that the hon. Gentleman has just mentioned. In Wandsworth, the figure is £136. It happens to be that community charge that the hon. Gentleman does not want to pay. In my opinion, that

[Mr. Portillo]

disqualifies him not only from voting in this debate but even from speaking in it. The participants in this debate ought to be willing to bear their civic responsibility.

Yesterday, I was flattered by the hon. Member for Brightside, who wasted valuable air time to call for my resignation. I felt that it represented a certain political coming of age that the Labour party should think it worth while to do so. The crime of which I stand accused is defence of Government policy. So far as the Labour party is concerned, defence of one's policy is a crime indeed. The Labour party is never willing to defend its own policies. It has made 65 changes of policy. It has had a different policy every three weeks. Even the policy that it has now lit upon is one that it is not prepared to defend.

The Leader of the Opposition, when he spoke recently at his party's local government conference, was unwilling to defend that policy, unwilling to explain it. He devoted only half a sentence in his entire speech to a reference to his party's policy. There has been no defence of that policy today, nor has there been any explanation of how much it would cost. We did not hear from the hon. Member for Dagenham what his party's system would mean for his constituents, or from the hon. Member for Brightside what it would mean for his constituents. No examples have been given.

Have the costings been done or not? During the debate, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), from a sedentary position, called out that the costings had been done. If they have been done, let the hon. Gentleman give them to us. It is no wonder that the Labour party has been entirely unwilling to join in the review. It does not want to have its policies analysed. It does not want to have its figures—which do not yet exist—scrutinised. It does not want to be exposed for the sham that it has produced.

Mr. Maxton: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Portillo: There is no point of order, and the hon. Gentleman knows it.

Mr. Maxton: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Portillo: It will be bogus.

Mr. Maxton: The Minister has not yet addressed the point that is made in the motion. The motion is, of course, about abolition of the poll tax; it is not about Labour party policy. Can the Minister, in the last two minutes, tell us whether the Government are in favour of abolishing the poll tax and introducing a property tax?

Mr. Portillo: Clearly my prediction was right: the hon. Gentleman's point of order was entirely bogus.

The Leader of the Opposition wrote a preposterous letter to the Prime Minister. The right hon. Gentleman must realise that there is no basis on which discussions could take place, as the Opposition are unwilling to produce their figures. The Opposition have contrived to produce a policy so obscure that one could not possibly know what one would pay. That is an entirely cynical approach.

The hon. Member for Brightside admitted that his party's valuations will be based on capital values, rental values, building costs and repair costs. That means that 21·5 million properties in this country will have to be valued four times over. There will have to be 86 million valuations.

The Labour party has failed us today. It has proposed the abolition of the community charge, but it has no clearly worked out alternative. It refuses to discuss what its policy will be. During a general election, it will not be enough to wave a blank sheet of paper at the electorate. Some answers will be needed, and the cynicism of Labour's position will be exposed.

The Government will produce their conclusions very soon. The review is on schedule. The first result, the community charge reduction scheme, is already in place, and that will produce benefits totalling hundreds of pounds for millions of people. With the review on schedule, and with this early result from it, I ask my hon. Friends to join me in supporting the amendment.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 189, Noes 331.

Division No. 94] **[7 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Ilsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey

Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Martyn Jones.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carr, Michael
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard

Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'caster)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 273, Noes 24.

Division No. 95] **[7.14 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Mariand, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony

Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beith, A. J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Douglas, Dick
Fearn, Ronald
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Livsey, Richard
Maclennan, Robert
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Wallace, James
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Malcolm Bruce and
Mr. Andrew Welsh.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the fact that the Government is undertaking a thorough review of local government finance, structure and functions; looks forward to a statement when that review has reached the appropriate stage; and in the meantime notes that, on information published to date, the average community charge actually set by local authorities in England will be £393, and welcomes the generous provision made by the Government, by way of the community charge reduction scheme, community charge benefit and income support, the combined effect of which will be to reduce the average net charge actually payable next year to under £275.

Family Hardship

7.25 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to move,

That this House notes the increasing financial pressure families are facing due to the Government-created recession; further notes that low-income families are now hit hardest of all by record house repossessions, fast rising unemployment, service cutbacks caused by the poll tax, and widespread benefit deductions; and calls on the Government to adopt a Budget strategy that will tackle poverty rather than penalise it and in particular to increase child benefit to £9·55 per week per child and pensions by an extra £5 per week for a single pensioner and £8 per week for a married couple, to cut interest rates, and to abolish the poll tax.

Although almost every family has been hit hard by higher interest rates, higher mortgages and higher inflation in this Government-created recession, low-income families have been hit hardest of all by record home repossessions, fast-rising unemployment, service cuts caused by the poll tax, and widespread compulsory reductions of benefit.

The Government's role in a recession should be to protect people from its worst ravages and to overcome it. In fact, the Government have done the reverse. They laid the foundations for the recession, aggravated people's experience of it, and are now blocking their escape.

Recently, home repossessions have been running at the unprecedented rate of nearly 45,000 a year, and the figure will climb even higher this year. The Government pressured people, through hefty discounts and right-to-buy schemes, into home ownership—which families on low incomes can ill afford—and then pulled the rug on them with their own policies.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer insisted on using interest rates exclusively to control the excess demand that he had unleashed, which gratuitously forced up interest rates and mortgage repayments higher than necessary—and beyond the reach of thousands of low-paid workers.

Where low-paid workers become redundant, the Chancellor is restricting mortgage interest payments for the first four months, which will increase the number of people who are driven out of their homes.

Unemployment is being used as an economic weapon more harshly in Britain than anywhere else in the EEC—and the lowest-paid are again the main victims.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Will the hon. Gentleman list those European countries which have lower unemployment than this country?

Mr. Meacher: If the Government had not made 30 changes to benefit calculations, and therefore 30 changes to the manner in which unemployment benefit is calculated, Britain would probably already have higher unemployment than most EEC countries.

Over the past year, unemployment in the EEC grew by 0·2 per cent. overall. In France, it rose by 2·9 per cent.; Italy, 4·7 per cent.; Greece, 15 per cent., and in the United Kingdom, 16·2 per cent. In Germany, unemployment fell by 1·4 per cent.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): What is this year's figure for this country?

Mr. Meacher: It is rising extremely rapidly towards 3 million by the end of the year.

Mr. Bottomley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No. The hon. Gentleman has already made his point from a sedentary position and I answered his question.

Instead of assisting the victims of their economic mismanagement, the Government have penalised them. Ten years ago, the unemployed were entitled to earnings-related unemployment benefit. They received 100 per cent. of their rents and rates and all their mortgage interest was paid. Eighteen to 25-year-olds received adult rate benefit and 16 to 17-year-olds could claim. One-off payments were available for those on supplementary benefit for necessities such as cookers and beds. Even if someone lost a job because of a row with his employer, the penalty was limited to six weeks reduction of unemployment benefit.

A decade later, earnings-related unemployment benefit has been abolished; housing benefit no longer covers the full market rent; 20 per cent. of the poll tax must be paid; mortgage interest payments are restricted; and single payments have largely been replaced by loans.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I will give way in a moment. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is embarrassed by the length of the list. Eighteen to 25-year-olds now receive a lower rate of benefit than adult benefit and most 16 to 17-year-olds receive nothing at all. If an employer claims, however unfairly, that someone left a job unnecessarily, the Government stop unemployment benefit and cut income support by 40 per cent. for six months. The result of all that for tens of thousands of low-paid and average-paid workers is a spiral from unemployment to poverty and destitution.

Mr. Mans: Am I right in thinking, therefore, that the Labour party will reinstate earnings-related unemployment benefit? Is he going to give earnings-related benefit to those yuppies who have been made unemployed in the City after earning £100,000 a year?

Mr. Meacher: That was an interesting comment which we will recall before the general election. The hon. Gentleman suggests that people who are entitled to earnings-related benefit are yuppies. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I will answer in my own way. The people to whom I was referring were entitled to earnings-related unemployment benefit because they had paid for it through their national insurance stamps. A private insurance company that removed an entitlement gratuitously and one-sidedly would certainly be taken to court for breach of contract.

Growing cuts in local services are another feature of the deepening recession. Again, the families on the lowest incomes are hit hardest because they depend most on those services. I quote a few examples of cuts being made this year. Tory-controlled Berkshire county council must make £7·5 million of cuts to avoid capping. Those cuts include £1 million in social services involving reduced staffing in elderly person's homes, the closure of a sheltered workshop, increased home care charges and community service cuts, including major ones in library services, and the closure of a youth and community centre.

Tory-controlled Ealing must make £10 million-worth of service cuts to cut its poll tax. Those involve the closure of two homes for the elderly, reduced spending on meals on wheels and an end to child care allowances for staff.

Tory-controlled Hillingdon must make budget cuts of £23 million to fulfill the Tory party manifesto pledge on the poll tax. Those cuts include the closure of a showpiece school with special facilities for handicapped children, an end to the school meals service and increased charges in a range of services for the elderly.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I think that I know what point the hon. Gentleman wants to make, and I will probably make it for him if he will be patient for a moment.

Tory-controlled Warwickshire must make £500,000 worth of cuts in social services, with further possible social services cuts of £1 million to avoid capping. Last, but not least, Westminster council—as ever, Tory-controlled—must make cuts of almost £1 million in the social services budget, including proposals to increase home help charges and close two holiday homes, a residential care home and two play groups.

The evidence is consistent around the country, as the report of the Association of Directors of Social Services shows, and I would be the first to admit that it applies in Labour-controlled as well as Tory-controlled areas. The poll tax has become the juggernaut for the destruction of local social services. It was the Government's own flagship creation, and its victims are overwhelmingly the elderly, the disabled, lone parents and the unemployed.

Mr. Hayes: The hon. Gentleman has been good enough to be honest with the House. He knows that there are difficulties with some Labour-controlled authorities, of which Lambeth is an example. True to form, the hon. Gentleman said that it was all due to the wicked Tory poll tax. The name Joan Twelves might just ring bells for the hon. Gentleman. She is the leader of Lambeth council and she said:

> "Even if Labour wins the general election, no one in Lambeth can have any illusions that an incoming Labour Government is the cavalry riding to the council's rescue. It is more than clear that no additional resources will be available."

That was a quote not from the Tory press, but from Joan Twelves, the Labour leader of Lambeth council. Is she wrong or right?

Mr. Meacher: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has not read our report entitled "Fair Rates". I should be happy to send him a copy and I am sure that after today's debate Conservative Members will read that document most carefully. The document proposes, among other things, a change in the balance of the costing of local government finance between Exchequer grants in the centre and the local raising of finance. It is precisely for those reasons that hard-hit local authorities such as Lambeth can, under our fair rates system, expect significant assistance.

Support services that are often crucial to keeping a family afloat have been shut. Personal and family budgets have also been cut drastically because of rising indebtedness. The latest figures show that one household

in 20 now has rental debts. At the end of 1990, 159,000 owner-occupier households had mortgage arrears. In 1979 the figure was 8,000. There has been a twentyfold increase.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No, I want to make progress, because I have a lot to say.

In 1979, 2,500 homes were repossessed. At the end of 1990, 44,000 were repossessed. That is a seventeenfold increase. Perhaps most serious of all, in 1989, the year for which the latest figures are available, 2 million households had problems repaying debt including more than 500,000 with serious problems involving arrears to creditors that were more than three months outstanding.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I will give way later.

Now, 18 months later, the number of families crippled by debt will be significantly higher. Those on the lowest incomes are hit even harder. They often have the biggest debts and the smallest incomes to meet them. Income support is now only one eighth of national average earnings, yet the Government have taken powers to reduce it further by compulsory deductions of benefit.

Of the miserable sum of £37·60 a week, which, as I said in a previous debate, is the figure for income support for a single adult, something of which no Minister was aware, up to 15 per cent. can now be deducted for housing, gas, electricity or water debts, and up to another 10 per cent. can be deducted for current liabilities for the same items.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I am finishing my point. In addition, the Secretary of State has laid it down that another 5 per cent. can be deducted for social fund loan repayments and that a further 5 per cent. can be deducted for poll tax arrears. For those two items alone, for which the right hon. Gentleman himself is directly responsible, according to his own estimates, in the current year 1·25 million claimants are being forced to live below the income support poverty line—a situation that previous Governments had never even countenanced, let alone engineered.

However, the right hon. Gentleman proposes to go even further. He is about to introduce a Bill to allow another 5 per cent. to be compulsorily deducted from an unemployed father on income support for payment of child maintenance. The Home Secretary proposes that yet another 5 per cent. can be deducted from income support for payment of a fine. Frankly, the right hon. Gentleman can pay himself the tribute that none of his predecessors ever received—income support, which used to be the sacrosanct safety net below which nobody would ever fall, is now so riddled with holes that the principle of protected poverty line income has all but disappeared.

The previous Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore), liked to tell us that poverty did not really exist. The present Secretary of State has clearly taken him at his word and virtually abolished the poverty line.

Mr. Sayeed: The hon. Gentleman will know that the previous Labour Government cut support to the family by nearly 8 per cent. in real terms. Why should anyone trust the Labour party to assist families in future?

Mr. Meacher: We continued to increase the value of child benefit throughout our period in government. It is amazing that a Conservative Member could be so foolish as to suggest that his Government's record on family support is not appalling. During the previous election, the Government said that they would continue to pay child benefit, but, with utter cynicism, they froze it a few months after the election. They have kept it frozen, with the one exception of an increase for the eldest child.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No, I shall not give way.

We hold the Government guilty on three counts. First, they generated the recession in the first place by their own gross economic mismanagement. Secondly, for all the reasons that I set out, they have gratuitously and deliberately placed the brunt of the hardship that their recession has caused on the most vulnerable and helpless group in society. Thirdly, they are now blocking the escape routes that families are seeking out of the predicament which they, the Government, have caused. I intend to pursue that third charge.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: As the hon. Lady is extremely persistent, I shall give way before I make my next main point.

Miss Nicholson: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that his mortgage statistics are somewhat flawed? The fact that there are now 3·5 million more home-owners means that the percentage rise must be set in a much larger context. More than 98·3 per cent. of people with mortgages are not in serious arrears. In 1990, fewer than half of 1 per cent. of all mortgagors had their homes repossessed.

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Lady is certainly well equipped with statistics which she has learnt by heart. However, perhaps she would be good enough to recognise that 159,000 people in mortgage arrears is unprecedentedly bad. There has never been a time since the war, when home ownership was lower, when anything like that number of people has mortgage arrears. The number of people with severe mortgage arrears who are being turned out of their homes is 44,000. I hope that the hon. Lady accepts that the Government have forced 44,000 people out of their homes. Is not that a disgraceful record?

Miss Nicholson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No, I shall not give way. I wish to make many further points.

What families on the breadline want is work, but the Government are not only rapidly pushing up unemployment as the main regulator of demand because they refuse to make any use of credit controls, they are—it is almost unbelievable folly in the pit of the recession—cutting training and enterprise council training budgets by £300 million. The Government are apparently ready to spend £16 billion this year on unemployment benefit, income

[Mr. Meacher]

support and tax forgone from the unemployed, but they are not prepared to spend a tenth of that sum on providing training to enable people to be employed.

The education training programme for the adult unemployed has been cut by more than 20 per cent. Also, 10,000 training places in the voluntary sector are now at risk, yet we are told in today's papers that the Government's latest temporary work scheme will not have any appreciable training element. Britain is the only country in the Economic Community in which youth unemployment rose last year. It rose by 17 per cent. in this country, whereas it fell by 20 per cent. in Germany, yet the Government have still not put a jot of extra money into youth training and they are still denying 16 to 17-year-olds virtually all entitlement to benefit. That is why cardboard city is still growing.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I shall give way for the last time.

Mrs. Gorman: Is not it true that the Government's policy now guarantees 16 and 17-year-olds a place in training? They do not need the benefit because they have somewhere else to go to spend their time.

Mr. Meacher: In that case, perhaps the hon. Lady would like to come along the Strand with me tonight and look under a number of bridges, in particular Waterloo bridge. She will find that hundreds of, if not a few thousand, young people are sleeping rough. That is a direct result of the Government's policy.

In terms of benefits, the Government are making it harder, not easier, to return to work. For example, I refer to the £43 a week means test on unemployment benefit which the right hon. Gentleman imposed last year. If a part-time worker now works for one or more days a week, he or she loses a whole week's benefit. That is a major disincentive to people taking up part-time work.

The unemployment trap actually sharpened last year. The Government's own document on expenditure plans for social security, which was published last month, shows that more people now lose 50p to 99p in every extra pound they earn this year than they did last year. Family credit is the Government's flagship policy for getting the low-paid back into work, but it is now emerging as the biggest hype of the decade.

That same report shows that, despite costly advertising, only 50 per cent. of those entitled actually claimed. That percentage is no higher than it was for family income supplement. It shows that it still takes three days longer to get family credit than it took to get family income supplement. It shows also that the family credit error rate is four times higher than it was for family income supplement.

Mr. Thurnham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I shall not give way again.

Mr. Thurnham: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman said earlier that he would give way to me later. He now says that he will not give way.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): It is not a matter for the Chair whether the hon. Member gives way.

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) will have to be quicker off the mark in future. I have given way so many times that it is in the general interest of the House that I should make progress.

Ministers are making it clear that they have no use for or are even opposed to a family policy to help people out of recession. The Minister of State, Home Office, the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold), gave an interview this month to the "Family Policy Bulletin", which is published by the Family Policies Study Centre. The article states:

> Asked if . . . there was no need for a Government family policy, she replied that there was 'a great deal of truth' to the suggestion."

The article went on to state:

> "Despite acknowledging the need for an expansion of childcare to help women who wished to combine motherhood with a job, she said she did not mind Britain lagging behind its European partners in publicly funded provision."

The right hon. Lady also stated—I stress that these are her actual words:

> "I am antipathetic to the notion that there should be universal access to child care:—'creches for all'. It simply exacerbates the trend that we have had of seeing that it is possible if you've got responsibilities to put them on to the state."

The Minister displays an extraordinary degree of blindness or indifference to the problems of families who are struggling on the poverty line. Obviously, she has not read the National Audit Office report, "Support for Low Income Families", which was published six weeks ago. it said that half of all income support claimants who were interviewed cited the need to look after children as the barrier to finding full-time work. Nor has the right hon. Lady read the previous report of the National Audit Office, which pointed out that the Government were undermining their pretensions to helping parents to work by refusing to allow claimants to offset their child care costs against earnings and by running down child care provision.

However, I am glad that the right hon. Lady then had the grace to express support for raising child benefit, but she added,

> "as and when the country can afford it".

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South) *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: No. I shall not give way, because I wish to answer what the Minister of State said.

As the Secretary of State has direct responsibility for both these actions, perhaps he can explain how he can afford £1·3 billion for bribing people to take out highly speculative personal pensions, yet he cannot afford to spend half that sum to restore the real value of child benefit after his four-year freeze——

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that very point?

Mr. Meacher: No. I am not interested in the hon. Gentleman. I am interested in the Secretary of State, who is responsible for these policies. If the right hon. Gentleman wishes to answer, I shall give way, but he does not need a nanny.

How can the Secretary of State pretend to have a family policy until he has an answer to my question about priorities? I should be very glad if he could answer me now.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I shall just say one thing now to the hon. Gentleman, because there are several points that I should like to make in my speech. As I said in my uprating statement, a family policy does not concern itself only with families with children—as the hon. Gentleman so often implies—important though they are. Families consist of elderly relatives, pensioners and disabled people and involve a whole range of responsibilities. Anybody in my position needs to look across the board to balance the help and support that he gives.

Mr. Meacher: I could not agree more. In that case, why have the Government given such a bum deal to the pensioners, the disabled, lone parents and all those who depend on benefits? All those groups, especially pensioners, have faced a huge erosion in their benefits, to the tune of £22 billion, as we have said before in similar debates. I notice that the right hon. Gentleman cannot answer the question that I put to him.

Mr. Mans: The hon. Gentleman did not answer mine.

Mr. Meacher: As higher child benefit is a major way of helping more lone parents back into work, I am sure that Mrs. Sandra Cocking from Dewsbury, whose letter I have with me, would be extremely interested in the Secretary of State's answer. She stated:

"I am writing to you for information and help"—

[Interruption.] I see that the right hon. Gentleman is getting some help from other sources and I am glad of it because he needs some assistance in this debate.

The letter continued:

"I am a single parent of three children and work 25 hours a week as a receptionist at B.R.B. Batley, West Yorkshire.

I have always tried to support myself and my three children, but when you try to help yourself today, you end up worse off."

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will the hon. Gentleman give way about child benefit?

Mr. Meacher: No, I am not giving way. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] I have made it perfectly clear that I shall not give way again, except to the Secretary of State.

That lady then gives a summary of her weekly income, both when working and unemployed. It shows that she is about £15 a week worse off when working. When will the Government ever learn that the biggest disincentive to lone parents returning to work is the Government and their failure to motivate a major extension of child care provision throughout the country and to provide for some offset against what are often otherwise prohibitive child care costs?

If the Government are not prepared to assist people who are making efforts to overcome their own problems in a recession that the Government have foisted on them, at least they should not actively hinder them.

I have with me another letter, a copy of which I have sent to the Secretary of State. This is from Mrs. Dundon of Sherwood, Nottingham, and speaks volumes about the problems that I have encountered in my constituency clinic and which other hon. Members have no doubt encountered, too. Mr. Dundon lost his job after an accident. After he visited his local DSS office in Nottingham on 4 February, he was denied sickness benefit 10 days later because he had 13 stamps missing. Part of the letter states:

"In the meantime he was told he would have to go to Income Support and make a claim with them. He did that on Friday 15th Feb, everything was explained to them, they got in touch with Sickness Benefit, then my husband was told that Income Support would be paying me through Sickness Benefit, his pay day would be a Tuesday, and he would be paid on 19th Feb . . . On Tuesday when the money did not come, my husband rang the DHSS and was told that he would have to wait 14 days for anything."

It would mean that that family would have waited a month after the original claim.

Mrs. Dundon's letter continued:

"My husband explained that we could not wait, because we had two children ages 9 and 7 years and that there would be nothing for them coming home from school to eat. He was told that this was his problem and to ring back at 2 pm. Then he rang"——

the letter names the man whom he rang—

"dealing with lost N.I. stamps who put him through to someone else. He ahd to explain everything to this person about his N.I. stamps, what was said at his interview on Friday 15th at Income Support. He was told to hang on, then he was asked his date of birth and N.I. number, then was left to hang on again and then told that they would ring him back by 2 pm. No one had called, so once again my husband rang back. When he explained that we had been waiting for a phone call, he was told that no one in the office said they would ring him. He then said, 'I was also told this morning to ring back at 2 pm. Can I speak to whoever is dealing with my claim?' The answer was 'No'. He said 'Can I speak to the supervisor?' 'No'. 'Can I speak to the manager?' 'No'. 'Well then, can you tell me who I am speaking to now?' 'No', and then the phone was slammed down on him. He was so frustrated by this time, he rang back again. He asked if he could speak to who ever was dealing with his claim. We don't know if it was the same girl or not, but she said that there was a managers' meeting and that the man who was dealing with his claim was at the meeting. My husband then said, 'Why couldn't you have told me this morning instead of asking me to ring back at 2 pm?' This girl replied, 'We don't have to tell you anything, ring back at 3.30 pm he might be here by then.' Again, my husband asked who he was speaking to and the phone was slammed down on him."

I entirely understand the strain and stress on those staff. They are undertrained and overworked. However, before I am told that that was an isolated case, I should point out that the National Audit Office report, published six weeks ago, found from its survey of 52 offices that such disquieting conditions were widespread. Errors in social security payments were twice as high as the Government had previously claimed. Public satisfaction with the service offered by benefit offices had fallen. Half the poorest claimants did not understand how their benefit was calculated. Perhaps hon. Members will be surprised that as many as half actually do understand it. Only one in 10 offices met the desirable standards for claims work. That is a damning indictment of the Government's modernisation programme on which no less than £2 billion has now been spent.

I conclude by repeating that we indict the Government on three counts. They created the recession by their economic incompetence; they made the weakest and most vulnerable families their main victims; and they are now blocking those families in their best endeavours to escape the hardship into which the Government have cast them. It is not only Mr. and Mrs. Dundon but millions of others who have experienced at first hand this Government's so-called policy on family hardship who now think that they should go.

7.59 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the question and to add instead thereof:

'notes that the policies of the last Labour Government pushed inflation to an all-time peak of 27 per cent., destroying savings and eroding living standards for millions of families and that Her Majesty's Opposition remains committed to policies which would once again sharply raise taxation and inflation; and commends Her Majesty's Government's record in creating new jobs, in widening opportunities for home ownership, in directing additional help to low-income families, and in bringing about an increase of one-third in the real take-home pay of a family on average earnings; and reaffirms its support for the Government's priority in fighting inflation.'.

Before I go any further, I hope that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) will understand that there is no way in which I can comment on the individual cases that he raised, although, of course, I shall ensure that they are looked into.

There are some things for which affection grows with familiarity, but the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, West is not one of them. It is simply boringly predictable in the overheated, overstated and unrecognisable picture——

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): The Secretary of State always says that.

Mr. Newton: I always say it because it is always true. Essentially, it is one speech, and it is always over the top. I could not understand why the hon. Member for Oldham, West was so reluctant to give way to my hon. Friends, because the evidence of anyone behind him, wishing to speak was thin indeed. The number has now increased to four, but during most of his speech only three Opposition Back-Bench Members were present for this much-trumpeted debate. That says something about the hon. Gentleman's credibility.

In replying to the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, West, the first thing that I need to do is to restore some balance to the discussion. To do that, I simply refer him to some facts. Who would have thought from listening to the hon. Gentleman that, in Britain now, a man with a family and two children on average earnings has experienced during the lifetime of this Government an increase of 31 per cent. in his real take-home pay? That compares with an increase of precisely 1 per cent. during the time of the Government of which the hon. Gentleman was a luminary.

A comparison was given by one of my hon. Friends of total family support by this Government and the previous one. Again, there was an increase under this Government and a decrease under the Government who went before them. I shall not rehearse them now, because the hon. Gentleman will think that I am being boringly repetitive, but he had heard me use before the figures on what happened to pensioners' average net incomes under this Government and under the previous Government. Their incomes have risen 10 times faster under this Government.

Above all, the hon. Gentleman knows—because it goes to his Achilles' heel and that of the people for whom he seeks to speak—what has happened to pensioners' incomes from savings under this Government. There has been a huge increase. They have more than doubled under this Government, whereas they fell under the Labour Government that went before.

Mr. Ian Bruce: I am sure that my right hon. Friend would not wish to be unkind to the Opposition Front Bench spokesman. At least on this measure, the Opposition have given a commitment—it is the only commitment in any Labour party document—to increase child benefit. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman did not want me to make that point to him.

Did my right hon. Friend read, as I did, the *Sunday Times* article written by probably one of the most knowledgeable people in the House, the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), the Chairman of the Social Services Select Committee? He said of the Labour party policy on child benefit that it was

"not the most sensible way to distribute the extra money to ensure that it reaches those most in need."

Will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that the Government will take that lesson?

Mr. Peter Bottomley *rose*——

Mr. Newton: I shall give way to my hon. Friend later.

The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South and other closely related points are matters which I intend to come to in a moment or two, but which I shall deal with in a slightly different way.

I was about to say that I would not load the House with yet more figures, because the figures that I have given, together with some of the devastating interventions of my hon. Friends in the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, West, are more than enough to expose the basic lack of credibility in the story that the hon. Gentleman sought to tell, not only when he described what has happened to families under this Government, but, perhaps even more importantly, when he suggested the benefits that a Labour Government could introduce.

We do not need to speculate about what the hon. Gentleman would do if, by some mischance, he acquired responsibility for social security. We do not need the crystal ball because we have the book—or rather, the press cuttings. It will be within the knowledge of everyone in the House that the hon. Gentleman was a Social Security Minister—I have the exact dates in front of me—from 12 June 1975 to 14 April 1976. Indeed, he was probably sitting at the side of Mrs. Barbara Castle, nodding dutifully—I hope that he was nodding dutifully, because I always like my Ministers to nod dutifully—when she explained to the House on 7 July 1975:

"Indexation of the child benefit is not appropriate."—[*Official Report*, 7 July 1975; Vol. 895, c. 238.]

The hon. Member for Oldham, West was certainly a Minister in the Department of Health and Social Security—as the Department then was—when inflation reached the record level of 26·9 per cent. in August 1975. High inflation was one reason why pensioners' savings incomes were so bad under that Government. The hon. Gentleman was at the DHSS in a period when building society savers had a negative return on their savings of 16·5 per cent. in 1975 and almost 9 per cent. in 1976. As I have already said, pensioners' average weekly savings incomes were falling. On top of everything else, the hon. Member for Oldham, West was a Social Security Minister in the year when the Christmas bonus to pensioners was cancelled in 1975. For all I know, he was the Minister who fixed that the bonus would not be paid in 1976 either, before he finally left the Department.

Mr. Meacher: As the Secretary of State is so extensive in his historical reminiscences, will he confirm to the

House that the basic state retirement pension, the most important pension to the poorest pensioners, increased by 20 per cent. in real terms in five years, under the Labour Government, whereas in 11 years under this Government, it has increased by rather less than 2 per cent.? Will he also confirm that child benefit, or family allowance as it was in the early part of the Labour Government, was increased every year, whereas in the past four years it has been frozen?

Mr. Newton: I am coming to some of the hon. Gentleman's points about child benefit. On pensions, the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the income of the great majority of pensioners is made up from a variety of sources. The Labour Government did no service to pensioners by dealing with only one element of pensioners' incomes while decimating all the others, with the results that I have explained. That is precisely what a Labour Government would do again.

Mr. Hayes: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Newton: May I complete this point before I give way to my hon. Friend?

The culmination of the hon. Gentleman's career at the DHSS may even have precipitated his departure. It is relevant to what the hon. Gentleman has just said. I have used this article before, but I shall use it again, and I shall probably use it in other debates yet. In *The Times* of 11 March 1976, there was an article entitled:

"Minister shouted down at pensions rally".

It said:

"Old-age pensioners shouted down Mr. Meacher, Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Health and Social Security, yesterday as he tried to explain the Government's record on pensions."

He has not done any better in explaining his party's policy some 15 years later.

Mr. Hayes: This is the perfect point for my intervention, as we are doing a pleasant trip down memory lane. That would not by any chance be the occasion when the hon. Member for Oldham, West was responsible for robbing pensioners of £1·2 billion by shifting from the historic to the forecasting method?

Mr. Newton: It was not quite. That was the policy that he supported in his subsequent post at the Department of Employment.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Would my right hon. Friend also like to remind the Opposition that, when Barbara Castle introduced child benefit, she was either utterly cynical or utterly stupid, because she told the House that it would target more money on poorer families?

Mr. Newton: Again, my hon. Friend is taking me to a point which I shall come to quite quickly. Perhaps I should come to it even more quickly than I had intended. I referred to the hon. Gentleman's record, but in a sense we can now see it happening again, because we have the hon. Gentleman's plans. That brings me to the extremely interesting and topical questions—from which the hon. Gentleman so notably shied away in his speech this evening—posed by the publication today of the Labour party's shadow Budget, entitled, "A budget for investment and recovery"—clearly, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has a sense of humour. I have a number of questions for the hon. Member for Oldham, West, which I hope he will answer, and I shall gladly give way if he wishes to intervene.

First, the hon. Gentleman made a little reference to the part of the motion that involves what he regards as his priority commitment to child benefit, but virtually no reference to what has hitherto been described by the Labour party as its priority commitment to increase pensions. At about 5 pm yesterday, when we saw the Labour motion, it included pensions. Some time this morning, the Labour party's entire economic team published the attractively printed document—its contents are less satisfactory—which, to all intents and purposes, makes no mention of pensions or pensioners.

What has happened? The hon. Gentleman said that the issue of pensions was one of his priorities, and one to which the Labour party was committed. That is what the motion states, but he has not referred to it. Where did that commitment go between 5 pm last night and mid-morning today?

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman is being exceedingly silly. Our commitment to pensions is exactly what it was before. We shall increase pensions by £5 a week for a single pensioner, £8 a week for a married couple, over and above the normal uprating. We shall restore the earnings link that this Government took away 11 years ago, as a result of which a single pensioner is £12·80 a week worse off and a married couple £20·50 worse off. We shall improve and restore the state earnings-related pension scheme. That defines exactly the position as it was, and that remains the position. The right hon. Gentleman should talk about the motion—Government policy on family hardship and the recession—and not make bogus points about the Opposition.

Mr. Newton: That argument is unbelievably thin. The motion calls on the Government to adopt a Budget strategy that will include the increase in child benefit, to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, and the pensions increase, to which he has not referred. The motion presents both those issues as priorities, in line with what Labour has consistently said during the past few weeks. But in Labour's stated proposals for a shadow Budget next week, the pensioners have disappeared. They have ceased to be the priority that they were——

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman is making a fool of himself.

Mr. Newton: I think not.

The pensioners have ceased to be the priority that they were in the motion tabled last night. To all intents and purposes, pensioners are not even mentioned in the document published by the Labour party's economic team this morning.

It is a slight exaggeration in one respect to say that there is no mention of pension issues in the document published this morning. It contains one fairly clear and straightforward proposal—although what elderly people will think of it, I do not know—to withdraw the subsidies on private health insurance for the elderly.

The other point on which I think the House and many people outside urgently need the hon. Gentleman's advice is that the biggest single saving in the package published this morning is the removal of what is described as the 2 per cent. personal pension incentive—that is, not the

[Mr. Newton]

ordinary, contracting-out rebate, but the additional reduction of 2 per cent. from the employees' national insurance contribution rate for those taking out personal pensions in the five years from 1988 to 1993.

The savings shown against that in the apparently carefully worked-out document published on behalf of the Labour party is more than £600 million, and makes up more than one third of the entire package. But that £600 million is not the saving from ending the incentive for new contracts from today, but the saving from tearing up the basis of all existing personal pensions—and it will be retrospective even beyond what that implies, because the refunds due to be paid in 1991-92 are payable in respect of the contributions made in the present year, which is now nearly over.

The proposal wrecks the basis of 4 million personal pensions, even to the point of withdrawing a legal entitlement that has already been gained. That involves one third of the savings presented in a package that is supposed to be balanced, and was published by Labour's economic team today. What does it mean?

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman is really having to dredge the bottom of the barrel. He is inventing, fabricating and scaremongering. The £600 million figure does not affect the 2 per cent. "bribes", as we call them —the incentive bonuses that have already been given—but simply refers to future years. We believe that we should and will honour existing contracts—there is no question about that. But the Government had absolutely no right to spend £1·3 billion on bribing people to take up personal pensions when they froze child benefit. In future, we shall certainly end that unwarranted bribe.

Mr. Newton: It is clear that there is huge confusion between what the hon. Gentleman is saying and what his shadow Treasury friends are saying. This morning, they published a document that talks about the Labour party's revenue and expenditure proposals that "could and should" be adopted in the Budget. The document continues:

"The proposals we make to raise revenue are:
End the two per cent. personal pension 'incentive'".

That is £619 million, or one third of the saving in what purports to be a balanced package. Unless there is a huge hole in the calculations published this morning, that can only mean what I have suggested it does: either the hon. Member for Oldham, West or the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East should clear up matters much more than has been done in the past few minutes, because the proposals contain a direct threat to the interests of 4 million people who have taken out personal pensions.

Mr. Meacher: Mr. Speaker—*[Laughter.]* I think that Conservative Members will be laughing on the other side of their faces when I have finished what I am about to say.

The right hon. Gentleman complained that £600 million is more than the tax relief in terms of the bribe for one year. An answer given by the Department of Social Security on 6 March this year from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, of which the Secretary of State seems totally unaware, makes it clear that incentives to schemes and personal pensions in 1989-90 totalled £0·6 billion. That was exactly the figure that we estimated. The figure we used came from the Government, and I am amazed that the right hon. Gentleman is ignorant on his own figures.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman confirms totally, and in spades, my view that the Opposition collectively do not have the foggiest notion what they are doing. I am not quarrelling with the figure, but saying that to include it in the table means that it must be taken away from existing personal pension contracts that have already been entered into. If not, the table does not mean anything at all.

Mr. Meacher: It is for the future.

Mr. Newton: It does not say that it is for the future. It says that it should be adopted "in this Budget" and is part of a package that purports to be a balancing of the savings items and expenditure items that should be in the forthcoming Budget. Either the package does not add up, which seems highly likely from what we have seen before, or it can be made to add up only by attacking existing personal pension contracts, to the disadvantage of 4 million people. If the hon. Gentleman cannot clear it up now, I hope that his hon. Friend who is winding up for the Opposition will say more about it.

Mr. Meacher: I shall certainly clear the matter up now. The right hon. Gentleman is straining to make an extraordinarily bogus point. I have made it clear that we have used the Government's own figures. They had budgeted for the incentive bonus at a rate of £600 million a year up to 1993. We say that that money should not be used for that purpose. The point is simple, but it appears to be too complicated for the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has totally missed my point. I did not query the figures—I queried the document produced by his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East. Perhaps it is significant that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is not a signatory to the motion. The document appears to make sense only if the personal pensions incentive to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, giving perfectly accurate figures, is withdrawn restrospectively. *[Interruption.]* Otherwise, the figures in the document do not make sense and are not worth the paper that they are written on.

So much for Labour's interest in pensioners. After all the rhetoric, all that the document published this morning contains is a proposal to do nothing whatever for existing pensioners and to remove something from prospective pensioners.

Some of my hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Oldham, West spoke about child benefit. What is Labour's precise proposal for the least well-off families with children, those who are on income support? The document published this morning says twice—the policy was accurately outlined by the hon. Member for Oldham, West —that the restoration of child benefit would give most help to low-income households. That document purports to contain a carefully worked out shadow Budget, but its costings show that families on income support would get precisely nothing because money would be totally clawed back.

Far from giving most help to low-income families, the proposal that is costed and published in the document would help everybody except the least well-off families on income support. That is supposed to be Labour's policy to combat poverty, if I may use the words of the motion.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend accurately describes Labour's proposals, and he knows that I disagree with them. The Labour party has changed its policy on child benefit, because it has removed £300 million from the commitment that it made in the last debate on child benefit. That is another matter that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) did not bother to mention.

Mr. Newton: That is quite clear. It is also absolutely clear from the fact that the hon. Member for Oldham, West has not sought to intervene that, on this point as on the others, there are either holes in the document published this morning—or glaring differences between the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East and the hon. Member for Oldham, West. The House and many people outside are owed an explanation about what is going on over the development and adumbration of Labour party policy. Manifestly, there are glaring inconsistencies. Perhaps we should seek to have the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East deliver the winding-up speech, so that he could explain on child benefit and on the other issues I have raised what he thinks has been included in his document, because it is quite different from what the hon. Member for Oldham, West has sought to describe as Labour policy.

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Gentleman has spent all his time attacking Labour and has made no attempt to defend his own policy. Ours is a carefully worked out Budget and nothing that the right hon. Gentleman has said has altered that by one iota. We shall increase child benefit by restoring what has been lost over the past four years and annually increasing it. That is in stark contrast to the Government's policy. The right hon. Gentleman spoke about people on income support. His argument about child maintenance is that it was an advantage for the mother to have some money from child maintenance even if that reduced pound for pound the income support that she received. It was argued that, if she managed to get into employment, that would provide a firmer base on which to extend her earnings. Exactly the same argument applies to child benefit.

Mr. Newton: It is as clear from that intervention as from the previous one that the hon. Gentleman is all over the place. It is said twice in identical words in this morning's Labour document that a restoration of child benefit, which is what the hon. Gentleman talks about, would give most help to low-income households. That is not qualified in any way. But the document's proposal for an increase in child benefit is costed to claw back the money from all those who are on income support. That proposal would do nothing for the least well-off families on income support. Will the increase in child benefit which the hon. Gentleman talks about be a gain to those on income support? The answer is that it will not.

The document talks about a policy that will give most help to low-income families, but the lowest-income families, those who are on income support, are totally excluded from any gain. *[Interruption.]* That means that the policy is not properly expressed in the document, and is thoroughly misleading. When it is widely realised that all this trumpeted stuff about child benefit entirely excludes the least well-off families, the hon. Member for Oldham, West may hear from some of his hon. Friends.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), who spoke for the Labour party in the previous child benefit debate, is not in the Chamber. Is that because his shadow Treasury team has deducted £300 million from the commitment he gave in that previous debate?

Mr. Newton: That is absolutely right, and that is why the hon. Member for Oldham, West cannot answer the question. The hon. Gentleman thinks that an impression that all families would gain from his proposal and that lower-income families would gain most is trivial. It now turns out that those on income support would not gain at all, and that is not a trivial matter. The difference is £300 million, and many people will want an explanation for that.

Mr. Thurnham: Opposition Members are beginning to realise the difficulty in which they find themselves. In "Meet the Challenge, Make the Change" Labour said that it would more than make good the loss in value. However, the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) said that they would restore it to the 1979 level. Opposition promises are withering on the vine, and they now realise that they are talking nonsense. In a study carried out in 1989, the Institute for Fiscal Studies said:

"simulations show that overwhelmingly the largest beneficiaries from an increase in Child and One-Parent Benefit would be family units in the middle and upper ranges. Those with net disposable incomes below £160 per week would gain very little."

Mr. Newton: Under the Labour party proposal, explained in the document issued this morning, least well-off families will gain nothing at all. That was not widely understood, and I am not entirely sure that those who published the document understood that they have stated either a policy that will give nothing to the least well-off or one with a £300 million hole in it. Taking this together with what I said about personal pensions earlier, my suspicion is that it has a £1 billion hole in it. It is typical of the Labour party's lack of credibility on a range of economic issues.

Because of these exchanges with the hon. Member for Oldham, West, I have taken rather——

Mr. Meacher: What about the terms of the motion?

Mr. Newton: The motion principally consists of statements about actions that the Labour party is recommending should be taken immediately to alleviate certain problems, including families in poverty. I am exploring the consistency between the motion and the speech of the hon. Gentleman, which conspicuously shied away from the second half of the motion, for reasons that have become clear.

The House and country need to know what the Labour party's policy is, whether the inconsistencies to which I have referred are clear, and whether the Opposition's policy for dealing with poverty, as described by the hon. Gentleman, is a policy from which the poorest are excluded. Unless he can tell us that I am wrong, for the hon. Gentleman to have tabled this motion last night, to have made the speech that he made this evening, and then to be forced to reveal that his policy does nothing for millions, certainly hundreds of thousands, of the least well-off families—those on income support—and with virtually no mention of pensioners, is something close to a disgrace. On that point, I rest my case.

8.31 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): In the debate we have heard what we often hear in such debates—many statistics and many facts showing the attack that has taken place on the families of Great Britain. I have a fundamental question. What is the role of the Government and of the House in dealing with the family? The Government have three jobs—to promote the values of decency and honesty, to nurture a healthy and buoyant economy and to create a fairer society by legislating fairly, on an equal basis, and justly.

The Tories were elected to Government in 1979 on the claim that they were the party of the family and that they would promote the values that would strengthen the family and nurture the economy even-handedly. What a fabrication that was—what a tissue of public relations gloss. No matter what lofty speeches we hear from Tory Members, either here or in the country, the people of my constituency and my family know the truth, because we live in the reality of the Government's many broken promises. The majority of families in my constituency struggle to make ends meet. Their struggle is made worse by cuts in benefit in real terms and the inadequate income support on which they are expected to live because of the curse of unemployment.

Older people have also been badly affected. Higher prices and lower incomes mean only one thing—living in poverty. The Government have denied older people a decent income and the dignity of independent living. More and more, older people are becoming dependent on their families. In turn, families can rely only on local government, and we know that local government has been attacked time and time again so that services have been cut.

I remember in 1979 one of the world's most famous housewives showing off with a bag of groceries. She would no longer be able to buy that bag of groceries—the shop would be shut because of bankruptcy. What she spent on that bag of groceries would probably only buy the plastic bag to put them in now, because of the Government's crazy economic policies.

The Government have inflicted the curse of unemployment on millions over the past decade. The Secretary of State said that he was proud of the Government's record. Recently, I met elderly men and women in my constituency who were cursing the Government because of their lack of commitment to ensuring that people can heat their houses adequately during the winter. They were cursing the Prime Minister because of his lack of commitment to ensuring that the elderly in Scotland can cope with the terrible climate there.

I have spoken to men and women who are still waiting for a job 10 years after they were made unemployed. They know about poverty and unemployment. The Government should not try to kid these people, who are listening to the debate. I have never heard such a rowdy rabble as that on the Government Benches. I am shocked that, in a debate on such a serious subject, they are laughing, giggling, smirking and making hopelessly ignorant interventions. There is no hope for those living in poverty if they are treated so frivolously. Tory Members should hang their heads in shame. However, Tory Members have a chance to show people in poverty that they are interested in their fate. I am interested, as are many others, in hearing what the Government will do to help these people.

We are suffering from 10 years of disastrous economic policies and massively high interest rates. Mortgage repayment default is throwing young people on the streets. My local authority has queues of young men and women who can no longer afford to own their own homes. They took the Government's advice and bought their homes. They took up the right to buy. Now, because of the Government's economic policies and unemployment, they can no longer afford the mortgage repayments. They get help with the mortgage for only so long and then they have to decide between that and putting food into the bellies of their children. Unfortunately, the local authorities cannot provide accommodation for the homeless because the Government have cut resources to them.

The Secretary of State should not try to kid the folk in Strathclyde, which has one of the highest unemployment levels and one of the highest poverty levels in Europe. The Government claim credit for improving the quality of life, but they have destroyed it and are doing nothing. They are sitting there smirking and laughing all the way to the bank. Like those on the board of a bank, they will be made unemployed when, at the next general election, folk put a cross against the Government because of their terrible record. Their record is so bad that the past 10 years will be regarded as the worst decade for a long time. We have an inhumane, uncaring Government.

Many elderly men and women have died of hypothermia in recent weeks. People have been found dead in the streets because they have not had homes. There are people in Strathclyde who genuinely cannot afford to heat their homes because of the Government's economic policy. Many elderly people are struggling. Worse, the Government have even sent into the streets men and women who should have been cared for by social services departments. The Government have dumped the mentally handicapped and the mentally ill out of hospitals. Those people are struggling in society, with inadequate resources and help because of the inadequate funding of the services which they desperately need.

I feel sick at the flippant way in which some Conservative Members have treated the debate. It is fruitless to have a discussion in the House in the name of democracy because some hon. Members have insulted the integrity of the people. They have insulted the homeless, the unemployed, the disabled and the mentally handicapped. I want an immediate general election to throw those folk on to the unemployed register. However, they would not suffer, because they would have a caring Labour Government to look after them.

8.41 pm

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I shall not criticise the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) for what he said. I like the hon. Gentleman. No doubt I shall buy him a large Scotch later to boost the Scotch whisky industry. What he said he meant from the heart. I do not think that it came from the head, because the Government have nothing to be ashamed of in their policies. *[Laughter.]*

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) laughs loudly, but he has let the cat out of the bag. Not content with supporting Labour policy which robbed pensioners of £1·2 billion in the past, he does not quibble

about robbing them of over £600 million if his party gets into power. Those are the figures that we were talking about.

The hon. Gentleman has talked about what he would do with the private pensions industry. The private industry is not about fat cats in the City but about ordinary men and women who, for the first time, have had the opportunity to have portable pensions. They have been liberated. As the hon. Gentleman has said many times in the House and in newspapers, he intends to turn the private pensions industry on its head. He may wish to deny that, but it is on record.

We have heard some interesting things from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about that incredible document, the shadow Chancellor's pledge. The hon. Member for Oldham has been unkindly accused of being the representative on earth of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), but listening to the hon. Member for Oldham, West and his offerings on policy is like crossing a bicycle pump with a French poodle; no one knows what the result will be, but it does not half put the wind up the shadow Chancellor. The omission of pensioners—a major part of Labour party policy, as we are led to believe—is nothing short of disgraceful. Many people in my constituency who would have supported the hon. Gentleman and his party would be deeply ashamed to vote Labour.

Let us get to the facts and deal with some of the points that the hon. Gentleman made on low pay. He forgot to mention that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has a 20-point plan for the disabled. He forgot to mention that, since 1979, the budget for care in the community has been increased by 68 per cent. above inflation and that local government expenditure on personal social services has increased by 52 per cent. above inflation.

Let us get down to the nitty-gritty. The people most in need, the poorest 20 per cent. of working households, had a growth in real income of 11 per cent. between 1979 and 1987. The real take-home pay of a married couple with two children, on half average earnings, has increased by 24 per cent. since 1979, and the take-home pay of people on average earnings has increased by 30 per cent.

The hon. Gentleman forgets that we have spent £10 billion on family benefits since 1979, which is a 29 per cent. increase in real terms. It was brought to his attention, but he could not answer the charge that under the last Labour Government it was cut by 8 per cent. That is an appalling record.

We are not talking just about the appalling record of the last Labour Government. We want to know what the Labour party would do if in power. The hon. Gentleman has told us how he would totally ignore pensioners. We know that. He has been elusive about child benefit. I should remind the House what the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), the junior Opposition social services spokesman, said in the House recently:

"I shall say slowly, for the benefit of the hon. Gentleman, that the next Labour Government will return child benefit to its value when Labour was last in office."—[*Official Report*, 27 February 1991; Vol. 186, c. 1022.]

Where is the hon. Gentleman tonight? He is hiding in his bunker in Walworth road, no doubt, in fear of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), the shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Many of the demands of the hon. Member for Oldham, West have not been costed. The ones which have been costed amount to over £50 billion, which is completely unrealistic.

We know about income support and child benefit. The Conservative Government have deliberately targeted the people most in need, but if the Labour party had the opportunity, it could not do that. The hon. Gentleman knows what would happen. If there was uprating in line with inflation—the sort of thing which his former boss, Barbara Castle, did not want to happen—those most in need, the poorest families, would not get it. What have the Conservative Government done? We have introduced family credit. There has been a lot of pooh-poohing family credit, but hon. Members should not forget that it is paid into the purse of the mother, which is an important point.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Does my hon. Friend agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), who said in 1983, when child benefit reached record levels, that that demonstrated the Tory commitment to the family? Is not the argument for raising child benefit that it is the equivalent of a child allowance, but is better paid in cash than in tax? It may not be the way to help those on income support, but it is the right way to help those with children.

Mr. Hayes: I have spent the last eight years agreeing with my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher).

We have spent eight times more on family credit than was spent on family income supplement in 1979. The average family credit award is over £30 a week, which is three times more than the payment in 1979.

What is the great Labour policy? What will Labour do about children most in need? We know; it has been in the newspapers and it has even been said in the House. Labour will allow it to wither on the vine. Will the hon. Member for Oldham, West deny that? Have I misled the House in any way? Is that Labour policy? Will the hon. Gentleman allow it to wither on the vine? I shall happily give way if I am wrong. Am I right? It is not often that I am right; I am very pleased to be right on this occasion.

Here we have some wonderful Labour policies, and we shall have some wonderful taxes. We are going to have a tax on jobs which will cost employers about £1·5 billion. We are going to have a minimum wage which will cost the health service £500 million and throw thousands out of work. No doubt the minimum wage will appease the trade union paymasters of the hon. Member for Oldham, West, but it will not be good for employment and it certainly will not be good for the finances of the health service.

Let us get back to the vanguard of socialism today in this country, the places where socialist policies are really happening, the Labour councils. I would fail in my duty to the House and to the country if I did not mention Lambeth, God bless it. If Lambeth did not exist, Conservative Central Office would have to invent it. What has Lambeth done? Lambeth, that greatly caring and socialist council with the same sort of policies as the hon. Member for Oldham, West wants, has voted to withdraw rail and the tube passes from children attending schools outside the borough. Considering that about 50 per cent. of Lambeth children go to secondary schools in other boroughs, that is pretty disgraceful.

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): Is the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) trying to defend this

[Mr. Jimmy Wray]

Government? Does he not read the statistics? Does he not know that 22,500 people have had their homes repossessed? Does he not know that 95,000 people in Britain today are more than nine months in arrears with their mortgages? Does he not know that in Scotland 16,000 people had their electricity cut off? This is the kind of thing that the hon. Member should be speaking about because his Government put us in this mess.

Mr. Hayes: I am grateful for the helpful intervention of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) because I was going to tell the House that since 1988 we have spent an extra £400 million a year in real terms on low-income families. I was going to tell the House that basic tax allowances have been increased by 25 per cent. since 1979. People are doing an awful lot better, despite the economic difficulties, than ever they were. Of course I regret the enormous problems of the 45,000 or so people who have lost their homes, but we are talking about 98·3 per cent. of all families who are in no serious difficulty with their arrears, and it is the job of the Government to do what they can to help.

I cannot remember whether it was Iain MacLeod or Winston Churchill who said that Conservatism was about giving people the ladders of opportunity and providing the nets to catch them. This is a time when we need those nets and it is the duty of the Government—they have been doing it as well as possible, subject to resource constraints—to make sure that the holes in the net are not so large as to allow many people to slip through. That is what Conservatism is all about.

Let me return to what I was saying about Lambeth council. I do not think that many Opposition Members went to hear about it.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): There are not many of them there.

Mr. Hayes: I agree with my hon. Friend.

Let us just go back to Lambeth council and what the chief executive said:

> "Some of the local customers are so frustrated with the services they are provided with—but sometimes never receive—and with the corruptness of the administrative systems that they feel compelled to resort to threats and acts of intimidation against it".

Is that really the sort of family policy that the Labour party will offer to the House and the country when eventually we go to the country at the general election?

We have been told that it is the wicked poll tax that is responsible for all these ills, but it is important that these facts come out:

> "Even if the Labour party wins a general election no one . . . can have any illusions that an incoming Labour government is the cavalry riding to the Council's rescue. It is more than clear that no additional resources would be available",

says Joan Twelves, the council leader.

Let us turn to Liverpool. God bless Liverpool. What does Councillor Keva Coombes say about Liverpool? About education—another great priority, just as a lot of things seem to be a priority for the Labour party just before an election—Mr. Coombes said that it was in a parlous state. He conceded that the Labour-run council was

> "the worst landlord in Liverpool, probably in the country".

This is the case for socialism that people are getting in Liverpool, in Lambeth and in Harlow——

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): What is the hon. Gentleman's majority?

Mr. Hayes: I have a healthy majority; it goes up all the time when people hear what is on offer from Labour. We have been given a community charge by left-wing Harlow of £459, despite the fact that Essex county council is below the standard spending assessment of £49 million. Harlow could have reduced the community charge by £42. A competent authority would have kept the charge at £338, but Harlow has taken money from the reserve—this will bankrupt the town in the next two years—of £118 per person; and the people who will suffer in Harlow are the elderly, the disabled—those most at risk.

How is it, when one hears from Lambeth and these other overspending authorities, that it is not the women's units, the public relations or the local government units that suffer, but education and housing, the most politically sensitive areas? It is the most wicked and cynical manipulation of the frail and the infirm that I have ever seen. That is why I am happy to support my right hon. Friend and his Front-Bench team. I do not pretend that it is easy or that we have all the answers, but we are on the way to some of the solutions, and at least we have the courage to admit the limitations and to put forward the plans that my right hon. Friend has mentioned this evening.

8.56 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am a bit diffident about straying into the party political flak that is flying all over the place. Listening to the insults that have been traded, one would be inclined to think that a general election was around the corner. I want to rise above all that if I can.

I agree with the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) in this respect at least; these questions are not easy, and we must remember that there are intractable problems and that they are not all related to maintenance, income support and pensions. The problems which confront low-income families cover a range of public policy sectors that we ought to examine, and I should like to spend a moment or two discussing some of them.

I preface my remarks by saying that the Government should adopt a budget strategy to assist family hardship, and to that extent I support the thrust of the Labour motion. But the Secretary of State won on points by quite a large margin when it came to his questions about the second part of the motion, and if we decide to support the official Opposition in the Lobbies later I make it clear that it will be because of the intention behind the stated objects of the motion; I think that the jury is still substantially out on the sums that Opposition Members have produced.

The Government have been in power for a long time and, as someone said recently, they have few alibis left. If they have not been able to use their time constructively to improve matters, particularly for families in hardship, they have no one to blame but themselves. We can quote statistics until we are blue in the face, but the evidence is that, since the Government have been in office, the poor have done relatively worse and the rich have done relatively better.

It is all very well for the Secretary of State to be clever —I do not mean that pejoratively; he was right to scrutinise the Opposition policies—but it is difficult for Opposition parties to produce policies, particularly financial plans in great detail, when the Government are sitting on top of all the information and statistics that they need. I would not go so far as to make some of the promises that have been made by the official Opposition, but it is right for the Opposition parties to state the targets that they intend to aim for over a reasonable time in the next Parliament.

The Secretary of State was a bit unkind to prosecute his argument to the extent that he did. However, he put some valid questions, and no doubt when he gets a copy of the Budget proposals that the Liberal Democrats produced earlier today, he will be asking me some of the same questions.

Mr. Newton: It is not all that difficult to ask Governments parliamentary questions to elicit information; quite a lot of them have been asked. What was interesting about the exchanges with the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was that, when I made the point that the shadow Treasury document published today, apparently carefully costed, has costed a proposal which does nothing for the least well-off families, the hon. Gentleman was unable either to deny that or even to say that that was not the intention. He left the impression that it was.

Mr. Kirkwood: The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) can speak for himself. I listened with interest to the exchanges, and I shall study the report of the debate.

It is necessary to recognise that there have been substantial social changes. The hon. Members for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) and for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) and I attended an interesting Children's Society seminar which focused on the needs of children. I found it valuable, because it made me give a lot more thought to how a Liberal Democrat Government would try to focus on the needs of children.

Many different strands can be introduced and adduced in any policy that is brought to bear on the problem. As the hon. Member for Harlow said, it is difficult to decide how much the state should interfere in the private domestic domain of the family. There are difficult questions about how women, with their changing role, should be supported by child care policies and policies which make it easier for them to become an integral part of the new, largely service-oriented economy with part-time work and job sharing. All those matters are apposite in terms of giving real help to families suffering hardship.

We must also recognise that the family unit has changed substantially. That was brought home to me during discussions at the children's forum last week. There is now no such thing as the traditional family. There are step-families and single-parent families. In my constituency a high proportion of families consist of elderly people and ladies who have their own problems. The panoply of policy that the Government bring to bear on such questions must go with the grain of some of those changes.

One point that I made at the forum last week is that Governments find it difficult to co-ordinate policy, particularly in relation to children and families suffering hardship because of the disjointed approach that we adopt to try to tackle poverty within the family. That has been true of all Governments.

Poverty within the family embraces a series of things. For example, one of the most positive things that we could do to help some low-income families would be to increase the support that we give to conciliation services. Family breakdowns cost the state a lot of money, and if we put resources into giving families teetering on the brink of breakdown advice and conciliation, they may be saved. That might be the most positive way in which to help them. Local authorities, voluntary bodies and some specialist charities have an important role to play in that.

Those are all matters outwith the Secretary of State's responsibilities, but Governments must recognise that we need to go beyond social security levels and consider debt advice, the valuable work of citizens advice bureaux and counselling and family planning services. All those services have a bearing on how we can provide support, financial and otherwise, to families who are suffering hardship.

I do not think that one can consider hardship properly without taking into account long-term education policy. Sensible, planned provision for the under-fives would give future generations a better chance of gaining independence —the independence about which we hear so much from the Government—and exercising choice. I agree that opportunities should be provided, but many families are simply unable to take advantage of them. Education is a part of the problem. So is housing. Members of Parliament, at their constituency surgeries, hear about dampness, overcrowding, and so on. Then there is the question of health policy. People need dietary and other preventive health advice. They need advice about life styles. All of these things are the proper function of government. Families who suffer hardship must get proper educational support.

I know that there have been interdepartmental committees dealing with women's issues and with some children's issues. I support what has been done, so far as it goes. However, I hope that the Social Security Ministers will not confine their view to issues that are the responsibility of their own Department but will encourage a more interdepartmental approach. I know that they have their problems, but I hope that they will do what they can to ensure that low-income families get all the assistance that they need.

There is a real need for a proper partnership with the voluntary sector. I do not mean that charities should be used to provide a back-up for the social fund; that would be inappropriate. However, some of the specialist charities in the voluntary sector have expert resources. Indeed, I have seen some very useful local authority initiatives also. In addition, some employers have very enlightened policies for child care and support for low-income families. The Government—particularly the Ministers in the Department of Social Security—should take a lead in the provision of a framework of support, in partnership with all the elements involved. I know that that will not be easy, but we should all be neglecting our duty if we were not to try a bit harder in that direction.

Prolonged poverty is inimical to family life. That, of course, is a statement of the obvious. We can argue about what constitutes relative poverty, and what constitutes absolute poverty. We can argue about whether the Government are doing enough. Opposition parties will always ask for more. However, some worrying trends are

[Mr. Kirkwood]

emerging. The next Government, from whatever party, will have difficulties if they do not face up to the lack of provision for low-income families, among other things. Child benefit and child care should be essential elements of the programme for the next five or 10 years.

I hope that, in the next general election campaign, there will be proper public discussion of the role of child benefit. This is a cross-party issue. The debate about it will be important, and I hope that it will be conducted in the open. As I said in a previous debate, I hope that manifestos will be explicit about what parties are seeking to achieve. Of course, parties can be criticised for trying to go too far. We need an open, proper debate so that the electorate may have some say.

I am very worried about the resourcing of community care. Up to now, I have been referring especially to children, but community care will be essential to elderly people. If proper provision is not made, there will be major problems. I am very worried about some health board trends. I am not against savings, but the health board in my area is trying to make savings that will simply result in geriatric care being offloaded in a fairly wholesale way to the private residential and voluntary sectors of nursing homes. I have nothing against mixed provision of residential care, but it is quite wrong for health boards suddenly to decide that it is no longer their responsibility to provide geriatric care. I hope that Ministers are aware of that. It will have a vast implication for the Department of Social Security budget.

I know, as well as anyone knows, that the Secretary of State has to go to the Treasury and fight his corner for money. If that trend in my constituency begins to emerge across the whole United Kingdom, the Secretary of State will have an increasingly difficult job in containing that demand-led aspect of the budget. He will have to make cuts in other areas, and that will not be in anybody's interests. I hope that he will urgently consider that. If it is happening in a relatively stable, out-of-the-way place like my constituency, goodness knows what the extent of the problem would be in urban areas.

I hope that the Secretary of State will reconsider the changes in the 1986 Act that led to a cut in provision for 16 and 17-year-olds. I accept that the Government of the day must be careful not to tempt youngsters away from families and towards streets paved with gold in London. However, the experience and the evidence show that 16 and 17-year-olds who are genuinely within a stressful family relationship leave home and go into destitution and, even worse, prostitution. I hope that that aspect of the 1986 reforms will be urgently reviewed.

The figures for homelessness and repossessions have been mentioned, and they pose an increasing worry. I am concerned about the number of people in Scotland who suffer deductions from their income support because, for example, they are in arrears with their community charge, are making social fund repayments, or are directly receiving fuel. The Government must be careful to ensure that they do not assume that everybody has the maximum income support available. In November 1990, 17,500 people in Scotland were in poll tax arrears and were not in receipt of full income support.

I am concerned about the 5,000 people sleeping rough. The Government have shown welcome signs of trying to reduce the number, but I am still worried. I am sure that my concern is not unique.

I hope that the Secretary of State recognises that Governments, of whichever party, must take into account the changing complexion of the family. As a policy-making institution, the Government should try to work with the grain of that and not moralise or impose rather spurious and out-of-date judgments. We need a better, more co-ordinated approach to all aspects of family policy.

I have tried to advance one or two ideas about ways in which I think matters could be improved. To achieve a concerted and co-ordinated approach, we need more resources. I hope that the issue will be tested seriously at the next general election. I believe that people throughout the country would be prepared to pay a reasonable amount more if they felt that that would result in a fairer and better collective provision for low-income families.

9.13 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said that he would try to lift the tone of the debate. Indeed, the speeches of Opposition Members have improved as we have gone along. The opening speech by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was pathetic, yet he has had enormous experience both in office and on the Opposition Front Bench. The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) made a heavyweight speech, and he referred to unemployment on the Clyde. Perhaps the Opposition should promote him to the Front Bench; they obviously need a speaker with his power of oratory.

I agree with many of the points made by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire and especially with his comment about wanting a more co-ordinated approach to family policy and lifestyle advice.

A survey published today showed that 10 per cent. of 16 to 19-year-old girls are sexually active and do not use contraceptives. That is the beginning of later problems, because if teenage pregnancies result, they either end in the tragedy of an abortion or in an unplanned pregnancy leading to an unplanned child, which will too often result in family poverty. Therefore, the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire was right to mention the issue.

I stress to my right hon. Friend the Minister the need for the Government to monitor what is happening. Figures show that there are as many as 1 million unplanned pregnancies—one in three pregnancies—every year in this country. We must monitor that and find out to what extent Government policy can help to reduce the number because no one wants that level.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I hope that people following this debate will not take that figure as correct. The number of live births is about 600,000 or 700,000 and there are about 150,000 abortions and there are also spontaneous miscarriages. Therefore, I think that there must be something slightly wrong with my right hon. Friend's assumption.

Mr. Thurnham: I am grateful to my hon. Friend; he was right to correct me. According to the figures that I have

seen, 1 million women are at risk of unplanned pregnancy, and there are about 300,000 unplanned pregnancies during a year, half of which end in abortion—about 150,000 or 160,000 each year. Therefore, 150,000 or 160,000 children would be born, suggesting that at least one in five children born is the result of an unplanned pregnancy. No one wants that state of affairs.

I agree with the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire that we should start by considering that aspect of family life in this debate.

I find Labour's policies amazing. I have already quoted the conclusion of the Institute for Fiscal Studies that child benefit is not efficient. However, I see that early-day motion 582, which has attracted 160 signatures from the Opposition Benches, states:

"child benefit is the most efficient form of financial support for families with children".

I do not understand how one can come to that conclusion when, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in his opening speech, that does not help families with the lowest incomes. The Opposition were unable to answer that argument and were unable to say how they could help such families. That is why the Opposition are beginning to climb down from saying that they will more than make good the value of child benefit. More recently, they said that they would "at least" make it good and more recently still that they will simply make it good. They realise that child benefit is not getting anywhere.

What most disappoints me about the Opposition is the fact that they do not seem able to support family credit. The Government have boosted family credit, enormously —there has been an eightfold increase in the amount of money spent on it. Yet the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has said, as we have already heard, that Labour would let family credit wither on the vine and would introduce a national minimum wage instead. Barbara Castle has already been quoted as the Minister who froze child benefit in 1975. As Secretary of State for Employment, she said that she would not introduce a national minimum wage because of its effect on regional unemployment. Why is the Labour party advocating policies that it would not implement when it was in power?

It grieves me that the Opposition should turn their backs on family credit, when that is exactly the sort of policy that leads to targeted benefits. The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) said that child benefit is not the most sensible way to distribute extra money. In that case, the most sensible way must be family credit. Will my hon. Friend consider the conclusions in the National Audit Office's study on family credit distribution? Family credit is not fully taken up. It is an excellent scheme, yet figures published in the study a few weeks ago showed that, by caseload, only 50 per cent. of it was taken up and, by expenditure, only 65 per cent. Therefore, there must be a considerable number of families who can still benefit from family credit and we should do our utmost to get them to take up that benefit.

That is the correct policy and the right way to help. One should encourage people to earn the most from their jobs that they can, and supplement their income where necessary to meet their family requirements. That is what should be done, rather than spread universal benefits around. We would much prefer to target benefits and reduce income tax, to make the economy stronger and to increase take-home pay.

That does not mean that the wealthiest would make the smallest contribution. The top 10 per cent. of taxpayers contribute 42 per cent. of total tax now, compared with 35 per cent. 10 years ago. Conservative Governments have increased the proportion of tax paid by the wealthy, and reduced that payable by everyone else from the exorbitant levels that existed under Labour.

The Opposition have not made it clear how they would fund their commitments. Where is the £1·5 billion more that they propose putting into child benefit to come from? If it is to be generated by increased taxes, who is to pay them? I have not yet seen the shadow Budget that was published today, but judging from the remarks of my right hon. Friend, it does not add up. Does it make it clear what tax levels would be under Labour, and whether there will be a return to the horrendous levels that operated under Labour?

I would like the family credit scheme to be considerably expanded. If additional funds are available, perhaps that is the area to which they should be applied. The National Audit Office made three recommendations. The first was that the Department should improve the nature and extent of the advice given to income support claimants about family credit. The system works better than it did, but there is scope for further improvement.

The NAO's second recommendation was that the advice and information given to ethnic minorities about income support and family credit should be reviewed. I know from my constituency experience that there is high unemployment among ethnic minorities, and that they tend to have larger families. On both counts, they are in need of more guidance on how to benefit from family credit.

The National Audit Office's third recommendation was that the reason why families move into and out of entitlement to income support and family credit should be examined, to establish whether there is scope to improve the effectiveness of the schemes' work incentives. That apart, family credit is an enormous improvement on family income support. The Government are paying out much more, and that money is reaching many more families than before. In overall terms, the scheme is a success, but I should like to see it implemented more fully. The Government's policies deserve the support of us all in the Lobby tonight.

9.22 pm

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): I will focus on a narrow aspect of family poverty, and one that the Government always ignore. It is a pity that, when efforts are made to identify areas of poverty, the Government constantly skirt round the disadvantaged and point only to groups that have enjoyed some improvements under their schemes.

Last week, the Low Pay Unit and Birmingham education authority released a report that highlights the exploitation of thousands of children who are working illegally, and *The People* presented disclosures by Danny Buckland, who managed to infiltrate a Norfolk factory with a photographer, to present pictorially a report on the exploitation of children in 1991, under a Conservative Government.

The Government have been in power for nearly 12 years. To many of us, it seems much longer. Some of the children highlighted in the Low Pay Unit report were not even born when the Conservatives took office. According

[Miss Joan Lestor]

to the Low Pay Unit and Birmingham education authority, the reason for that exploitation is family poverty.

I do not have time to describe the report in detail, but I hope that Ministers have read it. It shows that, in the areas that suffer the highest unemployment, greatest poverty, and worst low pay, more and more children are becoming the family breadwinners. That point has been raised before, but the Government have not dealt with the problem of long-term truancy among children or the fact that many children are working in appalling conditions. The legislation that protected those children, such as it was, has been done away with. The Government constantly refuse to implement the Employment of Children Act 1973. The Under-Secretary of State for Social Security said that if there was any evidence that it should be implemented, she would consider it. The evidence is before her, but the Government have done nothing.

There are 4 million secondary school-aged children in Britain today and 2 million of them work. According to the survey, three out of four of those children are employed illegally. They are at risk of economic exploitation. They also face physical risks and colossal educational disadvantage.

According to the survey, 43 per cent. of the children had some kind of job excluding baby sitting, running errands and walking the dog. Many of them had more than one job. One 11-year-old had five jobs: a paper round, helping with a milk round, working in a clothes shop, helping with furniture removals and working in a take away restaurant. He earned 50p an hour for 10 hours work. That is the position after almost 12 years of Conservative Government. That is the poverty that our children are experiencing.

One third of the children's jobs involve shop work, cleaning and factory work and they accounted for more than the number of paper rounds. The law states that no child under 13 should work. One quarter of the working children referred to in the survey were 10, 11 or 12 years old. The law also states that children should not work for more than two hours on a school day and not before 7 am or after 7 pm in the case of 13-year-olds. Many of the children work far longer hours than that. Many of them perform adult jobs for less pay. The average pay is £1·80 an hour.

One 12-year-old worked in a sweet shop for 18 hours a week and was paid 44p an hour. The adult minimum wage is £2·20 an hour. The survey found that one third of the children were involved in accidents at work, including cuts, burns, assaults and broken bones. Three 15-year-olds received serious injuries in agriculture; six 15-year-olds in manufacturing industries; seven 15-year-olds in the service industries; and two 15-year-olds in unclassified jobs. In addition, a 13-year-old and a 14-year-old were involved in major accidents in other forms of agriculture. In comparison with that saga of accidents involving youngsters, many of whom were working illegally, the number of court cases and convictions is pitiful.

That is one of the biggest indictments of the Government. We have heard reports of children working as the sole carer of a dependant relative. There are reports of children sleeping in our streets. Hundreds of our children are in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and hundreds more are on at-risk registers, but they do not have social workers attached to them.

There is also now a growing saga of children who are employed illegally, many of whom are trying to top up an inadequate family income, or working as the sole contributor and breadwinner in a family that has experienced years of long-term unemployment affecting the mother, father and the other children. That is what is happening in our society today, as revealed in the survey which interviewed nearly 2,000 children between 10 and 16 split evenly between boys and girls.

I am glad that Conservative Members have not laughed at my speech. This will have been only the second speech at which they have not laughed, although I am sure that one of them will do so before long.

I have made a serious indictment of a Government who claim to care about children and about people, but who allow our children to work illegally and deny to those who work with some semblance of legality any protection in terms of the legislation that they took from the statute book.

9.29 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Earlier my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was kind enough to allow me to intervene, when I talked about the track record of Barbara Castle, who introduced child benefit. I am sure that she meant what she said most sincerely. I quote her freely, because I do not have her exact words in front of me. She made the point that the key advantage of the introduction of child benefit was that it would benefit poorer families. Her exact words were that poorer families would receive a greater proportion of the money.

I do not understand how the right hon. Lady, who is now in the other place, could possibly have had that idea. Surely it is clear to hon. Members, regardless of which side of the House they are on, that the great weakness of universal benefits is that they spread the butter thinly—they give exactly the same to everybody irrespective of income, ability to pay, and, even worse, need.

Earlier today, Her Majesty's Opposition attacked the community charge and supported other measures, but they support universality as a concept embedded in their deepest commitment, particularly to child benefit.

I am more than keenly interested in the welfare of children. I was fortunate to spend a dozen years working as a full-time senior staff member of the Save the Children Fund. Fortunately, in my position as a Conservative Back-Bencher, I have sufficient time to be able to devote my spare hours to furthering the welfare of children in the United Kingdom in a variety of ways and through a number of voluntary organisations—46 at the latest count. I know that the Government's perception of need for children is the better one, given that family credit now supplements child benefit. I shall paint the picture in a slightly different way so that Her Majesty's Opposition can understand my perspective in this matter.

Child benefit goes to every child—or rather, through every mother, it is given for the benefit of every child in the United Kingdom. I make that point perhaps a little critically, because many mothers do not use child benefit for their children. Many cases have been identified and written up. Letters are written to women's magazines from

families on quite modest incomes, saying that they do not use child benefit for their children. I refer to magazines such as *Woman's Own* and *Woman's Realm*—the ordinary, common or garden women's magazines that many millions of women read every week. I have seen letters from someone who feels embarrassed at having child benefit when she does not use it for her children.

There are 6·8 million families with children in the United Kingdom, and that makes 12·2 million children. All of them receive child benefit at £7·25 per child per week. However, among those 12·2 million children, 3 million are in greatest need. That is the bottom group—a quarter of all children in the United Kingdom. It is interesting that that quarter comes from 1·5 million of the totality of 6·8 million families. In a word, a quarter of the children belong to a sixth of the families. Quite naturally, we see that families in receipt of family credit are the poorest and also have the largest families. That is why I so heartily supported the recent uplift in child benefit of £1 for the eldest child. The larger families will need that money to invest in children' s clothing at the beginning of their family life.

I have seen the benefit of family credit, as opposed to the uplift of child benefit nationally through the universality of everyone having the same, in my constituency where many families are on lower incomes. Farm workers have never been well paid—I wish they had. Many farmers do not have a large income, and other groups also receive family credit. I have seen that family credit gives real value to those families. It allows them to budget and to plan. It gives them sufficient funds to enable them to stand on their own feet and to start to involve themselves in the wider world.

That is why, although I welcome any help that is given to children, I especially support the targeting—that modern word—of families who are in real need. I welcome the Government's commitment to the poorest children in the land by continuing to uplift family credit.

9.35 pm

Mrs. Sylvia Heal (Mid-Staffordshire): The Government came to power on the promise of prosperity for everyone. People expected to have more money in their pockets, a home of their own, a secure job, and better prospects for their children in schools and universities. But the reality for many has been a treacherous breach of the hopes and plans that the British people had invested in the Government for the 1980s and on the basis of which they were voted into power.

Since 1979, the poor have become poorer. About one fifth of the population have been made worse off during the past decade. Not for them the benefit of a trickle-down effect from the growing prosperity of the few. We have heard that it is Conservative policy for that party to project itself as the party of the family. Quite apart from the economic and political consequences of the Government's policies, we must consider the more personal effects that relate to nearly every family in the land and what has really happened to many families in the time that the Government have been in office.

Grandparents now receive a state pension that is no longer linked to average earnings or increased prices, so they are worse off. According to Age Concern, more than one third of retired people are living on or below the poverty line. Many are constantly worried about heating their homes, paying their bills and having enough to feed themselves. They are often faced with deciding whether they can afford to buy a relative or friend a birthday card or whether they should spend that money on a loaf of bread or half a dozen eggs.

Many people in their 70s and 80s find it impossible to survive on their basic pension and have to work part-time to supplement it. The jobs on which many pensioners rely to boost their weekly income are often the first to go when the recession bites. I refer to the pensioners who may have a part-time cleaning job in a shop or office.

Fathers who were once in secure jobs have found themselves unemployed. Many are facing unemployment for the first time. If they have a skill or professional training, they did not expect that unemployment would happen to them. Unemployment brings humiliation and loss of confidence, as well as financial problems, which in turn can mean stress and tension within a marriage and within the family unit.

Many women work part-time outside the home so that they can combine employment and family responsibilities. Many women who have been employed in banking or by the building societies, both of which are large employers of women, have been made redundant. Women who work in teaching, the service sector or as helps in the schools meals service are facing reduced hours or job losses as a result of the recession or they have been the victims of cuts, which are due in large measure to the poll tax.

Young people searching for jobs are often sidetracked into the so-called training schemes which are often no more than a parody of the real thing. They receive little more than subsistence rates as a training allowance. Teenagers who have to leave home—not from choice, but because there is no work locally—may obtain work but they then have to pay a high price for accommodation, and their poll tax. They may join the many young people who are sleeping in cardboard city, begging on our streets, or turning to prostitution. Unemployment and changes in the benefit rules are the factors which contribute to that.

A further consequence of the recession and its impact on families is the increase in the workload of citizens advice bureaux. Advice on money problems is now the main and growing work of CABs in my constituency. In one of those offices, bankruptcy-related inquiries during January and February were as many as two or three a week. Many of them were from people who were made redundant and who had put what capital they had into a small business. They now face further problems. When the sign says, "Everything must go", it means just that—it means the family business and the family income.

The people who seek advice at CABs often have multiple debt problems, not because they have overcommitted themselves but because of a change in circumstances. In many cases, that change of circumstances is unemployment. That in turn leads to mortgage problems. Again, mortgage problems arise either from unemployment or from a reduction in working hours.

In some families, both husband and wife have lost their jobs and the impact on the family is devastating. As a result of the state of the economy, many unemployed people, having tried to find work and written perhaps 50 or 100 letters, are giving up hope. Many families face the grim struggle to pay the mortgage, rent, poll tax and increased prices for the now privatised water, gas and electricity, as well as the weekly food bill. New clothes, meals out and entertainment are luxuries that many

[Mrs. Sylvia Heal]

families cannot afford. I have spoken to families who say not only that they cannot afford new clothes but that they can no longer afford to buy clothes from the charity shops; they are reduced to going to jumble sales.

Community furniture projects have great demand for their furniture because people cannot obtain the additional money that they want from the social fund to replace items of furniture. The magic spell of prosperity has been broken at last. Few people still believe that we can become a nation of rich and happy shareholders. If we were to apply the same testing to the Government's policy on the family as they are imposing on children in schools, there is no doubt what the teacher's comment would be: "Failed. Could do better."

The family as a single, cohesive factor in contemporary Britain has been subjected to unprecedented pressures which in turn have created more social discord than we have had in any period since the 1930s.

9.42 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): In the few minutes left for the Front-Bench replies, I wish to make a few references first to the speeches which have been made in the debate. The speeches of my hon. Friends reflected their anxieties about the bitter plight of families on low incomes living in their constituencies. The anger expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) and the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mrs. Heal) contrasted starkly with the levity of the speech of the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), who seemed to think that it was all a great joke. The moving speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), which brought a new dimension to the debate, will be worth reading.

The spread of poverty has become absolutely relentless and its growth is a savage indictment of the Government. Far from creating new jobs, they have presided over a tripling of unemployment and a shift in the nature of employment towards temporary, casual and part-time work which is low-paid. Far from widening real opportunities for lasting home ownership, the Government have encouraged families to buy their homes. Those families were then forced by the Government's high interest rates policy into arrears and into losing their homes. It is a crazy situation.

In 1989, 83,682 mortgage payers were taken to court. That was a bad enough figure, but in 1990, more than 136,000 faced court action for mortgage areas. The biggest increases in the past year have been in the midlands, the south-east and the south-west—unusual spots for that to happen. At the same time, local authority home building has been at a standstill, and homelessness and housing waiting lists have been at an all-time high. Privately rented property is far too expensive for most families whose homes have been repossessed. There is no doubt that the current recession will lead to even further increases in the number of families in poverty, yet the Government show no sign of tackling the recession and, to judge by their amendment tonight, they have no conception of the misery that their policies are causing.

Even if the Chancellor could wave a magic wand to pull the country out of recession overnight, he would not and could not undo the damage now being wrought. A magic wand would not restore the homes of those people who have been evicted today, return the furniture to homes with bailiffs on the doorsteps today or repair the lungs of children living in damp houses today. Anyway, the Chancellor will not wave a magic wand, but will continue to pursue the disastrous policies that have led to such an appalling increase in hardship.

Hardship affects every member of the family; all are hit by it, but women and children bear the brunt. The lack of child care, to which the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) referred, means that women have less access to available jobs. That problem particularly affects single parents—76 per cent. of whom live in poverty, compared with 13 per cent. of two-parent families. Women form the vast majority of lone parents. Some 96 per cent. of single parents on income support are women and 71 per cent. of those on low wages are women.

Women's lives are very much shaped by their domestic responsibilities. The vast amount of unpaid work that women have to do—including child care, cleaning, shopping and managing the home—limits their opportunities to obtain paid work. During the past decade, the Government have done nothing to help them.

The Government are fond of pointing out at every opportunity the increase in part-time jobs, but they have done nothing to ensure that those jobs provide maternity rights, sick pay and holidays, or that part-time work is paid pro rata to full-time work. Because their pattern of paid work is so broken up by their caring responsibilities—whether for children or elderly dependents—many women fail to pay enough national insurance contributions to qualify for a full pension, so when they become older and retire, they do not have enough to live on and have to resort to income support.

Even within the family, the resources are not always fairly shared, although that is not necessarily the Government's fault. It is very often the woman in the family—the mother—who spends more of what might be considered the equal half of the family income on items such as food and clothing. That is why child benefit is, and is seen to be, so important to families. It is a disgrace that child benefit has been frozen for so long.

As the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) said, the Chancellor will at last be increasing child benefit not to £9·55 a week—which it should be for each child—but by a miserly £1 for the eldest child. Have Conservative Members any idea of how much that will help a family? The sum of £1 might just buy a large family loaf and some margarine, but not much more—there will be no change out of a pound. That figure will not buy any socks or shoes, although it might buy three pints of milk—big deal. It is so insultingly low that it causes more stress. The Chancellor has made a mistake by not increasing child benefit to the requisite amount.

The hardship about which we have heard in the debate has been the lot of many families for more than a decade and over the lifetime of successive Governments, no positive policy to help such families has been developed. Tory politicians often talk about a sort of north-south divide. They say that there is more poverty in the north, rather as if families there should have become used to being poverty-stricken. They say that the "good old south of England" does well and that there is no need for a strategy to eliminate poverty and hardship there.

Now the recession has hit the south with a vengeance. Families in the south, stunned by steep mortgage interest

rates, are losing their homes. They are getting into debt and losing their jobs as 100 firms a day are declared bankrupt. Two-earner families become one-earner or no-earner families. Those people were brought up under a Government who have no proper policies to deal with hardship and bring down inflation. Such families will join those who have been suffering for the past decade in realising that Britain must have a Labour Government who will begin to tackle the ills and evils of a decade of Tory policies. The general election campaign should start tomorrow.

9.51 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): So far, the debate has been a one-sided match. I do not know whether I shall be able to sustain that record. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security ate the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) alive. We have clearly won the argument. The Opposition chose this subject for debate, so it is somewhat surprising that the Opposition turnout has been so miserable. Their arguments have been equally weak.

I have great respect for the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) and I think that we entered the House on the same date. She spoke seriously about the exploitation of children, and she will know that local authorities have considerable responsibilities for children who work. I took a careful note of her points, and will instigate some investigations into the extent of the practice reported in one of the popular Sunday newspapers. I take the matter seriously, and certainly do not dismiss it for a moment.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) also made a serious speech—about the need for services as well as benefits, the level of which dominated the debate. We are not speaking just about services by statutory bodies, such as local authorities or the Department in which I serve, but about those provided by the voluntary organisations that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. Those are the citizens advice bureaux, Relate, which helps those in matrimonial difficulties, and other organisations which make a great contribution to enabling people to retain, and sometimes to improve, their quality of life.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about a matter that was first identified by the noble Lord Joseph—the danger of families in poverty entering a cycle of deprivation. Such families do not benefit from the education system and are ill served by many of the statutory bodies. In some way, we must break through to those families, and voluntary agencies can play a great part in that. Although my Department has no grant-giving power, the Department of Health spends a considerable amount of money, through its section 64 grants, on the voluntary bodies. This plays an important part in supporting such organisations and helping those who benefit from them.

Mr. Graham: Is the Minister aware that, in Scotland, many of the voluntary organisations that deal with the problems of poverty have seen their funding eradicated because of local government finance cuts, so much so that they are no longer able to carry out the valuable work that they have done for years to ensure that people get the benefits due to them?

Mr. Scott: Most of the local authorities controlled by the Labour party put supporting fancy left-wing ideas ahead of the priorities about which I have been talking.

I shall try to reply to the points made in the debate. The hon. Member for Oldham, West made the worst speech that I have ever heard him make. He has visited—we have been glad to enable him to do so—many of our local social security offices, and has gained some understanding of the efforts that we put in to delivering a better service to those who need our help. He will know that, on 1 April, the new benefits agency will come into effect. It will be able to work within a set of clear, unambiguous, published and measurable targets to deliver a better service to those who need our help. I hope that he will avail himself of the opportunity to visit those offices. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman could restrain his predilection for sedentary interventions, it would be more helpful. I hope that he understands that we are determined to deliver a better service.

Labour Members have talked an awful lot of nonsense. The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mrs. Heal) delivered herself of the most foolhardy statement of the debate when she said that, because the retirement pension had not been increased in line with earnings, pensioners were worse off. There is no question of that. Under this Government, the standard of living of pensioners has gone up by 31 per cent.—twice as fast as the rate of increase in the standard of living of the popualtion as a whole. That has been due to the increase in savings, the spread of occupational pensions and the maturing of the state earnings-related pension scheme. Anybody who looks around the country will see with his own eyes that the pensioners' standard of living has gone up by substantially more than it did under the Labour Government, whatever that Government did to the basic retirement pension. We are determined to ensure, by a combination of policies, that that rate of increase continues.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West and my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) mentioned family credit and its importance in supporting the living standards of families. The take-up of family credit has steadily increased. It now reaches twice as many families as family income supplement did, and we have a case load of 325,000 people on family credit. We are anxious to increase the take-up as much as possible. I am sure that, whatever quibbles the hon. Member for Oldham, West has, he will support us in trying to ensure that the benefit goes to as many families as possible. He will have noticed, as he spends some time in front of the television set, the television advertisements that we are showing at the moment. He will know that there is a special insert in our child benefit books reminding people that they may be entitled to family credit.

As we are talking about the living standards of families, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that, by introducing family credit, we have made a substantial contribution to the living standards of those entitled to it. He dared to mention unemployment traps and poverty traps. Our reforms in 1988 made a substantial contribution to removing the excessively high deduction rates which occurred under the previous system. We are contributing, and will continue to contribute, to the living standards of families.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 196, Noes 304.

Division No. 96] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*

Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House notes that the policies of the last Labour Government pushed inflation to an all-time peak of 27 per cent., destroying savings and eroding living standards for millions of families and that Her Majesty's Opposition remains committed to policies which would once again sharply raise taxation and inflation; and commends Her Majesty's Government's record in creating new jobs, in widening opportunities for home ownership, in directing additional help to low-income families, and in bringing about an increase of one-third in the real take-home pay of a family on average earnings; and reaffirms its support for the Government's priority in fighting inflation.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion in the name of Mr. John MacGregor relating to Statutory Instruments, &c. (the draft European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Immunities and Privileges) Order 1991) may be proceeded with, though opposed, until fifteen minutes to Eleven o'clock or the end of a period of three-quarters of an hour after it has been entered upon, whichever is the later.—*[Mr. Neil Hamilton.]*

Court of Auditors

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken).

10.15 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Francis Maude): I beg to move.

That this House takes note of the Annual Report of the Court of Auditors of the European Communities for 1989.

We frequently talk about the level of Community expenditure, but less often about the manner in which Community funds are spent—the "how" rather than the "how much". Tonight's debate enables us to remedy this.

Under the treaty of Rome, the Court of Auditors draws up an annual report on Community revenue and expenditure after the close of each financial year. This goes to the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, which must examine it along with the accounts and the financial statement that the Commission submits. It then falls to the Parliament, acting on the recommendation of the Council, to give a discharge to the Commission over its implementation of the budget.

This is the court's 13th annual report. The court was established in 1975, in response to pressure for an independent audit body. It does much useful work, but the annual report is pre-eminent. It is the principal means of scrutinising how the Community spends taxpayer's money; of extending to the Community the practices that are routine here; and of ensuring that money is spent in a lawful and regular manner and that financial management has been sound. The court has power to expose incompetence, waste, inefficiency and fraud, and to stimulate change. It deserves our support. I shall say a few words later about our proposals to enhance its authority.

I turn to the court's report on the 1989 budget, which is the subject of today's debate. The explanatory memorandum that I submitted to the Scrutiny Committee comprehensively summarises its contents.

There are some consistent and worrying themes. In particular, there is continuing evidence that certain Community programmes lack objectives that are sufficiently precise. In a number of instances the financial controls needed for proper implementation of certain policies are not in place, are not sufficiently rigorous, or are not being observed properly.

Areas singled out for criticism include agricultural programmes and the structural funds. There are also concerns about research. I will deal briefly with these three areas in turn.

Fifty-four per cent. of spending arises on agriculture guarantee support. In its report, the court criticised a number of programmes for failing to achieve important objectives. Set-aside, for instance, is a scheme to reduce grain production by taking land out of cultivation. A significant amount has been spent on this programme, but that has still not stopped the amount of land under cultivation increasing; and the land that has been taken out of production has frequently been marginal. The Commission will be looking into the court's suggestions to improve the scheme's cost-effectiveness.

We welcome the court's emphasis on the need for simplification of the agricultural programmes and for better implementation and control.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): This may be an ignorant question, but it would help me if my hon. Friend would answer it kindly. To what extent are the programmes and the definitions thereof the responsibility of the Council of Ministers, and to what extent are they the responsibility of the other organs of the Community?

Mr. Maude: That is not in any way a daft question. The Commission makes proposals to the Council of Ministers, and in general they will be detailed and specific. The Council of Ministers makes a decision upon them, having amended them as it thinks appropriate. The detailed drafting of a proposal, at every stage of the negotiation, generally will be in the hands of the Commission but subject to amendment in the Council of Ministers.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my hon. Friend note that in the Republic of Germany and in Rheinland Pfalz a clear declaration must be made about the fields to which set-aside should apply? Is he aware that there are no maps showing the location of those fields? In Sicily, the maps that must be produced are obsolete, because the land register dates back to 1940.

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend vividly makes the point that the system is not working satisfactorily. That is the point to which the Court of Auditors has rightly drawn attention. It is evident that the system of scrutiny has some potency. The Commission will have to introduce proposals to ensure that the scheme operates much more tightly. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to deficiencies in the way that the scheme works.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): To be fair to the Commission, which I think should be protected in this instance, may I ask this question: is it not true that the Court of Auditors pointed out that, although 611,000 hectares had been taken out under set-aside, and a fortune spent from public funds to enable that to be done, the number of hectares growing cereals had increased, that cereal production had increased, and that the barley mountain was at an all-time high? The Court of Auditors criticised the scheme as worthless and pointless, not the administration of the scheme by the Commission. Should not my hon. Friend accept that it is the scheme that is wrong, not the administration?

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend is right to say that the Court of Auditors pointed out starkly that, at the same time as the set-aside scheme, which was designed to take land out of cultivation, was operating, more land came into cultivation. The land that had been taken out generally was poor land at the margins of possible cultivation. There is a problem with the operation of the scheme, and the Court of Auditors has done the Community a service in drawing attention to that. The Community must now resolve those problems.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Does the Minister accept that the Council of Ministers has the final responsibility, and that the criticisms by the Court of Auditors are levelled against the Council of Ministers? Why should the Commission get all the stick?

Mr. Maude: It is heartening to find so many champions of the European Commission in this House, and so many who are anxious to spring to its defence. That will be a source of great comfort and support to the Commission. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the Council of

Ministers takes responsibility for the decision to set up the scheme, and for the parameters and the guidelines under which it operates.

However, the hon. Gentleman has considerable experience of these matters, and he will appreciate that the Council of Ministers does not administer the scheme; the Commission administers it. It is for the Commission to respond to the criticisms made by the Court of Auditors. That is its duty under the treaty. The Commission made the original proposal to the Council of Ministers, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman appreciates the way in which these matters must work.

The court's criticisms of the structural funds include failure to define the fund's objectives properly and the absence of adequate guidelines for implementation. Spending on structural funds increased substantially following the reforms of the Community budget in 1988, but the court rightly observed that those reforms did not guarantee that the funds would achieve their objectives.

Therefore, the Commission must ensure that the funds provide value for money, and the Council will need to follow up the recommendations of the court when it reviews the policy on structural funds.

The court also comments on the Community's research activities, especially work done by the joint research centre for other Commission directorates-general. Because the joint research centre bears the costs of all the work that it does directly, the other parts of the Commission have no incentive to give any research work to outside contractors. The court says that the centre must establish a proper customer-contractor relationship with its internal clients.

The court also criticises the early retirement arrangements at the joint research centre, which were reported widely in the press earlier this year, although some reports did not reflect the situation accurately. The centre does have some significant problems—in particular, a redundancy scheme which is over-generous but which fails, none the less, to match the centre's staffing with its work load. We shall urge the Council to look into that issue.

I must stress again the importance that we attach to achieving good value for the money that is spent by the Community. To that end, we have made suggestions for a series of treaty amendments in the intergovernmental conference on political union which would improve financial management in the Community. These include measures to enhance scrutiny by the European Parliament, to underline member states' obligations to counter fraud, and to develop the responsibilities of the Court of Auditors. These ideas, which we have canvassed widely with our colleagues in the Community, will be discussed increasingly in the coming months.

Next Monday the ECOFIN Council will decide its recommendations on the Court of Auditors report. That recommendation will be sent to the European Parliament to enable it to give the Commission a discharge on that report. Tonight's debate is an important part of this process of scrutiny, and it will be extremely useful to me to hear the views of the House on this matter before I attend the ECOFIN Council on Monday.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Further to my hon. Friend's comments about the Government's recommendations for an improvement in the scrutiny arrangements within the Community and the need to encourage Parliament to take more interest, does he agree that, unless we make progress in that respect, we shall continue to have annual debates like this and that will lead nowhere? The European Parliament should take more interest in the scrutiny of Community spending. A committee should be set up along the lines of the Public Accounts Committee of the House, which has some clout; people take some notice of its recommendations.

Mr. Maude: I do not regard annual debates such as this as inappropriate, or as anything but useful. They are a valuable part of the scrutiny process, and I would not want to discount them. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) is correct in saying that it would be desirable for the European Parliament to attach greater weight to the work that it can do to subject the work of the Commission in particular to proper scrutiny. There is a committee which is roughly equivalent to the Public Accounts Committee—the budgetary control committee—and a number of our proposals would enhance its power, especially the power to call specific officials from the Commission before it to interrogate them about the way in which they discharge their responsibilities.

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): Does my hon. Friend think that if this Parliament were to take a closer interest in the findings of the Court of Auditors, and if the European Parliament were to do the same, the first priority would be that the accounts should be delivered sooner? This evening we are considering the accounts for the year up to 31 December 1989, and we are now halfway through March 1991.

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend makes an important point, but I suspect that it may not be possible to truncate the period to any extent. The court cannot audit the accounts until they have been drawn up at the end of the year. The process of detailed scrutiny by those examining the Court of Auditor's report cannot begin until a little time after the end of the financial year. However, the sooner that scrutiny can be undertaken, the better it will be.

I repeat that we shall debate those matters at ECOFIN on Monday. I look forward to hearing the views of right hon. and hon. Members on this important report.

10.29 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Sadly, I must begin with an uncharacteristic note of congratulation to the Financial Secretary. The memorandum before the House is a considerable improvement on those submitted in earlier debates concerning the Court of Auditors and related matters. The memorandum is clear, and it sets out in greater detail than was the case last year the content of the court's report.

It is a pity that the documents for consideration tonight —some of which are lengthy—were available from the Vote Office only on Monday, two days before the debate. I hope that matters can be arranged rather better in future years, so that we may study at greater leisure and length the important and detailed points that the Court of Auditors makes.

The court has performed a useful and important role in identifying the probity and efficiency—or the lack of it —that attaches to the application of European Community funds, and I hope that its observations will be noted not just by the European Parliament but by the Council of Ministers and the Commission.

[Mr. Chris Smith]

During the Financial Secretary's speech, there was an interesting exchange about who is responsible for acting as an overseer. The answer is both the Commission and the Council of Ministers, and it is not good enough for the Financial Secretary to say, "The Council of Ministers sets the framework and guidelines, and put the policies in motion, but the Commission administers them," because the Council oversees the Commission's work as part of its administrative responsibilities.

When difficulties and problems such as those identified by the Court of Auditors exist, it behoves not just the Commission but the Council of Ministers—of which the British Government form a part—to act on the court's recommendations.

Many of the court's specific points should be addressed, and I will highlight just five of them. First, it pointed to the absence of any sector-by-sector aggregate budget summary, which meant that it had to add up the individual figures to reach its conclusions. That must be remedied, if at all possible. Secondly, the court drew attention to the continuing overproduction of butter in the Community by a staggering 25 per cent., and highlighted the consequential complexity of the subsidy regulation.

Thirdly, the Court of Auditors noted the lack of consistent information about the use of the social fund in relation to supporting the long-term unemployed.

Fourthly, the court questioned the direction and efficiency of aid to Bangladesh and especially to the poorest people and areas of that country. Finally, it questioned the lack of management controls in relation to some aspects of aid to central and eastern Europe. Those points sprang out at me when I read the Court of Auditors' report as items that must cause concern.

It is worth noting that the Commission's response to those points has been helpful in some respects, but too hesitant in others. There seems to be a problem ensuring that the findings of the Court of Auditors and its recommendations do not fall into a black hole of inactivity and inaction, but instead are implemented. There must be a continuing drive in the Community to get the best value for money and the best efficiency from the considerable funds that are deployed.

As well as the specific items that the court identified, some larger questions arise; I refer to two that deserve special consideration. The first involves the court's analysis of the development of the regional fund. The regional fund is becoming increasingly important within the Community's overall budget. It is, within a four-year period, doubling in size, and it is therefore very important that it is used wisely and sensibly.

The Court of Auditors' report refers to the benefits of diversification in the use of the regional fund—a process started in 1974 which was consolidated by the budgetary changes and guidelines instituted in 1989. The report also points to the increasing co-operation between national and Commission levels in administering the regional funds. However, it also identifies a remaining weakness in the assessment and monitoring of particular projects and programmes. Given the increasing importance of regional funds in the overall development of the Community and the desire to address imbalances between regions, it is important that that weakness is addressed.

The other specific question arising from the court's report to which I wish to draw attention is the analysis of the budgetary control over the agricultural guidance and guarantee fund. The report states rightly and sensibly that although the fund's overall expenditure may not have exceeded its budgetary guideline figure, that was achieved only by switching between different chapter headings within the overall expenditure level. Several of those chapter headings were exceeded.

If such virement in subsequent years is not possible between chapter headings, there is an obvious danger that the overall guideline figure for agricultural guarantee support might be exceeded. Given the enormous proportion that that section represents of the Community budget at the moment and the over-preponderance given to it within the balance of the overall budget, it is important that we ensure that it is kept within the guidelines. Those two specific points need careful consideration.

Several specific points that need a United Kingdom Government response arise from the report. They may be small, but nonetheless they are important. I point the Government's attention to just four of them.

Under paragraph 1.68, dealing with special agreements with third countries, the report notes that,

"every month in the case of the amounts deducted by the UK",

there is

"no indication of the reference periods and no way of identifying the amounts concerned".

It would be useful to know whether the Government have proposals for rectifying that problem.

Under paragraph 2.25, the court notes that in the United Kingdom the certificates of origin information manual is available only at the Central Customs Office and not more widely available. Have the Government any proposals for ensuring that it is more widely available? Under paragraph 4.3.43, where the report deals with aid for small producers of cereals, it notes:

"In the United Kingdom the non-retention of invoices also posed difficulties for audit purposes."

Have the Government any proposals for rectifying that problem? Under item 4.4.25, dealing with set-aside, which has already been mentioned, the report notes:

"As at March 1990 neither Italy, the FR of Germany nor the United Kingdom had submitted the reports"

on the findings arising from inspections which were due by 1 July 1989. Have the Government submitted that report? Are they intent on ensuring that their performance is somewhat better in future?

Those may be small points, but they identify matters in which some improvement on the part of the Government as well as on the part of the Commission and the Council of Ministers might be required.

When we debated this matter last year, I asked the then Paymaster General, who has since risen in the ranks of the Conservative party, what the Government intended to do to improve the resources of the Court of Auditors in fighting fraud in the European Community. The court's report for 1988 identified several serious instances of fraud, and the House was united in feeling that that should be tackled seriously.

At that stage, the Paymaster General told us that the resources available to the anti-fraud section of the Court of Auditors amounted to 30 members of staff. I asked then whether that was regarded as sufficient, and I repeat the question. If it is not sufficient, surely it is one matter in

which the bureaucracy in Brussels can act in the interests of the sensible running of the European Community, rather than against it.

We must ensure that the Community operates the substantial funds available to it with probity and efficiency. Of course, the Community has a long way to go in achieving that objective, as do our Government, but the Court of Auditors is a valuable instrument in ensuring that progress is made. We should welcome the report and demand that all bodies responsible, including our Government and their representatives in the Council of Ministers, take action on the findings.

Court of Auditors

10.44 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I beg to move, as an amendment to the motion, at the end to add:

"congratulates the Court for once again producing a detailed and comprehensive account of the appalling waste, mismanagement and incompetence of the institutions of the European Community; and much regrets that there is no effective vehicle within the European Community to ensure that appropriate action is taken on the issues raised in the Report."

You may have noticed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the wording of the amendment is somewhat sharper than the congratulatory tone of parts of the speech of my hon. Friend the Minister. It is not difficult, therefore, to raise the temperature a little, because the prose style of the Court of Auditors' report must rank as among the most boring in the world, and my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary delivered his comments upon it in a most appropriately soporific style—perhaps in the hope that none of us would notice some of the irregularities that he was talking about.

I was troubled by my hon. Friend's lack of indignation about what the amendment calls

"the appalling waste, mismanagement and incompetence of the institutions of the European Community".

I try to imagine myself for a moment not in the House of Commons talking about the European Community and its Court of Auditors' report, but at an annual general meeting of a public company in this country, discussing with the shareholders an auditors' report couched in such terms. In any half-decent company which had an auditors' report highlighting such failures and weaknesses, there would immediately be demands for the resignation of the chief executive and changes in the board, while the institutional shareholders would be up in arms. Even in public finance, the Public Accounts Committee would make a serious song and dance.

After reading the extraordinary catalogue of irregularities, creative accountancy, unlawful switchings of accounts, monitoring failures and plain vanilla frauds which all seem to be part of the staple diet of Euro-folk, I thought that the European Commission needed a new signature tune. I would suggest the old nursery rhyme, "Frère Jacques"—"Are you sleeping? Are you sleeping?" It is apparent that brother Jacques Delors and his merry men in Brussels have been disgracefully and incompetently asleep at the switch when it comes to running the proper financial management of the Commission. Instead of running a tight ship, I suppose that they have been dreaming of political unity.

We need to focus on some of the things in the report and address seriously whether we should not merely criticise in sharp terms—much sharper than those used by my hon. Friend the Minister—but also try to do something about it——

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I very much agree with what my hon. Friend has said. Does he agree that it is interesting that, each year, when the Court of Auditors' report laments that it needs more staff and more resources for its investigations, it always confirms, above all, that all these misdemeanours occur in all member states equally?

Mr. Aitken: It also confirms, year after year, that the frauds go on and on and get worse and worse. My hon. Friend's comment seems to prove what is happening year after year. We need to do something about it.

When one goes through the report's small print, one does not know whether to laugh or cry. In certain places one can do both. I shall have a stab at stimulating both emotions in the House. Let us, for example, tackle the subject of redundancies in Europe, which seem a different form of redundancy from any that I can discover. Some of us have long known that the Brussels Commission is the Valhalla of jobs for the boys, but what is new in the report is that it also turns out to be the El Dorado of golden handshakes for the Euro-researchers.

I found the comments of my hon. Friend the Minister amazingly complacent and self-satisfied about what he thought had gone on in the research department. He seemed to think that there were "continuing problems", or something like that. However, chapter 9 of the report discloses a jolly little tale—an expensive tale—of 150 temps in the Commission's joint research centre who were made redundant. They knew that they were temporary staff, because they had a contract stating that they were temporary staff and that the contract was terminable on either side at three months' notice. However, when the temps were made redundant, they received not the three months' money that they might have expected, but 70 per cent., of their salaries for each year of their working lives until the age of 65.

In the last three years, that has worked out at £30,000 per researcher. That exercise cost £4·5 million in 1988, 1989 and 1990. Presumably it will be a continuing cost to the Commission until those temps celebrate their considerably enriched 65th birthdays. It adds a new meaning to laughing all the way to the bank.

The European Commission puts it rather differently and in rather more moderate language. It simply says:

"Why it was necessary to give such terms to staff engaged on temporary contracts terminable at three months' notice is not clear."

Obviously, a lot more is not clear in the wonderful world of Euro-retirements and redundancies.

The Father Christmas munificence towards those who get the sack in Brussels becomes even more incredible when we reach the European Parliament. Chapter 15·4 of the auditors' report criticises the incredible payment of £2·2 million to three redundant persons. It is not clear whether the fortunate trio were Members of the European Parliament, MEPs' staff or European Parliament cleaning ladies, but at £730,000 per head of redundancy money for getting the sack, they too will have laughed all the way to the bank as a result of being dismissed by the Commission. The auditors say that the payments were made because of a "considerable system defect". The data on which the payments were made

"had not been checked either by the administrators responsible or by the Financial Controller".

It is very different from the world of our own dear Fees Office here in the House of Commons.

Such everyday stories of European Commission money folk in the Court of Auditors report are always expensive. Sometimes they are funny, sometimes they are sad. To me, the saddest parts of the report are those which deal with European Community aid, far too much of which is wasted by sheer incompetence.

In the House we hear a great deal from my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development about how glad she is that most of Britain's overseas aid is channelled through the European Commission, but one might take a different view after reading through the passages of the report on aid to west Africa and Bangladesh. The auditors say that, of last year's £25 million of food aid to Bangladesh, only 38 per cent. was actually distributed. The remaining 62 per cent. was either eaten by senior civil servants—I suppose that is food for the boys—or sold by them for a profit. The poorest Bangladeshis simply did not receive the aid that they were supposed to receive.

In west Africa, the story is much worse. Let me focus the attention of the House on the story of EC aid to Benin, a country that I happen to know quite well, and which is one of the poorest countries in the whole of Africa. This sad story is to be found on pages 206 to 216. Here is what was wasted. There was a £3 million EC aid project for village water wells. All the wells had to be abandoned because they did not work properly and had not been properly surveyed. There was £40 million EC aid for a cattle-rearing project. It failed because of delays and inadequate financial management and, again, a failure to do proper surveys. The same fate befell a Benin fish farming project, to which EC aid of £1·5 million had been given. That failed because its self-sufficiency was doubtful, if not non-existent. A Benin wildlife park failed to open its gates for many of the same reasons.

But perhaps the most shocking story of aid to Benin that went wrong involves a European Community aid transfer of £5 million in cash, called a STABEX transfer. The money was tranferred from Brussels to a joint EC-Benin bank account in July 1988. It was supposed to be under the control of the joint signatories of a Benin official and an EC official. The EC official forgot his duties, and the Benin official moved the entire sum to another bank account without proper authorisation by the EC official, who did not notice for another seven months that the money had been moved. Then the bank to which the £5 million in cash had been moved went bankrupt, and the whole amount of aid had to be written off.

Five million pounds is a lot of money in aid when children are starving and aid is desperately needed in a poor part of Africa. It is not amusing but desperately sad that such incompetent mismanagement of the EC aid programmes should occur.

Mr. Rowe: Does not my hon. Friend agree that this is the same story, writ large, as is sadly so often the case with national aid programmes, where we encounter exactly the same difficulties despite our best efforts? Does it not suggest to my hon. Friend that we should reconsider the policy under which aid is given? It might be better to allow organisations and companies with an established track record of delivering good work in a country to be given additional assistance, rather than, as at present, the frequent setting up, de novo, of schemes by people with no proven track record?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend's intervention had several themes, but I do not think that I agree with any of them. Perhaps one with which I do agree is that anybody other than the EC would be better doing the job. If my hon. Friend has up his sleeve some organisations with a track record, let us send them the money. I do not agree that the national performance of our Government or civil servants has been nearly as bad as that of the EC. I have not heard any horror stories about a British Government official who allows £7 million in cash to be transferred to the wrong account and does not notice the transfer for seven months, so that the full amount is written off and wasted. That is a disgraceful story. I cannot accept that there is any comparison between such mismanagement and anything that I have heard of within the British Government.

Mr. Cash: Does not my hon. Friend agree that, in light of the tremendous activities of charities seeking to raise money to help those who are starving in the third world, it is incredible that figures such as he has mentioned should be squandered? That is a total disgrace and must be sorted out.

Mr. Aitken: I am glad that I seem to have raised the temperature in the House, because that is what I intended to do. Some of the wastage is heart-breaking, but it does not seem to matter to those in Brussels. If the message goes out from this House that people care about the scale of incompetence, which can be heart-breaking for those involved in the world of aid, it will be a good thing.

Agriculture is the biggest item in the EC budget and features extensively in the criticisms in the auditors' report. It is perfectly clear that the European Commission's financial accounting methods for agriculture are roughly those of Polly Peck or Bernie Cornfeld's Investors Overseas Services. One can find examples after example of that. Page 55 of the report criticises the Commission for treating food aid gifts to third-world countries as sales at intervention prices, so making fraudulent profits and improving the agricultural budget. On another page, the report states that agricultural expenditure is kept within its guidelines only by the dubious accountancy practice of transferring from those sectors with underspends to those with overspends.

Page 83 contains a pretty clear hint that the co-responsibility levy is continuously evaded by continental farmers, who pretend to consume large quantities of the cereals on their farms in order to qualify for benefit. I noted the Court of Auditors' comment that none of the member states visited, except the United Kingdom, took steps to check the reliability of global figures and check farms on a test basis. Only Britain operates on a level playing field.

European agricultural spending today faces a new budget crisis, largely because of the cost of buying in east German corn, which has risen to a cost of more than £1 billion this year. That will mean cuts in European Commission agricultural spending. As we have the Court of Auditors' report in our hands, it is a good moment to ask what Mr. Delors is going to do about it. We know the answer from some interesting recent press reports. Mr. Delors has decided to cheat and continue the sort of fraudulent, creative accountancy cycle that we find in the auditors' report.

Why do I say that? I shall quote from a fascinating article, written by Mr. Boris Johnson, the Brussels correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph*, which appears in this week's *Spectator*. Mr. Johnson states that the EC must make some cuts. The article states:

"Just to keep within budget, this means moderately painful price cuts for farmers in the whole of Europe. Resistance is being led by the French, and amazingly, Delors himself.

Last week he startled officials by allowing himself to be outvoted by his 16 commission colleagues after a flagrant attempt to protect French farmers. While his colleagues

[Mr. Aitken]

agreed with the Irish farm commissioner, Mr. Ray MacSharry, that there was no choice but to make the cuts, Delors said it would be better to admit defeat and break the EEC budget. Voted down, he fumed: 'I will not defend this in public.' MacSharry: 'Do you mean to say you will not defend a collegiate decision?' Delors: 'I will not take moral lessons from you, MacSharry!'

That is the sort of conversation that sets a Brussels cocktail party a-twitter, and raises questions about marbles."

The report is important, because it raises the curtain on a whole series of totally unacceptable financial management practices. At times, they are fraudulent, deceitful and dishonest. I shall not press the matter to a vote, but I take issue with the tone of my hon. Friend the Minister, who misjudged the mood of the House by not saying as clearly as I hope he will if he speaks again at the end of the debate, how shocked the House and, I hope, the Government are at some of the revelations in the report.

Year after year, we turn up for these late night debates and simply accept that somehow there is a continuing financial shambles in the Commission. It is not good enough. The amendment asks that we take action

"to ensure that appropriate action is taken on the issues raised in the Report."

I hope that the debate will encourage the Government to take some truly effective and thorough action.

11.1 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): As hon. Members have said, we are debating a detailed two-volume report. The first volume has 133 pages and the second has 85. There are also many tables. As the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle) said, it is now March 1991 and the report is for 1989, and we have an hour and a half in which to debate it. That is not a very effective way in which to proceed. Despite what the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) said, the Minister did not misjudge the mood of the House. He caught it just right, because the mood is somnolent and the Minister was reflectively somnolent.

One can only pick out some matters. Even the critical hon. Member for Thanet, South could pick only the odd bit of the report, and in dealing with any organisation one can always find awful things that have gone wrong. I shall pick three matters in the report, and the first of them is not a criticism. It is to note, and it is worth noting, the size of the bureaucracy. The report tells us specifically that the total staff for all European Community institutions is 24,266. That includes everybody—the cleaners, the electricians, the doormen, the lot—and the Commission takes 17,257 of those. For a Community of 338 million, and bearing in mind the policy areas that are covered and allowing for error, sometimes gross error as we have heard, that represents good value for money.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Russell Johnston: How could I refuse?

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman advances an argument used by many pro-marketeers, that the EEC has a small bureaucracy. Does he take into account the fact that a large part of the EEC bureaucracy is administered by individual member states? For example, our Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food employs 3,500 civil servants solely on EEC matters and that is repeated in almost every Department. The idea that there is a relatively small and efficient group of people administering the EEC is not true.

Sir Russell Johnston: It is true, but I shall not argue at length with the hon. Gentleman. It is not true that other Departments employ the 3,000-plus that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and presumably the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department, employ. The Ministry is in a special position. The hon. Gentleman has made his point.

My second point concerns fraud and irregularity, on which the hon. Member for Thanet, South properly laid great emphasis. The United Kingdom has a good record in putting European legislation into effect. However, no country is perfect, and the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) gave examples of where we have not gone along with what we have been required to do.

The Court of Auditors makes a major and admirable effort to cover the field, but it is not clear that there are effective measures to deal with defaulters. Financial sanctions were supported by a recent vote in the European Parliament, and I wish to know whether there has been any progress on this. At the administrative level, for example, one notices in paragraph 1.73 that the court says:

"There is no systematic linkage of information concerning frauds to the entering of own resources in the accounts. Such information could, however, have an effect on the recording of the entitlements established. In particular, the Commission does not make out any recovery orders, even in the case of amounts that have been properly identified."

That is not satisfactory. The response from the Commission, on page 226, is long and complicated. I simply ask the Minister whether we are getting on top of this. If the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury is correct, 30 fraud detectors for 300 million people does not seem a good ratio.

My third point concerns a matter which has, for a long time, caused all those interested in an effective European Community regional fund, based on agreed criteria, deep dissatisfaction with the attitude of this Government and of the Labour Government before them, after the establishment of the regional fund. As hon. Members will recall, that was made the responsibility of the then George Thomson, now Lord Thomson of Monifieth. I am talking about additionality.

The Court of Auditors' report expresses the problem succinctly and clearly at paragraph 7.106, where it says:

"The principle of complementarity"—

these are awful words—

"aims at ensuring that Community action is in addition to national action to assist the regions and is not used as a substitute. The implementation of this concept requires the drawing-up of adequate procedures to ensure that Community contributions to regional development are not in practice diverted from their purpose"

We do not do it that way. In the past, regional funds, which were usually based on a negotiation of a fixed proportion, have been treated by the Treasury as a clawback of what the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), used to call "our own money". I do not accept that concept, and I should like to hear the Goverment's opinion of the clear statement by the Court of Auditors of what is proper—a statement of which we are in breach, and to which no reference is made in the commentary by the Treasury or the Scrutiny Committee.

My last point is about the unpredictabilities of politics. When he was briefly Foreign Secretary, the Prime Minister had to write the interim White Paper on European Community developments between June 1989 and January 1990. He said:

"For the first time in years Community spending, including on agriculture, is under proper control."

The reason for that was increased resources. Until then, resources had lagged behind policy decisions, and that was the reason for the Delors package, which had been reluctantly accepted by the right hon. Member for Finchley. The report gives a generally good picture of the Community picking up momentum.

However, by the end of the year, the Berlin wall was down, the effect of agricultural imports from central and eastern Europe were being felt, and the drought in the United States was sending up world prices. On all those things, my views are contrary to those of the hon. Member for Thanet, South. Those uncertainties in the world argue for closer and closer integration in the Community.

I conclude as I began, by remarking on the ineffectiveness of the whole procedure. In my experience, it is often made worse by a tendency among Ministers simply to ignore questions that are asked of them. In a short contribution, I have asked only two or two and a half questions. I very much hope that they will be answered.

11.9 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me so early in this important debate.

I have spoken regularly in debates on the reports of the Court of Auditors. What is significant about this evening's debate is that there is a much greater attendance, which is most encouraging because many of us have been concerned about the lack of interest that the House has shown in these important matters.

The other feature of the debate which I welcome very much is the invitation of my hon. Friend the Minister to make suggestions about how affairs in the Community can be better controlled and organised. I want to make suggestions on three subjects—the unsatisfactory nature of the division of responsibilities within the European Community, the unsatisfactory systems that are represented by some of the European policies, and the sheer unintelligibility of much Euro-jargon.

On the division of responsibility, I quote from the Court of Auditors' report:

"Management of numerous important areas of the Community finances is shared between the administrations of the member states and the Commission."

I suggest to my hon. Friend that in that division of responsibility there is the classic recipe for confusion, disaster and total lack of control. There is too much opportunity always to leave it to the other chap to do what needs to be done.

The report is valuable, important and excellent. As my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) has pointed out, it contrasts very much with the auditors' report that we in commerce would expect to see. One only has to flick through the pages of the report to find criticism after criticism about the way in which the finances of the Community are organised. The report is littered with phrases like:

"The system of budgetary and financial management in force needs to be improved";

"the accounting and internal control shortcomings";

and

"More rigorous financial management by the Commission would provide better information".

There is much criticism in the report. One looks hard to find any reference to things that the Commission is doing efficiently and with probity.

With regard to systems, I am sure that many hon. Members will understand that the systems defy reasonable control. I have on previous occasions in the House talked about fraud in agricultural products. No number of accountants and no army of inspectors could control the abuse and fraud involved in commodities because they cannot recognise what they are looking at. That is a matter of simple practicality, but it goes well beyond that.

I was interested to read the supplementary explanatory memorandum on the management and control of export refunds by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in which he states:

"the level of subsidy has been determined with insufficient regard to the need for economy; the Commission's arrangement of export subsidies has not satisfied the requirements of public accountability; and national controls provide an insufficient safeguard against fraud."

On the implications of this, he says:

"The Government is concerned that the objectives of the refund system should be achieved as economically as possible and regards fraud against the Community budget as a serious problem which needs to be tackled quickly and effectively."

He welcomes the court's report,

"which underlines the need for improved management of EC expenditure and greater effort to minimise fraud."

Those are all very welcome expressions of sentiment. So often in these debates we hear expressions of sentiment as to how we would like to see matters improved, and we utter platitudes along those lines; but so much of the fraud and the abuse can never be resolved unless we tackle the system that allows them to take place.

In a Committee Room in this House we have been considering the transport of live animals within the European Community. Part of the evidence submitted to us in Committee is that 31 bulls were exported from a market in the midlands for meat in Sicily. As a practical man involved in that trade, I cannot think of any legitimate reason why beef animals should be exported from the middle of this country to the island of Sicily to provide Sicilians with freshly butchered meat. I suggest that the only possible reason for the extremely long journey of those animals was to satisfy the fraudulent intent of, perhaps, the mafia.

Perhaps my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury would see whether something could be done to help all of us in the House to assist him and the European Community to get a better grip of the Community's finances. There is an important role for the House in scrutinising the many regulations and directives which come from Brussels. I am sure that other national Parliaments look to see what we are doing at Westminster to scrutinise such matters as are before us tonight. I am also sure that many hon. Members are deterred from looking closely at many things to do with the European Community simply because of the complexity of the legislation and of the detail put in front of us, the sheer incomprehensibility of much of it and the frustration that builds up as we feel that it is impossible to get to grips with this huge and monolithic bureaucracy.

In looking at the whole question of the European Community, we must not allow our idealism to blind us to realities; nor must we allow our innate common sense to be

[Mr. Christopher Gill]

subordinated to theory. Earlier today in the House we saw how an ideal or principle had gone awry simply because the practical difficulties were not fully recognised and were underestimated.

In our efforts to be so communautaire, to demonstrate that Britain will play a leading role in the councils of the European continent, passing many directives and regulations and participating in the intergovernmental conferences and other meetings, we must keep our feet on the ground.

Many of the complaints that are itemised in so much detail in the auditors' report arise because the system is so fundamentally flawed. Agricultural support spending is out of control. Fraud is endemic. What assurances can my hon. Friend the Minister give the House? Can he promise the House that the programmes in which fraud is endemic will be abandoned? Will the Court of Auditors' recommendations be implemented? Platitudes and promises will not do. In the final analysis, if there is no improvement, the House must be prepared to withhold funds.

11.20 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I am not holding a flag for the Commission, but does not the Council of Ministers have responsibility to oversee the administration as carried out by the Commission? Is that not part of its powers under the treaty? I should like the Minister to elaborate on that.

It is no use hon. Members simply attacking the Commission. The Commission has fallen short and it is open to justifiable criticism, but the Council of Ministers has a responsibility. The Minister cannot answer for the Commission, but he can answer for the Council of Ministers, because he is part of that Council. Knowing the way in which the Common Market operates, we cannot expect the Minister to stand at the Dispatch Box and defend the Commission because he is not responsible for its workings. But, as a member of the Council, he is responsible for overseeing the administration carried out by the Commission, so he should be able to answer on that.

I should have thought that pro-marketeers, such as the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), would be glad to have done with the evils and shortcomings of the Common Market, instead of trying to gloss over them. If the hon. Gentleman reads the document that the Minister has produced for us—on which I congratulate the Minister—he will see that it is a fair, perhaps even a biased, summary in favour of the market. Yet that document alone is a terrible overall indictment of the administration.

I agree with the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) that, if the books of any company were in the state that the books of the Common Market are in today, the directors would all be fired and the fraud squad would be called in. It is no joke that £5 million that should have gone to the needy has gone astray and that that has been glossed over. I have heard Commissioners boasting about what they are doing for the third-world countries. What could that £5 million have done to help people in their dire need? The House has a right to highlight that and to pay attention to what is really happening.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that was only one of the examples that my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) produced? The £5 million is only the tip of the iceberg. If that sum is quantified in terms of the fraud taking place in the Community as a whole, the total sum is enormous. The situation has gone beyond the pale, and action must be taken.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It would be impossible to highlight every example during this short debate.

Surely it is amazing that the Court of Auditors has continually to say to the Commission that the presentation of its accounts and of its administration has many shortcomings. Surely the Common Market should have its act together by now. It should be able to present an overall summary to the Court of Auditors. The summary that has been produced fails to differentiate between compulsory and non-compulsory expenditure. Accordingly, the auditors are in difficulties when they come to examine the books. They have to do considerable research in trying to carry out their duties. The Court of Auditors is to be commended.

Many of the members of the Court of Auditors are strong pro-marketeers. Some of them were members of the European Parliament and were committed to the Common Market, but the court is not biased. Although some of its members have the background that I have outlined, they are alarmed by what is happening. When the court draws attention to irregular carry-overs, the Commissions merely states that it is applying the rules. It adds that some flexibility is still required. Under the smokescreen of flexibility, the Commission excuses what it is doing.

Money should be returning into the coffers of the Common Market, but we find that the interest on arrears of payments of our own resources is not even being collected. The Commission is not collecting the money that should be coming back to the Community. Surely the House should be concerned about that. The document that the Minister has produced shows that we are getting into a sorry pass.

I have always been worried about the inadequate customs control of certificates. It is something that we know about in Northern Ireland. It seems that it is possible to obtain certificates to make repeated crossings of the border. It must be remembered that every crossing takes money out of the EEC's pocket. I am sure that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber is as concerned about that as I am, he being a Scotsman. I am a Ballymena man, an area which is known as the Aberdeen of the north. We are told that there is no proper documentation and that the Court of Auditors cannot undertake proper scrutiny. That is alarming.

The court refers to serious weaknesses in the implementation of the levy system. Any Member who has farmers in his constituency will be worried about that. I am worried about slow payments. The court has highlighted the delays in processing requests for payments. Surely those who deserve to benefit from the subsidies should be paid on time. We should be trying to ensure sound financial management, so that they get their moneys when they are due.

I am alarmed by the offhand way in which the Commission seems to dismiss the matters to which the

Court of Auditors has drawn attention. It does not say, "The Commission is prepared to face these matters and to take steps to ensure that the deficiencies do not continue."

The time has come for the Council of Ministers to take the Commission to task, and to say, "It is in the interests of us all to get honesty and integrity into the way that the funds are expended." That would remove a great deal of current criticism, which would be in all our interests. I am not a Common Marketeer; I have always been anti-Common Market. However, it must face up to its responsibilities. It cannot continue to be dishonest; it must now start to be honest.

11.30 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): The hour is late. It is that time of day when the Whip fixes one with a baleful stare and asks whether one really wishes to make some comments. I shall be brief, and restrict my comments to three observations about the 1989 annual report and the functions of the Court of Auditors.

First, I wish to emphasise that the accounts are produced very late indeed. I expressed that concern when my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary allowed me to intervene in his speech. If the accounts are produced in December of the year following the year end, they are too late for the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament to enable that information to have any bearing on spending plans and decisions for the year that follows, even in a normal year. In a year when there has been some structural change in the Community—such as following German reunification, when five additional German Lander became part of the Community—the need for information from the previous year is most important. That is lacking. Although my hon. Friend said that the report was the principal means of scrutinising how money is spent on the Community's behalf, unless that information is delivered sooner, so that it can apply to the following year's budget process, the system can be of little use.

Secondly, the Court of Auditors has no teeth. Much political importance is attributed to its work, and it is certainly active. It produces many papers—for example, 13 in 1989 and 14 in 1990. However, there are no powers to demand remedial action and to enforce changes. That means that for all the virtuous pronouncements in its reports, there is no power in reserve to hasten the pace of change and to enforce budgetary control. With the volume and complexities of CAP spending and the voluminous growth of regional fund expenditure, that becomes doubly important.

My third point concerns the anti-fraud efforts, upon which hon. Members have already commented. A few weeks ago, on a Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee visit to Brussels, I had the opportunity to meet the Commissioner in charge of the budget, Mr. Schmidhuber. He made the fundamental point that, no matter what effort is made by the budgetary team and by the Court of Auditors, it depends very much on the efforts of the member countries if fraud is ever to be tackled. Even with an expert team of 30 staff, all their efforts will come to naught unless the Council of Ministers debates the matter in earnest and ensures that each member country makes a determined effort.

The report is a mine of information, and I cannot resist detaining the House for a few seconds to read from paragraph 118 of section 1:

"The Commission regrets that it has no internal documentation on the general accounts at the moment. Over the last few years, priority has been given to the modernisation of computer applications . . . This effort entails a heavy workload, not only for computing depts but even more so for accounting depts . . . Since the same officials would also be responsible for compiling a manual of accounting procedures, it was therefore impossible to begin work before March 1990."

As hon. Members have already said, if that were to happen in the corporate world, there would rightly be fireworks.

Unless there is an effort to produce the accounts more swiftly, unless the Commission is given teeth, unless the Council of Ministers ensures that greater efforts are made, and unless fraud is combated at member state level, the production of the accounts will prove to be largely academic.

11.37 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Much has been made of the importance of budgetary discipline in the Community. The introduction to the annual report of the Court of Auditors states:

"the Court observes that, of the measures adopted to impose discipline on agricultural expenditure"—

which is by far the greatest proportion of the total—

"those it examined have not, as yet, attained the desired level of effectiveness."

It continues—this is highly important—

"The apparent control of agricultural expenditure is above all the result of a favourable situation on world markets."

In other words, budgetary discipline hinged more upon favourable world markets than on the intrinsic methods employed to achieve it. That is not a very good start.

Furthermore, there is a reference in the introduction to the famous Delors report, that deserves a little explanation in the context of the intergovernmental conferences and the references to budgetary deficits and so forth in relation to economic and monetary union. Paragraph 1.52 states:

"The Court considers that the first cases of implementation of the new rules on budgetary discipline are still a long way from management with 'due and proper care' and from the 'spirit of rigour' described when the Delors package was introduced in document COM(87)100 final of 15 February 1987".

In shorthand, that means that the application of the rules which have been given such an enthusiastic welcome within the Community—the Delors package—are clearly not working, or were not for the financial year ending December 1989.

In view of the enthusiasm with which some member states and the Commission have received the Delors report, we are entitled to insist that the Minister tells us whether he and the Government are satisfied with the way in which the Delors package is working, given the importance that we have attached to budgetary discipline.

As regards the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund guidance measures and the general conclusions drawn from them, the court states:

"Three years on"—

after the system was first put into effect—

"the same shortcomings are evident: undefined objectives, vague expressions, dispersal of measures, lack of operational guidelines and lack of effective coordination of the various aspects of the common agricultural policy. At best, the measures financed under the structural policy result in fragmented, generalised financing of investment relating to agricultural or forestry activities."

[Mr. William Cash]

In regard to the most critical questions facing the report —agriculture and budgetary discipline—at best it can be said that it gets two out of ten. That is not a criticism of the Court of Auditors—I am grateful that it has done such a good job in identifying these matters—but, we must go beyond the question whether the Court of Auditors has done a good job and consider whether the objectives of the budgetary arrangements are being implemented. If they are not—this report deals with the entire expenditure of the European Community—we are entitled to ask some serious questions about the viability of the system as a whole.

It is not good enough for my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to explain in accountancy terms, and in a sombre, melancholy, downbeat manner, what he thinks has occurred. We need vigorous criticism of the system from our own Government, to ensure that the aspect on which we lay so much emphasis—budgetary discipline—is delivered. As the Court of Auditors itself is so critical of the lack of budgetary discipline, we might have expected some comment from my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary along the same lines.

The report is full of examples of fiddling, fraud, waste, and extravagance—you name it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it is there. It is about time that we put our foot down. When my hon. Friend attends the Council to discuss the Community's budgetary arrangements as a whole, I hope that he will speak his mind and get them sorted out once and for all.

11.42 pm

Mr. Maude: With the leave of the House, may I say that we are, sadly, drawing to the end of the debate, and I have been rebuked by hon. Members in all parts of the House for the way in which I approached it. I have been accused of being soporific, sombre, melancholy, and, inaccurately, by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), somnolent—I plead not guilty to that charge.

If I have been sombre and melancholy, it is because we are dealing with a sombre and melancholy subject. I am glad that no one accused me of not taking it seriously. It is a serious matter, and I am pleased that the House treated it as seriously as it did.

If I have any criticism of the debate, it is that those hon. Members who are enthusiastic about the idea of the European Community have a tendency to approach such reports in a spirit almost of apology. They suggest that, if a fault exists, it is that member states have denied the Commission the resources that it desperately needs to avoid waste and inefficiency. Later, I will refer briefly to resources dedicated to guarding against fraud.

With respect to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber, the approach that I described is not the correct one to take. Of course we must ensure that member states, but the Commission as well, can monitor the situation properly, exact full value from the funds, and ensure that they are spent properly.

On the other side of the argument, some seek ammunition with which to lambast the Community, for which they have little sympathy. One is bound to admit that the report provides a rich arsenal of such ammunition. However, an auditor's report tends, by its very nature, to highlight things that have gone wrong. Its purpose is to shine a spotlight on problems, and to point to remedies.

The faults that have been identified fall into two categories, in the way they have been addressed tonight. Into the first fall those that arise from a system that some of my hon. Friends argue is incapable of delivering a satisfactory outcome. Into the second fall the perhaps more remediable problems that arise because, although the system is satisfactory, its execution leaves much to be desired.

As an optimist, I do not believe that the systems concerned are incapable of improvement. If they have proper objectives, are properly managed and operated, and are rigorously scrutinised, I am confident that they are capable of producing satisfactory results.

However, it must be said that the report draws attention to some lamentable lapses. Some of them, as my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) said, are humorous, while others are deplorable. Important sums of money which have been voted and deployed for the relief of poverty in some of the poorest parts of the world have not made it to their destination. That is lamentable.

I assure the House that, when we debate the issue in the Finance Ministers Council on Monday, I shal, as British Ministers always do, make clear our views on the subject. If I can offer my colleagues a word of comfort, may I say that, as I attend Finance Ministers' meetings, I find increasingly that our view about the need for rigour is being echoed by our partners as——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): In the light of the earlier comments of the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken)——

Mr. Aitken: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Hon. Members: No.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 16, Noes 72.

Division No. 97] **[11.45 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Paisley, Rev Ian
Aitken, Jonathan	Skinner, Dennis
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Spearing, Nigel
Body, Sir Richard	Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Cash, William	Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Gill, Christopher	Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Gordon, Mildred	
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*	**Tellers for the Ayes:**
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James	**Mr. William Ross and**
Nellist, Dave	**Mr. Bob Cryer.**

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'r's)*
Amess, David	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Arbuthnot, James	Carrington, Matthew
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Chapman, Sydney
Arnold, Sir Thomas	Chope, Christopher
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Fishburn, John Dudley
Boswell, Tim	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Bottomley, Peter	Franks, Cecil
Bowis, John	Freeman, Roger
Brazier, Julian	Goodlad, Alastair
Bright, Graham	Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*

Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Maude, Hon Francis
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Redwood, John
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. David Davis.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the Annual Report of the Court of Auditors of the European Communities for 1989.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the Order [11th March], That the draft European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Immunities and Privileges) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c., be discharged.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

11.56 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I beg to move,

That the draft European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Immunities and Privileges) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 8th March, be approved.

I shall be brief, but I must make a few introductory comments, as I have been requested to do so. The debate is about the European bank for reconstruction and development. I am delighted that the bank has chosen London as the location of its headquarters—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am glad that hon. Members of all parties join me in expressing that welcome.

Specifically, the debate is about the privileges and immunities which are necessary to fulfil our obligations under the agreement which has established the bank and its headquarters in London. The privileges and immunities give no more than is necessary for the effective operation of the bank in London. What I propose is standard practice for institutions of this kind.

The order needs to be formally made at the next meeting of the Privy Council on 20 March so that the headquarters agreement can be signed at the inaugural meeting of the bank on 15 April, which will be a most important occasion at which the Prime Minister, President Mitterrand and the governors of the bank will be present. The agreement will come into force on signature——

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Will the hon. Gentleman assure the House that the order in no way gives any power to the bank over and above the internal affairs of our own banking arrangements in this country?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It gives no powers of that kind. I shall give some more details, and the hon. Gentleman can then judge them.

We had a general debate about the establishment of the bank last July when my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development informed the House that the Government would be presenting this order for approval once the negotiations for a headquarters agreement had been completed. That has happened, and the headquarters agreement has been laid before the House.

In the debate last July, the House discussed an order which gave effect to the immunities and privileges of the agreement establishing the bank. The order before the House today will revoke that 1990 order and replace it with fresh provisions which will consist of the provisions in the 1990 order and certain new immunities and privileges negotiated for those connected with the bank.

The privileges and immunities in the 1990 order were given by the House and by every member of the bank. The new immunities and privileges to which I shall refer relate to not the establishment of the bank but its siting in London. To recap briefly on the debate last July, the privileges and immunities debated then and now produced in this order include certain exemptions from duties and taxation for the bank and certain immunities from seizure of its property. The officers and employees of the bank are exempted from taxation on the salaries paid to them by the bank, although they will pay an internal tax for the benefit of the bank. They will be immune from suit and legal

[Mr. Lennox-Boyd]

process in respect of their official acts. Legal status is conferred on the bank by the order. That order is to be revoked and reincorporated in the new order with further provisions on which I shall touch briefly.

The further provisions relate to privileges and immunities which the House has not had chance to discuss before. They give effect to the draft headquarters agreement and result from the bank and its staff being located in London. They are complicated and, of course, I can give further details in response to any inquiry. Briefly, the privileges and immunities include immunity of the bank within the scope of its official activities from legal proceedings, subject to certain specified exemptions, and inviolability for the bank's premises.

Persons connected with the bank, including officers and employees, experts performing missions for the bank and representatives of members of the bank are granted varying privileges and immunities according to their status. However, those who are British citizens or permanent residents of the United Kingdom receive only the essential minimum privileges and immunities to enable them to perform their official functions.

All the proposals are common practice in institutions of this nature. I should add that the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments has drawn the attention of the House to two points on the drafting of article 6 of the draft order. That article regulates the inviolability of the bank's premises. The order before the House has been amended to meet the objections made by the Committee. I commend the order to the House.

12.2 am

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): First, I thank the Minister for his careful and helpful introduction to the order and for his courtesy in explaining it to me informally before the debate. The Opposition join the Government in welcoming the location of this important institution in the United Kingdom and we greatly welcome its role and function. That welcome was extended in great detail by my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd).

However, it is most regrettable that the Government made something of a dog's breakfast of getting the order through the House. All credit must go to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments for helping to sort matters out and to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), the Chairman of that Committee. However, the Opposition recognise the importance of getting the order to the Privy Council next Wednesday so that there will be no undue embarrassment when President Mitterrand and the Prime Minister take part in the ceremony later this month.

Therefore, we shall support the order, although there is a growing feeling among Opposition Members that the number of international organisations with immunities and privileges is growing rapidly. It is about the only growth industry in the United Kingdom, and we hope that the Government will keep a tight rein on it. I know that, in this instance, they have been cautious about the number of members of staff allocated privileges, for which I commend them. Notwithstanding those points, there are no substantial reasons why the order should not be approved by the House. We do not oppose it, and we look forward to its safe passage through this House and the other place.

12.5 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I shall make only a few brief remarks because, as both Front-Bench spokesmen said, the order has been dealt with by the Join Committee on Statutory Instruments, one of the less glamorous of the Select Committees of the House which does a useful and important job in scrutinising, not the merits of statutory instruments, but their technical proficiency. The original draft order was defective. Although it was authorised under the International Organisations Act 1968, the agreement establishing the European bank for reconstruction and development provided for a number of qualifications to the inviolability of the bank's premises which the order sets out to establish.

Section 6 of the agreement gave two qualifications. The first, 6.2, stated:

"The Bank and the Government shall agree under what circumstances and in what manner any such official may enter the Premises of the Bank without the prior consent of the Bank in connection with fire prevention, sanitary regulations or emergencies."

Clearly, those are sensible qualifications to allow access to the bank and qualify the inviolability of the bank's immunity.

However, that section was not included in the first draft order, and after representations by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office withdrew the original order and relaid the order —incorporating that section—which we are considering tonight.

However, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office did not include article 6.3, which provides that

"the bank shall allow duly authorised representatives of public utilities to inspect, repair, maintain, reconstruct and relocate utilities, conduits, mains and sewers within the Premises of the Bank and its facilities."

The argument that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office used was that, when the agreement was reached on the European bank for reconstruction and development, it was "understood"—the word used in its memorandum —that it was one of a class of provisions that imposed obligations on the bank exclusively under international law. I find it curious that inspection, repair, maintenance and relocation of utilities, conduits, mains and sewers within the bank's premises should be subject to international, not domestic law. I should have thought that sewers were very much a matter for domestic, not international, law.

Therefore, we have drawn the attention of the House to the instrument, which is noted on the Order Paper, not because of any specific headings under which we are required to report instruments to the House—for example, if they go beyond the Minister's powers or involve unusual use of powers—but on the residual power that we have to draw attention to the unusual use of an instrument, which we are doing.

The extract from the 14th report of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments is available in the Vote Office should any hon. Member wish to obtain it —several already have. I cannot imagine that there has been a huge rush to obtain it. However, it is available and, of course, in presenting a report to the House, we are

obliged to include the memoranda from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I hope that the Minister can explain why sewerage in such cases is subject to international law. His reply will be interesting.

12.10 am

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am pleased to say that I think that I can provide an explanation. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) for his kind words. I am sorry if he or any of his colleagues suffered any discourtesy or inconvenience. It was unfair of the hon. Gentleman to suggest that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was at fault. The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) will know that the interpretation of legal drafting is not an exact science. The legal department accepted the alternative view of the Joint Committee and acted accordingly. It was a matter for debate, but, naturally, the department wished to afford the Joint Committee the courtesy of accepting its view and that view was incorporated. That is the reason for the delay and why the matter is before the House.

I shall now deal with the matters raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, South. We are affording diplomatic immunities to the bank. The hon. Gentleman spoke about the provision in article 6.3, in which we are breaking new ground in our agreement with the bank. By derogation, we are reducing the full diplomatic immunity that is normally accorded to diplomatic institutions. that part of the negotiations was hotly debated, but the Government's view prevailed. It was decided that it would be improper to incorporate that derogation in our domestic law because those who represented the bank and accepted the derogation felt strongly about the matter. They agreed to abide by the decision as a matter of international law, but did not wish to have this diminution of their diplomatic rights, as they saw them, incorporated in British law. They have undertaken to allow inspection. Emergency inspection is enshrined in article 6.2 and they have accepted the need for access for such inspection. However, they have not accepted the incorporation in British law of the need for general access by public utilities. As I said, they are happy to agree to it under international law. I hope that my explanation satisfies the hon. Member for Bradford, South.

Question put and agreed to.

British Rail

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

12.13 am

Sir John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): I welcome this opportunity to discuss the performance of British Rail, and I am delighted to see in his place my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport.

Britain invented railways and built them all over the world. I have always preferred travelling by train to driving a car, particularly on today's crowded roads. Before the war, I lived near Hitchin on the old LNER line, and often went to see the Silver Jubilee thunder by. At that time, the trains to and from Hitchin were so punctual that one's watch could be set by them. I also remember the thrill of going to Paddington station en route to Oxford, and I remember the west country accents, the chocolate and cream coaches, the glorious engines and, of course, the station master in top hat and tails. Apprentices for the GWR had to go to Swindon to be approved. It was like joining a good regiment. The railways were privately owned, and the morale of the staff was high.

For the last 45 years, I have travelled on the Marylebone line. Initially, the steam trains were not too bad, and the trains alternated between Marylebone and Paddington. Since steam went out, the service has unfortunately deteriorated, with bad time keeping and many more stops at the stations. I realise only too well that this line has not suffered as much as some of the lines in the south-east of London about which there are so many scandals. However, the number and frequency of delays, the cancellations of services, the breakdowns of engines and signalling, about which there is little or no information, are innumerable. Even yesterday, the train that I had planned to catch from Marylebone left 20 minutes late.

Some year ago, I began corresponding with the then chairman of British Rail on all these matters. Replies were slow in coming in, sometimes written by a less senior official, and always, I am afraid, temporising and unsatisfactory. I had a long series of complaints about the appalling state of the car park, which I used regularly. One could easily have broken a leg on the rough ground, and at night the car park was either unlit or lit by only one, insufficient, lamp. Eventually, in exasperation, I asked to see the chairman, and after some delay, I was fobbed off with promises of a meeting that never took place. In the end, I heard no more about it.

I am bound to ask myself whether, if the railway system was not a monopoly, it would dare to treat its customers in this way. This leads me to believe that there must be something radically wrong at the top, and also with recruitment, training and promotion of the right people to the higher positions in British Rail. There seems to be no incentive for efficiency, and a lack of leadership at all levels. Let us imagine for a nightmare moment that our forces in the Gulf had been conducting themselves on the principles on which the railways are run. How different the result there would have been.

These weaknesses show up worse when a service breaks down or is cancelled. Unfortunately, I have seen only too many such incidents. No senior official ever appears on the scene. No one above a chargehand or, in Army parlance, a lance-corporal, ever appears. Where are the sergeants, let

[Sir John Stokes]

alone the subalterns or more senior officers? All too often, no explanation of why the incident occurred is given, and we are not told how long it will last. If, in desperation, one telephones the railway centre, it often takes ages to get through, and before anyone replies. Even then, there is often no clear answer. Can one imagine this happening in one of our great private enterprise companies—for example, Marks and Spencer?

The situation is no better in my constituency. Halesowen now has no station, although there are two local stations nearby. Stourbridge is on the Birmingham to Worcester line, with a poor local service, old rolling stock, and often a lack of information when anything goes wrong. Recently, there has been a new name for the region in which I live—Network SouthEast. Although some stations have been improved and repainted, the whole idea of Network SouthEast seems to be a purely media and promotional one, with appalling stupid signs such as "Welcome to Little Snodgrass". What the customers want is not advertising expertise but a better service. The timing of most services is poorer because there are so many stops at stations.

Morale among the staff of British Rail generally is not good, although I still meet some marvellous railwaymen, with some of the pre-war ideals of giving a good service to the public. I usually find that the booking clerks are good and give a better service than one often gets at a post office counter.

The whole organisation needs much better leadership and inspiration at the top. The railways have lost a huge freight business. Unless they improve, they will lose passengers as well. A recent survey published in the magazine *Which?* points out that two out of five rate the overall quality of service as fair or very poor, that around two out of five think that the service represents poor value for money and that more than two in three regular commuters think that the quality of service has deteriorated in the last three years.

The article also points out that British Rail does not guarantee that trains will start or arrive at the times specified in timetables and states that it is not liable for any loss or damage that might arise from delay. The same applies, of course, if any passenger service is suspended or discontinued.

Another great tragedy for the railways and, from an environmental point of view, for the country as a whole has been the loss of freight traffic. Business after business has lost confidence in the railways, due in large part to strikes and the poor service that is given. I was surprised to hear some time ago that even the Post Office now sends many letters and parcels by van instead of train.

With too many cars and lorries on our overcrowded roads, the railways had a golden opportunity which they have not taken. Why, for instance, can they not give a door-to-door freight traffic service, combining the carrying of goods by train with subsequent delivery by van? Really good service is given by the railways only when part of them is contracted out, as with the famous Orient Express.

The recent short spell of bad weather highlighted faults in the design of engines, rolling stock, lines and signalling, and in many cases the failure of management and staff as well. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) pointed out on Monday in a question to the Secretary of State for Transport, huge investment is no use if British Rail cannot operate the equipment in bad weather.

I am reluctantly driven to the conclusion that the weaknesses in management are due largely to security of tenure and the certainty of pay, which have made many inclined to be slack in their approach to their duties. Above all, why do not top and middle management get out and about to see at first hand what is happening? I am sure that the chairman is a good man. I hope that he will have his own carriage, with supporting staff, attached to inter-city services or other main-line trains, so that he can get about personally and see as many stations as possible. Cannot managers model themselves on the best private enterprise companies, where the customer always comes first?

There no longer seems to be the pride that there once was in the railway profession. The sooner all the separate services are privatised the better. We shall then see better management, better equipment, including more electrification which is efficient and not harmful to the environment, better managers and staff, higher morale and a better deal for the customer. The distress, sadness and disappointment among travellers by train I have seen year after year. Surely under this Government we can do something to improve matters. Perhaps we should send someone over to France to see how the railways are run there. Above all, the stimulus of competition will work wonders, and British Rail will be freed from the protected and cosy position that it enjoys at present.

12.24 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): It is a great pleasure to be in the House tonight to answer the debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes). In responding to my hon. Friend's comments—bearing in mind that I have many times been at the Dispatch Box in response to Adjournment debates at a late hour—and to the clear and cogent arguments that he has adduced this evening, perhaps he will allow me to respond in a rather more ad hoc fashion than my brief would otherwise have dictated. The style in which he has introduced the debate calls for perhaps a more direct reply than would otherwise be the case.

What my hon. Friend has described from his knowledge of British railways over the past 40 years is a comment on how society itself has moved. I would not dissociate myself from his analysis of the change in the railways since nationalisation. He described the situation in, I believe, 1946. I can just remember, as a very small boy aged four, going to Euston when travelling from London to the north-west; I can recall that great station and the thrill of the age of steam for young children. Those days are past. Euston station as my hon. Friend and I recall it is no more.

My hon. Friend said that we were dealing with a nationalised industry in which to some extent over the years a very large organisation had become driven by the need to supply certain services and perhaps had forgotten how to satisfy customer need. That was very much a theme of his speech. I believe that it is an accurate analysis. What is needed in the years to come is so to organise the structure of British Rail that it can and will respond more positively to the requirements of the customer.

There are parallels here with the national health service and perhaps with our education service. It must become more responsive to what the customer wants, the customer in this case being the travelling passenger. My hon. Friend has suggested privatisation as the solution. The Government would agree with him. It is surely right to place British Rail in the private sector. The Government have not reached any conclusions about the timing or the method of that—it is a very difficult task and one that must be done sensitively, with proper consultation and with proper forethought—but we are clear in our determination to move the railways back to the private sector from which they originated in their individual railway company form.

My hon. Friend referred to the management of British Rail. Today I have been out and about with the management of Network SouthEast, visiting stations in north Kent—Ramsgate, Margate, Ashford and Tonbridge —together with not only my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) who, out of a great sense of loyalty, is still here at this late hour, but four other hon. Members who represent constituencies in Kent. We were accompanied by very senior management from Network SouthEast, which I thought was commendable. We stopped at the stations, and the management ensured that I spoke to passengers and staff. I commend the management of Network SouthEast on its preparations for my trip today and on the fact that it gets out and about.

My hon. Friend talked about freight. There has been a dramatic shift of freight from the railways to the roads. Just after the war, the majority of freight was carried by rail; now it is only a small minority, perhaps 10 per cent. That in part has been due to the growth of the motorway and trunk road system and the greater freedom and flexibility of moving freight by road for manufacturers and shippers. But the Government strongly believe that, in the next decade, British Rail, whether in the public or private sector, will face the great challenge of capitalising on the opportunities presented by the channel tunnel to ship freight long distances from the great regions of the nation through the tunnel to compete with other European nations in selling goods at a fine and competitive price.

The Government are assisting British Rail to make that difficult transition. British Rail must develop a system of intermodal terminals where manufacturers can move their freight by road to new terminals where train loads will be assembled and hauled a minimum of 200 miles through the tunnel to the waiting markets.

We believe that that is the right way for British Rail to recapture some of the freight that is now being carried on the roads. I envisage that freight from the new terminal at Normanton, near Wakefield in Yorkshire, will remove lorries from the M1, M25 and M20—roads that would otherwise have been used to carry individual lorry loads of freight through the tunnel. I hope that British Rail can capitalise on the construction of that new terminal and the new technologies available to British Rail, such as the new low-wheeled bogie wagons that will be able to run on both British and European gauges and through the tunnel and move more freight from the roads and on to rail.

My hon. Friend referred in passing to InterCity, which has experienced a remarkable transformation. In the past 10 years, the inter-city service has improved greatly. It is now one of the few railway systems—if one can describe that sector of British Rail as a system—that makes a profit. That is a remarkable achievement—a turnround in fewer than five years. A great tribute should be paid to the management of InterCity and British Rail on that achievement.

The inter-city service, with its modern rolling stock, running on electrified lines—the east coast main line is a fine example of a new line with new rolling stock being delivered—represents an acceptable railway service in comparison with any other European railway service.

One of the great problems of Network SouthEast, which basically provides a service to commuters into the capital, is its Victorian railway lines which run under Victorian bridges. I saw Rochester bridge today and how narrowly constrained the railways were in bringing the commuters of Kent into London as a result of there being a single track in one direction over that bridge. The same is true of the great London terminals such as London Bridge, Waterloo, Victoria and Liverpool Street in particular, where the capacity might have been acceptable 50 years ago but today is unable to cope with the enormous increase in the patronage from which British Rail is now benefiting.

My hon. Friend might be interested to know that from 1970 to the mid-1980s patronage on Network SouthEast continually declined year on year. All of a sudden, in the mid-1980s, when prosperity returned to Britain, and particularly to the south-east, patronage began to rise at an impressive rate. Network SouthEast suffers now from the problems associated with overcrowding on many lines. Perhaps it is reaping the consequences of years of neglect in investment in rolling stock. It has undertaken, therefore, with Government support, a massive programme of reinvestment, and we are seeing the benefits of that on certain lines. For example, from Liverpool Street station to Southend, there is modern rolling stock. On the Northampton line, which runs up to my constituency from Euston, there is modern rolling stock. On some lines, however—I shall in conclusion have something to say about Marylebone station and the Chiltern lines—the service is not acceptable.

There are other lines where the service is not acceptable. I saw today Kent link and coastal lines where a great deal of new investment is needed, and we are providing it. The Kent link services—those services for inner London and London suburbs towards the south-east and Kent towns such as Dartford and Sevenoaks—will benefit from this autumn from the introduction of class 465 electric trains. I accept, however, that more needs to be done. On the Kent coastal services, out as far as Margate and Ramsgate, the introduction of the 471 Networker express trains will help matters. We are discussing with British Rail how quickly the process can be accomplished.

The Government acknowledge that British Rail has a long way to go in meeting the quality-of-service targets that we have set. My hon. Friend will know that the objectives vary between sectors and time of day. They can be summarised as roughly 90 per cent. of trains arriving within either five or 10 minutes of schedule time, depending on the service sector, 99 per cent. or more of trains running, 95 per cent. of telephone inquiries to be answered within 30 seconds, all carriages to be cleaned inside and out every day, sliding-door trains on Network SouthEast and regional railways to be no more than 135 per cent. loaded, with slam-door stock to be no more than 110 per cent. loaded and no standing for more than 20 minutes except by choice. My hon. Friend might say to me that even 135 per cent. or 110 per cent. loadings are

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

unacceptable. I look forward to the day when no passenger need stand on any British Rail train, but we must be realistic about the loadings of trains serving London surburbs. There are short-journey services into central London that inevitably will be crowded.

I conclude by answering specifically my hon. Friend's questions about the Marylebone line. In recent years, the service on the line has suffered because of aging, unreliable rolling stock and infrastructure. It has been clear for some time that a complete overhaul of the line and total replacement of the rolling stock would be necessary to provide the high standard of service that my hon. Friend and others using the line rightly demand.

The line is in the process of complete modernisation at a total cost of about £75 million. Marylebone station has been extensively modernised as part of a major redevelopment of the area. A new signal box is also now in place at Marylebone and the resignalling of the entire line has been completed. The total cost of the resignalling package, which includes associated track improvements, is about £12·5 million. The train fleet is also being replaced. The first of 89 new class 165 Neworker vehicles currently on order was handed over to Sir Bob Reid last month, and after trials should be delivered to the line next month. Some 165s will enter service in May, and the number will increase over the summer until the full fleet is in place in September.

The new passenger trains are some of the most technologically advanced in the world and should lead to much improved performance. They have been designed specifically to operate under driver-only operation, which should significantly improve reliability. There is great difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff in the south-east. If fewer staff can be used safely, trains can be operated more reliably.

The new trains will also feature automatic train protection. The installation of ATP trackside equipment along the whole line is under way and should be completed later in the year. In addition to enhancing safety, the ATP scheme incorporates improved driver information systems that will provide advance information about track hazards.

I hope that my hon. Friend is pleased with that report on the Marylebone line. Improvements are in hand. I hope that, before his years as a Member of this honourable House draw to a close, he will be able, with me, to celebrate the introduction of that spanking brand new rolling stock on the Marylebone line. It would give me great pleasure if my hon. Friend would join me, at the appropriate time, in visiting the stations and the new trains in service. I cannot be precise about when that will be, but I hope that it will not be too long.

On the attitude of management and staff, my hon. Friend drew an analogy with the armed services—the esprit de corps, and the ability to communicate not only between the officers and the other ranks but with the passengers—the friends, not the enemies, of the railway. I believe firmly that my hon. Friend is right in saying that privatisation will help to bring the railways closer to the customer, which is where they started from, where they should be and where, in due course, they will be.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nineteen minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 14 March 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for further consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Thursday 21 March.

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Tuesday 19 March at Seven o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: As Bills 2 to 9 have blocking motions, with the leave of the House I shall put them together.

CATTEWATER RECLAMATION BILL *(By Order)*

HOOK ISLAND (POOLE BAY) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (LEWISHAM, ETC.) BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (KING'S CROSS) BILL *(By Order)*

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 3) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 21 March.

MIDLAND METRO (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*
Read a Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

School Playing Fields

1. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many acres of school playing fields have been sold in the past year; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): In the past year, eight acres of surplus playing fields associated with Orangefield secondary school in Belfast were sold, but will continue to be used as playing fields.

Mr. Greenway: I welcome that reply and wish that England had a similar record. Can my hon. Friend confirm that the green lungs which playing fields represent will be preserved at all costs in Northern Ireland, and that the Government will see to it that boys and girls at school there receive a proper physical and sporting education and have the playing fields needed for that purpose?

Dr. Mawhinney: I can assure my hon. Friend on all the latter parts of his question. We attach considerable importance to physical education and sport and to providing the facilities necessary to carry them out. I cannot promise, however, that we shall maintain a green lungs policy at any cost; but I assure my hon. Friend that we shall not dispose of playing fields and open spaces unless there are overwhelming reasons for doing so.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome the assurance that there will be sporting facilities, but does not the Minister think that it was wrong of the Belfast education and library board to decide to put on the market the part of the property adjacent to Finaghy primary school containing a swimming pool, when the board could have put the other side of the school on the market and maintained the swimming pool as a needed leisure facility in the Finaghy area?

Dr. Mawhinney: As the hon. Gentleman pointed out, that decision was taken not by the Government but by the Belfast education and library board. However, I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's concern to the attention of my right hon. and noble Friend the Paymaster General.

Small Businesses

2. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many small businesses have been created in Northern Ireland in the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): This information is not available. However, as an indicator, VAT registrations during 1988 and 1989 show an estimated 7,700 new, mostly small, businesses.

Mr. Stevens: I am grateful for that reply, particularly as I understand that my hon. Friend only arrived back in this country at about six o'clock this morning after trying to promote Northern Ireland in Japan.

Do not the figures that my hon. Friend has quoted confirm the success of the Government's enterprise initiatives in Northern Ireland, and are not they a tribute to the spirit of the people there, who are determined to push aside the effects of terrorism in that Province?

Mr. Needham: Domo arigato gozaimasu Stevens-san. One thousand more new businesses started in the past two years in Northern Ireland than in the preceding two years. Self-employment has risen by 60 per cent. in the non-agricultural sectors since 1981 and the Northern Ireland economy is going through the recession exceptionally well, as evidenced by today's unemployment figures. However, as my hon. Friend remarked, more should and must be done because small businesses are the crucial base for our future expansion. I am confident that new businesses will continue to grow on the basis of our present success.

Mr. Speaker: May I ask the Minister to interpret the first sentence of his answer for *Hansard*?

Mr. Needham: I said, "Thank you very much."

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: The Minister will be aware that we welcome any businesses coming into Northern Ireland or any businesses that start up in Northern Ireland, but does he agree that the time has come to give local small businesses the same sum per job created as that given to outside enterprises coming into Northern Ireland?

Mr. Needham: It is crucial that we remain competitive with Wales, Scotland, the Republic, Portugal or any other countries in trying to attract business, including outside enterprises coming in to Northern Ireland. We still give considerable incentives to business in Northern Ireland. It is crucial that our help should be directed to marketing, training and improving productivity and competitiveness instead of merely giving grants. The fact that we are moving to a more competitive business environment in Northern Ireland, with more productivity, better marketing and better selling, means that our business is doing better. We shall help small business, but small business must do everything it can to help itself.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I welcome the Minister's remarks, as I welcome everything that is being done to bring small businesses to Northern Ireland. Bearing in mind that the Minister says that we are getting through the recession successfully, perhaps he will deal with the other side of the coin and tell us how many small businesses have had to close down in the past two years?

Mr. Needham: About 6,000 have deregistered in the past couple of years, but that is not a substantially greater figure than hitherto. I repeat that the Northern Ireland economy is growing at a faster pace than that of the rest of the country. That can be seen from the fact that our unemployment figures are hardly rising, if they are rising at all. We have reports from Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte, PA Consultants, even the Northern Ireland Economic Research Council, which is not the most optimistic of bodies, the Trustee Savings bank and the British chambers of commerce stating that the Northern Ireland economy is coming through the downturn in the economy better than any other region—something that has not happened at any time since 1921.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

3. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his most recent discussions with the Government of the Republic of Ireland about a replacement of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Brooke): After discussions, not only with the Irish Government but with the leaders of the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland, I have drawn up a text which I believe provides a sound basis for formal political talks on all the key relationships. This text which, in my view, respects the essential principles of all concerned, is now being sent to all the potential participants, with the request that they should respond to me, I hope positively, before Easter. I shall make the text public in due course.

Fourteen months of painstaking collective effort about important but essentially preliminary points lie behind us. Against that background, I do not believe that we can sensibly engage in further textual barter. The moment for decision has come. We have a real chance to move forward together to substantive talks. These would offer the prospect of a significant transfer of power to local politicians in Northern Ireland and a new beginning for relationships between both parts of Ireland, and among the peoples of these islands.

Mr. Taylor: That was a substantial reply, which we in the Ulster Unionist party welcome. The party has always been keen on talks within Northern Ireland and eventual talks with Dublin.

Is the Secretary of State aware that his reply is timely, bearing in mind, as he emphasised, that he has been on the job for 14 months and that many people in Northern Ireland were beginning to lose interest in the process? Can the right hon. Gentleman tell the House why the document that he agreed with the Ulster Unionist parties on 24 December—Christmas eve—was subsequently rejected by the Dublin Government about seven weeks later? Is that because the Dublin Government, as reported in the press, now refuse to talk to Ulster Unionists as part of the United Kingdom delegation? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that people in Northern Ireland see the Dublin Government using the Anglo-Irish Agreement as a vehicle through which to obstruct political progress in Northern Ireland and talks between Unionists and the Dublin Government?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his welcome for what I said. No one could be more conscious than I that we have been 14 months engaged in the process, as I have lived through every moment of them. As to the text that I have discussed, not only with the Unionists but with the other potential participants in the talks, at all stages there has been discussion about whether we could find a draft that would be acceptable to everybody. Now that we have reached the stage where I am putting forward a text which I hope respects the interests of all concerned, if we can proceed during the immediate future with good will towards all other participants, we are more likely to get to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Does the Secretary of State recognise that in many quarters of the press there will be

confusion about his statement today, for over past weeks and months many had expected the Secretary of State eventually to mourn the passing of his initiative but instead find him with the air of an expectant father? He believes that he has a text which will get support from the parties in Northern Ireland and the Dublin Government. Can he tell us whether he has come to that conclusion because of his talks with party leaders and with the Dublin Government? Has the gap that existed after 24 December been narrowed as a result of his meeting with the Government of the Irish Republic? May I assure the Secretary of State on behalf of my party that when the text is made available to us it will be examined carefully but in a positive light?

Mr. Brooke: Throughout the process I have always been disturbed by the association of my name with the initiative, on the general basis of the case of the Liberal peer, the publication of whose memoirs at the turn of the century was held up for three weeks because the printers had run out of capital "I"s. As to the substance of the hon. Gentleman's question, throughout the exercise there has been a continuing convergence towards narrowing the gap. I pay tribute to all concerned for their contributions to the process.

Mr. Duffy: Will the Secretary of State not be discouraged by the reluctance of certain parties in Northern Ireland to sit down and talk, which may owe less to a lack of political will than to private hopes about the outcome of the general election? Will he draw comfort from the fact that certain items on the political agenda, which were not there when he arrived, owe much to his political courage and imagination?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his closing sentence. I have not been discouraged as we have gone through the process, because there has been a desire for convergence on everybody's part and everyone has played a constructive role. As to the result of the general election, that is a subject about which I have no doubts.

Mr. Kilfedder: I, too, congratulate the Secretary of State on his untiring endeavours to promote talks. I look forward to seeing the document which will be published in due course. I hope that it will ensure that there will be talks. Will the Secretary of State ensure that the Foreign Office makes all proper arrangements for the visit of the President of the Irish Republic when she comes to the United Kingdom in June, albeit on a private visit, so that we can show that the people of the whole United Kingdom wish nothing but the best of friendly relations with the Irish Republic?

Mr. Brooke: There is a slight element of a concealed agenda in the hon. Gentleman's question, but I have no doubt that everyone will welcome the President of the Irish Republic as and when she comes.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not the case that substantial political progress depends in essence on two matters—first, that the minority community in Northern Ireland should have an input and that both communities should be treated on an equal basis and, secondly, as has fortunately been the case in the past few years, that there should be growing co-operation between the Irish Republic and this country? One hopes that that co-operation, which to a certain extent is shown by the Anglo-Irish Agreement, will remain in force and will be part of the policy of the present Government as well as of future Governments.

Mr. Brooke: Underlying the talks of the past 14 months has been the proposition that I put on 9 January last year, that any arrangements likely to succeed would need to enjoy widespread acceptance. That has informed all our discussions. As the hon. Gentleman will know, the Irish Government have been involved in those talks continuously over the past 14 months and have made their own input to them.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my right hon. Friend agree that to ensure that the majority community is positive, flexible and responsible, he ought to make it clear now that there will be no unreasonable veto of the minorities or of the Irish Republic, so that a deal can be made that will be acceptable both to the minority community and to Her Majesty's Government?

Mr. Brooke: One of the considerations that has informed all our conversations has been the awareness of all taking part that everyone has the freedom to withdraw from them, if they wish to do so. In that sense, although I personally would not use the word, everyone has a veto, but I sincerely hope that it will not be used.

Mr. McNamara: We admire the Secretary of State's tenacity over the past 14 months and, as he knows, we have wished him well in his discussions. We share to a degree the regret that he must feel that it has been necessary for him to issue today what amounts to an ultimatum. That is a matter of regret for us. Is it the Secretary of State's opinion, on the basis of his discussions, that it is possible for all the parties involved to sit down and work things out according to a suitable timetable? Does he agree that if the parties concerned do not accept his position, we shall be back at square one? Does he further agree that the three relationships will have to be re-examined, whatever might replace his present round of talks—though I hope that they will not be replaced? Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that the next fortnight will be an important time for reflection for the people who are party to the discussions, because the only persons who will delight in the talks not progressing further after the next fortnight will be the men of violence from both communities?

Mr. Brooke: It was not in my mind to present what the hon. Gentleman described as an ultimatum, but, after 14 months of constructive negotiation with all the parties, I am concerned to take personal responsibility, on behalf of the Government, for a text that will be acceptable to all. In that sense, and by definition, I run the risk that everyone will accuse me of misreading the tea leaves in making that proposition. Nevertheless, I believe that that is a sensible way to draw matters to a conclusion. As to returning to square one and dealing with three relationships, that seems to be a form of multidimensional chess, but I will endeavour to unravel the hon. Gentleman's proposition. I wholly agree with his remarks about terrorists.

Community Relations

4. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his plans to encourage the churches to promote community relations.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government have indicated on a number of occasions that they are prepared to help Church-based programmes which promote cross-community contact, greater mutual understanding, or appreciation of cultural diversity. In addition, I have met the Church leaders twice to explore what further help the Government could give to encourage local initiatives. I hope to meet them again in the near future.

Mr. Burns: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is crucially important in encouraging community relations that the churches should conduct ecumenical acts of worship and work together in the community?

Dr. Mawhinney: Ecumenical services and the like are matters for the churches and for Church leaders, not for Government Ministers. I agree strongly with my hon. Friend that the involvement and standing of churches in the Northern Ireland community give them a significant role to play, should they be willing to accept it, in those areas which are, in the first instance, divorced from theology or worship.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister agree that much more has been done at congregational level than has sometimes been given credit? Does he accept that one of the greatest hindrances to better community relations is a separate Church-based education system which penalises children going to state or integrated schools, and in which many priests will not even help children to take their first communion?

Dr. Mawhinney: I certainly agree with the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question. There is a lot going on, on a cross-community basis, with the Church and churches at its focus. As to the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, the Government believe that parents should have the opportunity to make choices concerning the education of their children. No doubt the hon. Gentleman, like me, welcomes the fact that, as a consequence of the introduction of the cross-community scheme a couple of years ago, about one third of all the schools in the Province, and about 300 youth clubs are involved in joint local projects. That was not happening a few years ago and it is a measure of the progress that has been achieved. I look forward to more progress in the years ahead.

Rev. Ian Paisley: In view of the remarks that the hon. Member has just replied to, will he confirm to the House that the Moderator of the largest Protestant church in Northern Ireland, the Irish Presbyterian church, has made it clear that he will not take part during his office in any ecumenical services, and that that is not merely the view of one Protestant communion? Does not he think that it would also be helpful to community relations if he gave the same type of help to Protestant church schools as he gives to Roman Catholic church schools?

Dr. Mawhinney: On the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I repeat what I said in my initial answer. The behaviour of Church leaders towards ecumenical services is a matter for them to decide, not for Government Ministers. Outside the direct theological issues and issues of worship and joint worship I know that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that the churches are involved in many other activities which would provide a platform for more joint action than takes place at the moment. On the second part of his question, I think that he understands that what he refers to as Protestant churches are able to apply to the Department of Education for funding for Protestant church schools on the same basis as any other school. I shall reflect his concern to my right hon. and noble Friend the Paymaster General, who now has responsibility for these matters.

Terrorism

5. **Mr. Stanbrook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress towards eradicating terrorism in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: The Royal Ulster Constabulary, supported by the armed forces, continues to make progress towards the defeat of terrorism, within the rule of law. It does this by pre-empting, deterring and, as necessary, responding effectively to terrorist attack. During 1990, 380 persons were charged and 440 persons were convicted for terrorist related offences, including 80 and 35 for murder and attempted murder respectively. Some 223 weapons, nearly 22,500 rounds of ammunition and more than 4,300 lb of explosives were recovered. We shall continue to be resolute in our determination to end terrorism in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stanbrook: If my right hon. Friend wants to deal with the political causes of Irish terrorism, will he consider redrawing the border between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic so as to exclude those who do not wish to be British and to include in Northern Ireland only those people who do, with generous resettlement grants for those who find themselves on the wrong side of the border from their point of view?

Mr. Brooke: I mean no disrespect to the question asked by my hon. Friend, but I cannot think of anything that would be more likely to encourage terrorism than if it were seen that a redrawing of the border followed from their actions. At a more general level, it is my experience with borderlines that someone is always cross to be on the wrong side of them.

Mr. Molyneaux: Is the Secretary of State aware that there is widespread support for the attitude of the General Office Commanding Northern Ireland in his references to the defeat of terror in the Gulf area? Does the Secretary of State agree that there is an urgent need for the eradication of terrorism, whether it is directed by Saddam's army council or by the self-styled army council of the IRA?

Mr. Brooke: The GOC's statement earlier this week, to which the right hon. Gentleman refers, could not have been clearer. It was a resolute statement of Government policy and I stand wholly behind it.

Rev. William McCrea: For over 20 years now, the people of Great Britain and Northern Ireland have endured the scourge of terrorism. Will the Secretary of State tell the House and my constituents when the victory over terrorism will be won? Does he not agree that the

secret of the Gulf war lay in the lack of political interference in military measures? Will he tell the House that the Government will adopt the same resolute manner in eradicating terrorism in Northern Ireland, and that the handcuffs and the political restraints will be removed from the security forces, so that they can do their job in a proper military fashion?

Mr. Brooke: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a precise date for the victory over terrorism, but I have no doubt that it will occur. In answer to the second question, let me repeat that the security forces in Northern Ireland operate under the rule of law and I do not believe that, on reflection, the hon. Gentleman would wish it otherwise.

Mr. McNamara: I welcome the encouraging figures given by the Secretary of State. May I ask him two specific questions? First, has the review of the question of permanent vehicle checkpoints been completed yet? Secondly, are the Government taking any steps to try to protect taxi drivers from the special risks to which they currently seem to be subject?

Mr. Brooke: A good deal of work is being put into reviewing the PVCP policy. I cannot commit myself to a timetable for the conclusion of the review, but I accept that different views are held in the community about the value of PVCPs, which I have discussed with representatives of that community. I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about taxi drivers, and we are looking into that.

Self-government

6. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further discussions he has had with leaders of the political parties about a measure of self-government for the Province.

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend the Minister of State and I have, within the last fortnight, met the leaders of all the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland. As a result of my conversations with them, I have been able to take the steps that I outlined a few moments ago in my answer to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor).

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Building on that answer, will my right hon. Friend tell me whether he agrees that the heartfelt longing of so many people in the Province for a measure of political stability and local administration should take precedence over anything else that he may seek to achieve in any further talks? In his talks with the political parties, did he find enough common ground among them to encourage him to believe that a devolved Administration in the Province may be possible in the not-too-distant future?

Mr. Brooke: The longing to which my hon. Friend has referred has come through not only to me but to the leaders of political parties with whom I have been engaged in conversation. I have observed concern that the talks should succeed, and that we should proceed to constructive measures. The fact that we have been able to reach the point that we have reached, and that I have been able to draft the text to which I have referred, is, I think, evidence that common ground is beginning to exist.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To what extent is a Bill of Rights on the agenda in the discussions? Such a Bill would be particularly appropriate for Northern Ireland, because it would protect minorities in different sets of circumstances —both Protestant minorities in Catholic areas, and vice versa.

Mr. Brooke: I do not think that it would be appropriate for me to tell the hon. Gentleman exactly what I am in the process of putting to the political leaders; it is a confidential matter between them and me. I can tell him, however, that—as I have said on previous occasions—although the Government do not see a Bill of Rights as an early part of any agenda, they would be prepared to consider it if it became relevant in the conclusion of an overall arrangement.

Mr. Latham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that none of his many friends in the House wish him to be viceroy or proconsul for ever? We wish his latest initiative every success, bearing in mind the fact that it follows in the long tradition that has been going on for more than 400 years.

Mr. Brooke: I am certain that that was a very nice remark of my hon. Friend's; in that spirit, I hope that I am correct in agreeing with him.

Political Progress

7. **Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last had discussions with the representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland about political progress in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: I last met the Irish Foreign Minister, Mr. Collins, on 11 March.

Mr. Mallon: I very much welcome the Secretary of State's statement today and I am glad that a final draft is being put to the parties, not least because 14 months is a long time—it feels like 400 years—for the discussions. Does the Secretary of State agree that, if negotiations take place, as I hope, they will be based on the three sets of relationships that we discussed in great detail during the previous talks? Does he further agree that it is only on the basis of those three sets of relationships that a workable and lasting arrangement can be found?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he said, and I share his sense of the passage of time. I do not mean to be discouraging when I say that the 100 years war went on for 116 years.

The three sets of relationships have informed all the discussions that we have had, and I agree with the hon. Gentleman that they seem to be the best basis for such talks in terms of securing widespread acceptance.

Mr. Bellingham: When the Secretary of State had these discussions with his Irish republican counterparts, was extradition on the agenda? Can he say exactly whether the new extradition arrangements are working properly?

Mr. Brooke: I am not sure that extradition per se falls into the category of political progress, which is the question that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) asked me; but in the meetings that we have at the Intergovernmental Conference under the Anglo-Irish Agreement, extradition is of course discussed, and there are exchanges in both directions.

Mr. Trimble: I should like to refer the Secretary of State to Tuesday's *Irish Times*, in which Mr. John Bruton, the leader of Fine Gael, the second largest party in the Irish Republic, is reported to have said:

"The deletion by the Irish Government"—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Paraphrase it, please.

Mr. Trimble: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

I should like to refer the Secretary of State to Tuesday's *Irish Times* report in which Mr. John Bruton, the leader of Fine Gael, the second largest party in the Irish Republic, is reported to have said that the deletion by the Government of the Irish Republic of the reference to Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom from its latest proposals showed that the Irish Government's main objective was to try to arm-twist the Unionists into a united Ireland. This view is reinforced by a statement of Mr. Ahern, a member of the Dublin Cabinet, in which he said that any solution that did not provide for movement towards an all-Ireland unitary state would be unacceptable.

Is that, in the Secretary of State's view, consistent with the so-called recognition in article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Is it one of the interests of the Irish Republic that he is trying to protect in his proposals?

Mr. Brooke: The text to which I referred in my answer to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) was composed subsequent to the Tuesday when the text to which the hon. Member has referred appeared in the *Irish Times*. Given that we now have a potential common text which I am putting to the leaders of all the parties and to the Irish Government, I do not think that we shall make a successful outcome more likely by engaging in retrospective argument about what has occurred in the past.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. Friend believe that Her Majesty's Government are putting as much urgency and energy into solving the Northern Ireland question politically and peacefully as they are putting into the search for a solution to the middle east question?

Mr. Brooke: Yes.

Security

8. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security of civilians in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since I last answered questions, on 14 February, there have been six civilian deaths and two security force deaths arising from the security position. I am sure that the House will endorse the Government's condemnation of the brutal mortar attack outside Armagh on 1 March, which sadly resulted in the deaths of two young UDR soldiers and the maiming of two others; and of the vile attack at Cappagh on 3 March, in which four civilians died.

For the most part, Northern Ireland is a safe place. Sectarian violence—including violence aimed at persons believed to be connected with the security forces—persists, although not at the levels experienced in the 1970s. We are not complacent; we are determined to create the conditions in which all the people of Northern Ireland can live without the threat of terrorist violence.

Mr. Brown: Does the Minister of State understand that, just as Labour Members have condemned the killing of innocent civilians in the Gulf, we also condemn the unnecessary killing of innocent civilians in Northern Ireland? However, to condemn is not enough; we need some sort of political initiative, which we hope will be taken soon and will be successful. In the meantime, do not the working-class communities in the Province deserve better? They deserve protection. I believe that the only way to achieve that—and this may be controversial—is to set up defence squads based on the trade unions—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has every right to put his point of view.

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying before I was interrupted, should not defence squads be set up, based on the trade unions, with the participation of both Catholic and Protestant workers? Would that not make more sense than more and more people being killed unnecessarily? It may be no panacea, but does the Minister of State agree that at least it should be considered?

Dr. Mawhinney: Probably those who would find that suggestion the most controversial are the trade unions.

I wish to pick up the hon. Gentleman on the use of the words "innocent civilians". Everyone involved within the law in Northern Ireland is innocent—not only the civilians, but the security forces, the UDR and the police. The use of the word "innocent" as an adjective linked with "civilian" does a great disservice to the people of Northern Ireland and to the security forces.

Sir Antony Buck: Does my hon. Friend agree that the security of civilians in Northern Ireland is remarkably good in the circumstances? Will he pay tribute, in that context, to the work of the RUC, the UDR and our armed forces who have operated under great burdens for many years?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Dr. Mawhinney: I agree very much with my hon. and learned Friend. I am sure that the security forces and the RUC will take great heart not only from his comments but from the wide endorsement that those comments were given on both sides of the House.

Jobs

9. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action the Government intend to take to safeguard jobs in the first decade of the single European market.

Mr. Needham: The Government are taking a whole range of actions to ensure that Northern Ireland derives economic benefit from the single European market. Industry has responded well to those actions and must continue to exploit the many opportunities that are available.

Mr. McGrady: Is the Under-Secretary aware of a report from Cambridge Economic Consultants, which says that, in its opinion, in the first 10 years of the single European market, 40,000 jobs will be lost in Northern Ireland? Does the hon. Gentleman subscribe to that view, especially as the European Commission has found that the industries

that are endemic in Northern Ireland will be those that will bear most of the brunt? Does he agree that there should be a renewed and reinvigorated drive to obtain inward investment for Northern Ireland as a substitute for the potential job losses post-1991?

Mr. Needham: No, I do not agree with that report. As I said earlier, the Northern Ireland economy is dealing with the downturn very much better than it has dealt with any previous downturn. As the hon. Gentleman knows, it is also dealing with it very much better than any other region. We are attracting investment from a whole range of companies and countries precisely because they know that, by coming to Northern Ireland, they will be able to compete in the European market. The Northern Ireland economy in the 1990s has a rosy future, provided that we raise the level of our marketing, training and productivity. That is exactly what we will do.

Mr. Tim Smith: Instead of talking about safeguarding existing jobs in the Province, should not we be a little more positive and talk about the creation of new jobs? Will not the single European market offer good new opportunities for Northern Ireland as an attractive place for investment from outside the Community?

Mr. Needham: I thank my hon. Friend. I am being, and have always been, positive about the Northern Ireland economy. We are attracting very large numbers of new jobs from a large number of countries and a large number of companies. By getting those new jobs, the training, productivity and marketing right, the Northern Ireland economy is, for the first time, showing the way to the rest of the country.

Mr. Stott: Perhaps the Minister might reflect that, just before the advent of the single European market, the seasonally adjusted figures for unemployment in Northern Ireland are understated by roughly 50,000 as a result of the way in which the Government currently calculate the statistics. Does he accept that the true level of unemployment now stands at 20 per cent? Does he regard that as an achievement of 12 years of Conservative rule, given the fact that, in 1979, unemployment in Northern Ireland was 11·3 per cent?

Mr. Needham: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's figures. Unemployment in Northern Ireland at the moment is 13·5 per cent. It is lower this year than it was a year ago, whereas in the rest of the country it was 5·7 per cent., and it is now 7 per cent. The Northern Ireland economy is, I repeat, showing a faster rate of increase than at any time since 1921. I have yet to hear from the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) what on earth he would do to the economy of Northern Ireland.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Williams: Does the Prime Minister recall saying not so long ago that the poll tax system would be fairer, more acceptable and prove to be enduring? Does he think that he is still clear in his own mind about that?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will be a good deal clearer in his mind about the future of the community charge before very long. It is particularly surprising that, some months after the Labour party produced its own roof tax, it is still unable to answer even the most obvious questions about it.

Mr. Ian Bruce: My right hon. Friend, in paying tribute to the forces in the Gulf, has very often referred to the training that those people had received. Will he assure the House that, in the "Options for Change" review, while we may change where the training is carried out or the number of people being trained, we will certainly ensure that the quality of training, such as that provided in Portland, is not diminished?

The Prime Minister: The quality and nature of training is clearly very important. Whatever may happen as we consider "Options for Change" in future, that will not change.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister think that the Ministers who have been responsible for spending £10 billion of taxpayers' money on the utterly discredited poll tax system should now do the honourable thing and resign?

The Prime Minister: Shadow Ministers responsible for a scheme that they would foist on the country should explain how it would work. The right hon. Gentleman cannot even tell us, months after his scheme was introduced, what the levels would be in his constituency.

Mr. Kinnock: The Government have spent and are continuing to spend vast sums on trying to sustain the poll tax system—including the £400 million to set it up, the £300 million a year on trying to maintain it and the £6 billion in an attempt to sweeten it. Does not the Prime Minister agree that any company or public body responsible for spending so much money so wilfully would have the people responsible on their way to gaol, and rightly so?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the people leading the queue to gaol should be those Labour local authorities which waste more money than anyone else in the country and whose average community charge is £78 higher than that of Conservative authorities.

Mr. Ward: When my right hon. Friend considers with his colleagues the lessons of the Gulf war, will he bear in mind the need for amphibious capability and in particular the need for amphibious craft for the Royal Marines and such services?

The Prime Minister: In the aftermath of the Gulf war, we shall need to consider a number of matters to ensure that our armed forces are up to date and relevant. I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend says.

Q2. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cryer: While the Prime Minister tries to control the warring factions in the Tory party over the poll tax, will he bear in mind the fact that he could bring immediate relief to the millions of people who are groaning under this vicious poll tax—especially those who have been thrown on the dole queue by his economic policies—by restoring Government grants to local authorities to their 1978-79 level under Labour? At the same time, he would get rid of the political corruption that gives an extra £64 a head to Tory-controlled Wandsworth, while low-paid areas like Bradford are left without.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is on shaky ground if he wants to discuss local government, given the attitude of Labour local authorities. If he really wants to see how money is wasted and badly handled, he should go to Lambeth.

Mr. Brazier: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, under the principle of accountability, it is long overdue that we should introduce into the House a Question Time for the Leader of the Opposition, so that we could ask what his policies are?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that that is a matter for the Select Committee on Procedure.

Q3. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Prime Minister aware that the people of Wales want not only an early end to the poll tax, but something done about the iniquitous level of water charges? Since privatisation, there has been a 45 per cent. increase in Welsh Water charges, and the average bill of £195 compares to £137 in Severn-Trent, which gets its water from Wales? When will he start an inquiry into the monopoly profiteering in the water industry?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that charges have risen sharply under Welsh Water—[HON. MEMBERS: "It is absurd profiteering."] It is not absurd profiteering but the unprecedented £1·8 billion investment programme which is necessary to improve water and sewerage and bring them up to a standard that the people of Wales would wish to have.

Q4. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Amess: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the "buy British goods from Basildon" campaign that was introduced recently by myself and our local European Member of Parliament, Patricia Rawlings? Does my right hon. Friend agree that such local initiatives can make a useful contribution to reducing the trade deficit? Socialist Opposition Members should follow our lead in backing rather than bashing Britain.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend, as ever, is very inventive, and I am grateful to him for drawing that campaign to my attention. The key to reducing the trade gap is for British industry to produce goods that people want to buy at competitive prices, which is increasingly the aim of British industry. Many British companies already do just that, and I hope that more people will buy British. It is time that the Opposition supported British companies and stopped knocking Britain whenever they can.

Q5. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ross: Has the Prime Minister had a chance to study the proposal that Prime Minister Mulroney made for some form of arms control initiative? Before the Prime Minister's meeting with President Bush in Bermuda on Sunday, will he immediately impose a moratorium on arms sales, particularly to the middle east? Will he assure President Bush that the whole country would support an immediate control on the sale and export of arms?

The Prime Minister: We have to look at the export of chemical, nuclear and biological weapons, in particular to the middle east. I expect that we shall take up that matter at the United Nations and elsewhere.

Q6. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Twinn: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the London borough of Haringey has set a community charge £171 higher than neighbouring Conservative Enfield? Does he share the sense of joy of 20,000 of my constituents and of my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), who heard yesterday that the local Boundary Commission will not transfer four wards into Haringey? Will he join my hon. Friend and me in congratulating our constituents who fought hard with us to stop the daft idea?

The Prime Minister: I am unsurprised to hear from my hon. Friend about the level of charge in Haringey. It is, after all, a Labour authority. Perhaps, if Haringey gets a Conservative authority, it will, as in so many other places, get a far lower charge.

Q7. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fearn: Is the Prime Minister aware that the figures for housing waiting lists are now at a crisis level, especially in the north-west? Will he institute a crash building programme in local government which would help local government, the people in need and, indeed, the construction industry, which is on its knees?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will know of the estate action programme and the dramatic increase in the funding to many housing associations. I fear that a significant part of the problem is the large number of local authority dwellings that remain unlet with no apparent effort to let them.

Mr. Sims: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, at a time when pressure had to be gently exerted on certain Governments to make a financial contribution to the costs of the Gulf operation, the Government and people of

Hong Kong made a donation of £15 million? Will he take this opportunity to express the appreciation of the Government and the House of that gesture?

The Prime Minister: I am certainly grateful for that contribution. I expressed my thanks to the Governor of Hong Kong and the Executive Council some weeks ago.

Q8. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winnick: Which is likely to come first, a substantial fall in unemployment—the figures for which have risen yet again and which the policies pursued when the Prime Minister was Chancellor of the Exchequer helped to create—or the ending of the poll tax, which he justified at every opportunity?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, unemployment rose to 7 per cent. across the United Kingdom in the figures announced today. That is high. It is still well below the European average. It is well below France, at 9 per cent., Italy, at 9·9 per cent., Canada, at 9·3 per cent., Spain, at 15·8 per cent. and Ireland, at 14·8 per cent. If Government policies alone determine the level of unemployment, our record is infinitely better than that of any of those countries.

Q9. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Speller: Has the Prime Minister had any confirmation that poison gas has been used in Iraq in the past few days? What steps is he taking to see that the capacity for chemical and nuclear warfare is destroyed and that that destruction is permanent?

The Prime Minister: I have no evidence that poison gas has been used, but that is one matter which we shall wish to discuss with our allies in the weeks ahead.

Mr. Hardy: Would the Prime Minister care to compare his Government's treatment of the city of Westminster and of the metropolitan borough of Rotherham? Is he aware that Government support per head to Westminster will be 470-odd per cent. higher than that given to Rotherham? Is he aware that if we had had the same treatment, far from charging a low poll tax, our local authority would be giving everyone at least £250 next year?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the level of support is a good deal higher in inner London boroughs generally, although, as he will know, there is a sharp difference in the level of community charge even between adjacent London boroughs such as Lambeth and Wandsworth.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Has the Prime Minister been made aware of the statement by Jacques Delors in the European Parliament this week, that the Prime Minister had said that the United Kingdom had substantially changed its position on monetary union? Can he confirm whether this is so, or can he tell us what this change is?

The Prime Minister: I can confirm that that is not so. I also confirm that I had the opportunity of telling Mr. Delors that over dinner earlier this week.

Dr. Reid: Is the Prime Minister aware that, in about an hour and a half, the Select Committee on Trade and Industry will publish its report on British Steel's closure of the Ravenscraig hot strip mill and Clydesdale? Anyone who listened to the information given to that Committee cannot doubt that the report will be a damning indictment of British Steel's industrial relations policy. Does he recall telling me about three months ago, in a meeting that he was kind enough to have with me, that, should the worst come to Lanarkshire, he would not stand idly by? Since then, another 3,000 workers have been told that they will have to stand idly by, having been made redundant. Can he now tell the people of Lanarkshire what he intends to do, or does he find the same difficulty in making up his mind on that issue as he does on the poll tax?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows precisely what we propose to do. If he racks his brains, he will recall that I told him when we met some time ago. I made it clear to him at our meeting that the Lanarkshire working group had been established now to identify what measures might be needed at some future stage if the mill were to close. That remains the case, as the hon. Gentleman has known for some time.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 18 MARCH—Second Reading of the War Crimes Bill.

Motions on the membership of Select Committees.

TUESDAY 19 MARCH—My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will open his Budget statement.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

WEDNESDAY 20 MARCH and THURSDAY 21 MARCH—Continuation of the Budget debate.

FRIDAY 22 MARCH—Private Members' Bills

MONDAY 25 MARCH—Conclusion of the debate on the Budget statement.

Mr. Speaker, the House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee A will meet at 10.30 am on Wednesday 20 March to consider European Community Document No. 10541/90 relating to the common fisheries policy; and European Standing Committee B will meet on the same day at 10.30 am to consider European Community Documents Nos. 8073/90, 8792/90, 4112/91 and 8075/90 relating to Community social matters.

[European Standing Committee A
Wednesday 20 March
Relevant European Community Document
10541/90 Common Fisheries Policy
Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee
HC 29-xiii (1990-91).

European Standing Committee B
Wednesday 20 March
Relevant European Community Documents
(a) 8073/90 Regulation of Hours of Work
(b) 8792/90 Employment of Pregnant Women and Recent Mothers
(c) 4112/91 Employment of Pregnant Women and Recent Mothers
(d) 8075/90 Minimum Safety and Health Requirements for Temporary and Mobile Work Sites
Relevant reports of European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 29-i (1990-91)
(b) HC 29-ii (1990-91)
(c) HC 29-xii (1990-91)
(d) HC 29-ii (1990-91)].

Dr. Cunningham: Is it not the clearest indictment of the Government's economic and industrial policy failures that unemployment has again exceeded 2 million? Is it not a shocking disgrace that, for the second time in a decade, the Government have forced our economy into such a deep and damaging recession? Can the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that, when we debate the Budget next week, the Secretary of State for Employment will be at the Dispatch Box to answer for those abysmal failures of the Government's term in office?

Why has the Leader of the House still not found time for us to continue our consideration of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill? What have thousands of teachers done to cause the Government to fail to continue consideration of the measure, which is important for teachers and for the future of our children's education? Why is not the Leader of the House candid about the ever-increasing delay? It is now more than six weeks since the Bill left Committee. When will the House have the opportunity to find out what is in the Government's mind?

Can we have time next week for a statement on the Government's intentions to privatise electricity in Northern Ireland? There will be considerable interest among all hon. Members in that important and controversial measure.

I support the request that has already been made that we have a debate at the earliest possible opportunity on the report by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, which covers the crucial issue of steel in Scotland and the importance of Ravenscraig and other steel plants for the economy and for employment in Scotland. Scottish Members could then call the Government to account for their continuing failure seriously to address the damage to the Scottish economy which results from Government policies and from the policies of British Steel.

It is widely reported in the press today that there have been heavy briefings from Downing street on the Government's intentions with respect to the future of the poll tax. Is it not essential that, if the Government have made a decision, it is announced in the House? If the decision is, as it should be, to abolish the tax, will not the Leader of the House find time to take up the offer made yesterday by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) for the Opposition to co-operate with the Government immediately in a Bill to abolish the poll tax and to replace it with a property tax? Whatever the decision, is it not time that not only Parliament but the country saw an end to all the flarching and callifuggling about the future of the poll tax, and that we had some honest answers from Ministers—including the Prime Minister—about their intentions?

Has the Leader of the House had time to reflect on the shameful and contemptible behaviour of Tory Members in yesterday's debate on the abolition of the poll tax? They attempted to wreck the speech—*[Interruption.]*—some of them are here now and are attempting to wreck my question—of my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham.

Has the Leader of the House seen that the *Official Report* shows that there were 16 bogus points of order from Conservative Members? Conservative Members defied the ruling of the Chair nine times and persisted in trying to interrupt when it was clear that my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham was not giving way. Mr. Deputy Speaker ruled 18 times that Tory Members were making or trying to make spurious and bogus points of order. There were 11 occasions on which Mr. Deputy Speaker had to intervene and call for order, and 12 other instances when *Hansard* recorded interruptions, all from Conservative Members. Will the Leader of the House find time soon for a debate on that boorish, loutish and unacceptable behaviour?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Hon. Members: Give way.

Dr. Cunningham: I will not give way. It is indicative of the guilt of hon. Members that they do not want the record to be put straight—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This takes a lot of time.

Dr. Cunningham: Does not the Leader of the House recognise that my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham deserves and is entitled to an apology on the record from the Leader of the House? Will he ensure that we can have discussions through the usual channels next week? We are not prepared to tolerate such behaviour again, in the interests not only of fair debate, but of the good name of Parliament, about which his hon. Friends seem to care little. If he does not arrange these things, the Government may find that they have great difficulty because we shall use—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Yes. We shall deploy the legitimate procedures of the House to give the Government a taste of their own medicine.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman has referred to unemployment. He will know that the number of people in employment in this country hs been rising for seven years, and has increased by more than 3·3 million since March 1983. Indeed, there are now nearly 27 million jobs in the United Kingdom. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said a few moments ago, the United Kingdom's unemployment rate is lower than the European average and lower than the rates in a considerable number of countries in the Community. It will of course be possible to discuss these matters next week, during the debate on the Budget statement. I expect that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment will take part in that debate.

The hon. Gentleman will realise that there will be no opportunity next week to discuss the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill. With regard to the Budget, we shall be following normal practice. The hon. Gentleman will have to be patient.

I hope that it will be possible to make some comment before too long about the privatisation of the electricity industry in Northern Ireland.

With regard to the report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, I am sure the hon. Gentleman recognises that it will be possible to discuss trade and industry matters fully during the Budget debate.

Hon. Members will know that, this morning, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister chaired a meeting of ministerial colleagues on the question of the community charge. He will chair a further meeting next week, and the Committee's conclusions will then have to go to the full Cabinet. After that, we shall announce our proposals.

In the context of the Opposition's position on the community charge, the hon. Gentleman mentioned yesterday's debate. He suggested that the Opposition would be willing to co-operate if their proposals were incorporated in a Bill. He will have noted that the Opposition's motion yesterday was resoundingly defeated —defeated by a majority of 142. So much for the Opposition's great attempt to push their proposals. So much, indeed, for the Opposition's faith in their own proposals. Clearly, they were unable to get a large number of their Members to come and support them.

The hon. Gentleman described the behaviour of some Conservative Members yesterday as shameful. The pressure from my hon. Friends was caused by the fact that, despite many attempts, they were getting from Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen no answers with regard to the details of the Opposition's policies. I hope that, the next time these matters are debated, we shall get answers. That will be the way to make progress. That said, I have to add that I am always prepared to discuss any issue that the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise with me through the usual channels.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): I should like to draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 500, which concerns the Merchant Navy.

[That this House welcomes the recent report of the Joint Working Party on British shipping published in September 1990; notes the vital importance of Britain's merchant fleet for the economy, employment and our strategic defences; recognises the links with regard to economic activity and maritime skills, between the merchant fleet and the marine related industries; notes that British shipping and those marine related industries together contribute some £5 billion a year to the country's invisibles; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to take immediate and positive action to first ensure that the British fleet is strengthened by appropriate stimulation of investment in modern tonnage and second encourage the recruitment, training and employment of British seafarers.]

That motion has now been signed by a majority of the Members of this House, including 66 per cent. of those Conservatives who are eligible to sign. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is very important that we have a debate on this subject, and will he agree to bring the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor?

Mr. MacGregor: As my hon. Friend knows, the Government are actively following up the recommendations in the joint working party report. These deal, among other things, with recruitment and training. As I said on another occasion, assistance with the costs of training Merchant Navy officer cadets is already provided under the Merchant Shipping Act 1988. With regard to financial assistance, as my hon. Friend has indicated, the General Council of British Shipping and others have made submissions to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. My hon. Friend will realise why I cannot make any comment on that.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I should like the Leader of the House to give consideration to certain proposed Orders in Council that were published recently. Although I have them here, I do not intend to read or paraphrase from them. As can be seen, they are quite substantial documents. I understand that there is provision for consultation up to September, after which the orders will be brought before the House. Will the right hon. Gentleman consult his colleagues with a view to arranging a longer consultation period—perhaps into 1992—to enable the interested parties to digest the material and to respond? Will he also do something to see that all this detailed material is dealt with in such a way that hon. Members can debate it thoroughly and table amendments?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall have to look into the points that the hon. Gentleman raises.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for us to have a statement shortly on

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

the role of the district auditor, with particular reference to Derbyshire county council? Is he aware that the council has been sitting on a report from the district auditor on the management of its pension fund for nearly nine months, mainly, we believe, because that report contains details of highly irresponsible and even illegal behaviour? At the moment, only the council has the power to publish that report and there seems to be no way in which anybody can force it to do so. Will my right hon. Friend look into that scandal as a matter of great urgency?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall certainly discuss it with my right hon. Friends. I shall be coming to Derbyshire on Sunday and Monday this coming week, when I shall be happy to hear from my hon. Friend about the issues that she has raised before I do so.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): If it cannot be done by Ministers from the Department of the Environment replying to tomorrow's debate on the ecology of the Gulf, will the Leader of the House arrange for a full explanation to be given to the House of Commons next week of exactly what happened before the bombing on the road to Basra? Either it was justified, in which case the House of Commons would listen to a justification, or it was thoroughly unjustified, killing thousands of people, many of whom were from the Indian subcontinent and contract workers, and creating a feeling in the Arab world that it was terribly unnecessary slaughter. One way or the other, the House of Commons should have an explanation.

Mr. MacGregor: I know that the hon. Gentleman has a debate on important matters in relation to the environment tomorrow, to which a Minister will be responding. I cannot promise him a debate next week on the other point that he has raised.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): May I support the plea by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) for a debate on what took place in the House yesterday during the poll tax debate, because that will give the Conservative Members an opportunity to point out that, since 1983, the proceedings of the House have been suspended on more than 10 occasions due to the antics of Labour Members of Parliament? That will give Conservative Members the chance to give the players' benefit to those who did the work during the years preceding yesterday.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend has made the point already.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Leader of the House tell us rather more about how the Government intend to respond to the report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry into the Scottish steel industry? As he will be aware, British Steel is in the process of closing down the Scottish steel industry, and any action that is to be taken on the Select Committee's recommendations will have to be rapid.

What assurance can we have that the Select Committee's report will not be allowed to gather dust in the Department of Trade and Industry while the Scottish steelworkers are put on the dole? Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a statement to be made, perhaps this evening, or at the very least guarantee that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, in responding to the Budget debate next week, will be in a position to answer, point by point, the Select Committee's remarks and recommendations?

Mr. MacGregor: Clearly there cannot be a statement this evening. It never has been the practice to respond instantly to a Select Committee report. I understand that it is a fairly lengthy report, and the Government must have time to consider it. The Government will be responding to the report in the usual way and, as the hon. Gentleman knows, there is a time scale for the Government's response.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): If the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) were here a little more often——

Dr. Cunningham: I was called to the Chair by the Home Secretary.

Mr. Brown: I apologise.

The hon. Gentleman has been in the House for 21 years. When discussions between the hon. Gentleman and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House take place through the usual channels, will my right hon. Friend have available to him the document that is in the Library, which shows the number of suspensions of hon. Members by the Chair during the past 10 years? Will he remind the hon. Gentleman that, since the 1979-80 Session, when I came into the House, there have been about 13 suspensions, all of them of Labour Members.

Will my right hon. Friend remind the hon. Gentleman of the way in which some Opposition Members behaved when I sponsored a Private bill through all its stages? You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that, apart from one speech which lasted six minutes, I was never heard in the House, and all the disruptions came from Opposition Members. Will my right hon. Friend suggest that, from time to time during the 21 years that he has been in the House the hon. Gentleman should have come into the Chamber to see some of the antics of his hon. Friends?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend makes his point very clearly, and I can well understand his frustration. The figures that he quotes make their own point.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Will the Leader of the House make time for a debate on local government, so that I can ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to visit the London borough of Hackney, the poorest borough in the country, to see its problems for himself and, above all, so that he can congratulate the leadership of Hackney council on lowering Hackney's poll tax, in the face of enormous difficulties and social problems?

Mr. MacGregor: We have had a number of debates on local government, and I am sure that we will have many more.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): In relation to Monday's business, may I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 595?

[That this House recognises that many who voted to avoid the alteration of even a word or a comma in the War Crimes Bill did so with a heavy heart, and wonders why the Labour Party suspended its usual critical judgment of the Government.]

May I also draw my right hon. Friend's attention to his remarks on 6 December in column 463 and to questions 50 and 51, which I hope he will be able to answer tomorrow? What has changed since last year, when the Government seemed to exclude any prospect of the House changing a word or comma of the War Crimes Bill? Is there any way in which the House can decide that the Parliament Acts should not come into effect?

Mr. MacGregor: I have seen early-day motion 595. We debated the procedure motion on Monday evening. All things considered, the procedure that we are following is the best way to proceed, and that view was endorsed by a clear majority of hon. Members on Monday evening. Both Houses can still express their view on the Bill.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): May I also draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 500?

[That this House welcomes the recent report of the Joint Working Party on British shipping published in September 1990; notes the vital importance of Britain's merchant fleet for the economy, employment and our strategic defences; recognises the links with regard to economic activity and maritime skills, between the merchant fleet and the marine related industries; notes that British shipping and those marine related industries together contribute some £5 billion a year to the country's invisibles; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to take immediate and positive action to first ensure that the British fleet is strengthened by appropriate stimulation of investment in modern tonnage and second encourage the recruitment, training and employment of British seafarers.]

Hon. Members who signed it will be disappointed by the right hon. Gentleman's response. Is it not time that the Government accepted that since they took office the decline of the merchant fleet has been the worst on record? They have a clear responsibility to respond to the widespread concern that has been expressed about the British merchant fleet. Only Government intervention will revive the fleet, the shipyards and the work related to them.

Mr. MacGregor: I have made clear the Government's response to some of the points that have been made on the merchant fleet, particularly on training. I am aware that other points are being made about financial and tax matters. It is not appropriate for me to say anything about that today.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the publication of the interim report of W. S. Atkins on the channel tunnel rail link has been widely welcomed? However, it raises matters of considerable complexity, not least whether the views and legislation of the European Commission on railway lines are being observed. Given the complexity of the issues, will he give us a chance to debate the parameters within which the consultants will be allowed to discuss this matter?

Mr. MacGregor: I recognise the importance of this matter, particularly to my hon. Friend's constituents, but I cannot promise a debate before the Easter recess. The House must consider many matters in the coming weeks, but I shall bear my hon. Friend's request in mind.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): In calling for a debate on parliamentary behaviour, is not the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) guilty of applying the most grotesque double standards? As recently as 29 January, in a debate on the rate support grant for Wales, my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), now the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, made a seven-minute speech in which he was interrupted no fewer than five times by bogus points of orders and by other interruptions.

Mr. MacGregor: Points of order are used on both sides of the House when Members of Parliament wish to express points of view or to pursue a particular matter. That is why I said yesterday that much of the frustration felt by my hon. Friends was due to the fact that they were not getting answers to the questions that they had raised.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate on the press? Has he seen a letter in *The Star* newspaper this morning asking Members of Parliament to support the closure of Sellafield? Has he also seen the centre page spread in *The Star* on Tuesday of this week that suggested that British Nuclear Fuels plc had backed off from the Press Council over complaints? Does the Leader of the House know that *The Star* editors did not include in that article the fact that they had been given a sound drubbing and beating by the Press Council only a year and a half ago when I complained to the Press Council over *The Star's* bad and inaccurate reporting of matters relating to the nuclear industry? Ought we not to be debating those matters in Parliament? That newspaper is getting totally out of hand, and does not realise what damage it is doing.

Mr. MacGregor: I have not seen either the letter or the report to which the hon. Gentleman refers, so I cannot comment upon them. As for the general issue, I cannot promise a debate in Government time in the immediate future, or for some time to come, due to the pressure on parliamentary time. However, the hon. Gentleman has recourse to various courses of action. He obviously feels strongly about the point, so no doubt he will do that, through the appropriate authorities. He can also use the devices of the House to raise the matter in other ways.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate about the importance of the Government's response to the Select Committee's report on Ravenscraig, which is to be published later today? Does he not appreciate that the rundown of the Scottish steel industry will lead to the loss of thousands of jobs in central Scotland, that it will severely damage our industrial infrastructure, including the railways system and the basic infrastructure of central Scotland, and that, above all, it will close down certain options for future industrial developments by industries that use steel? Does he not recognise that we are talking about the future of Scotland as an industrial nation? That is why we must have clear Government action in response to the report and a debate on what they intend to do about it.

Mr. MacGregor: Job losses are of course unwelcome. The Government will continue to encourage British Steel seriously to consider any commercially viable opportunities involving its Scottish plants and any commercial offers for the assets. These decisions were taken on commercial considerations. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Lanarkshire working group is identifying the main constraints to revitalising Lanarkshire's economy

[Mr. MacGregor]

and will be recommending measures to resolve the problems. The restructuring of the local economy is very much in the Government's mind.

It is difficult for me to comment on the Select Committee's report, since it has not yet been published, but the Government intend to respond to it in the normal way. I repeat that it is possible to raise all economic and industrial matters next week and in the following Monday's debate on the Budget. Moreover, there will be an opportunity to raise them when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry speaks on trade and industry matters.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I join the shadow Leader of the House in urging my right hon. Friend to have a debate as soon as possible on standards of behaviour in the House, so that Conservative Members can point out that, far from being a bunch of coy little political virgins—goody-goodies and teacher's pets—the type of personal abuse that Opposition Members heaped upon our former Prime Minister far exceeded anything that has ever emanated from this side of the House? It would also provide us with the opportunity to point out that nothing was required from this side of the House to ruin the speech made yesterday by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould).

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend has made his point. I would only add that Conservative Members have frequently been subjected to running commentaries from quite a number of Opposition Members for a long time, which have often come from a sedentary position, and we have not complained about that.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The Leader of the House will know of the intense concern of many about the fate of the British hostages and other hostages in the Lebanon. Will he arrange for the Minister of State, Foreign Office to make an early statement when he returns from his meetings with the Syrians and others?

While he is at it, will my hon. Friend have an urgent word with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary and ask them to reconsider their refusal to meet the spiritual leader of Tibet, who is visiting Britain next week? It is a disgrace that the only Cabinet Minister permitted to meet the Dalai Lama is the Lord Chancellor, who has been told not to say anything to him. Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that the Chinese will treat the British Government and others with nothing but contempt if they show weakness? Will he urge the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary to hold the proper discussions with the Dalai Lama next week, so that the fate of Tibet can be properly understood and considered by the British Government?

Mr. MacGregor: The Government remain concerned about the hostages, and are actively pursuing all their cases. I shall bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's suggestion about a possible way of reporting to the House on any developments that take place. The Government wholly share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the matter.

On the hon. Gentleman's second question, we are following a practice established for some time when the Dalai Lama has visited this country. There is clearly a distinction between his role as spiritual leader, which is widely recognised, and direct official relationships. The hon. Gentleman will know that the Dalai Lama is due to meet many people when he comes here next week.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will the Leader of the House take note of my support of the request by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) for a debate on the campaign being waged by *The Star* against British Nuclear Fuels plc at Cumbria? The article contains great distortions. I have been to Japan to see the fast breeder reactor to which the nuclear waste will be returned for fuel. This scare article may cost jobs and alarm the local inhabitants in Cumbria, and we should debate the matter on the Floor of the House.

Mr. MacGregor: I repeat that I have not had the opportunity to read the reports, so it is difficult for me to comment, but I have said that there are other ways of pursuing the matter on the Floor of the House and outside. No doubt my hon. Friend will want for once to strike up an alliance with the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) in that respect.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): I was interested in the right hon. Gentleman's earlier reply, in which he said that he hoped for an announcement in the near future on Northern Ireland Electricity. Did he mean a statement about Government policy or a statement about the procedure in this House for dealing with proposals on the future of Northern Ireland Electricity? Does he recognise that there will be outrage throughout Northern Ireland if any attempt is made to push through an Order in Council to privatise Northern Ireland Electricity without the right of parliamentary debate or the right to table amendments? Does he accept that that is yet another example of an issue that should be referred for proper discussion to a Select Committee on Northern Ireland?

Mr. MacGregor: The right hon. Gentleman will have to wait for the statement, which I said I hoped would be made in the House before long.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): In respect of a possible statement on the abolition of the poll tax next week, will the Leader of the House give us a guarantee of a separate statement on Scotland? Is he aware that the Scottish legislation differs in many respects from that for England and Wales? It has been on the statute book a year longer and been inflicted on the people of Scotland a year longer.

Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that, in the second vote last night, three of the four Scottish Office Ministers—the Minister of State and two Under-Secretaries—declined to support the Government's review proposals? The surprise today is that they are still in their jobs; but Scotland's case is different, and we want an assurance of a separate statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman should not draw any significance from the voting list last night for the second Division. I should make it clear that I did not mention any precise time for a statement. I cannot say yet in what form the statement will take place or how it will be announced. I have noted the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the position in Scotland.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Has the Leader of the House had a chance to read in *Hansard* of

the changes to Standing Orders for private business? If the right hon. Gentleman has read the report, he will have noted that *Hansard* records that all the proposed new Standing Orders were ordered to be passed. If the right hon. Gentleman reads the Vote and Proceedings, however, he will find that it is recorded that the Standing Order dealing with environmental assessment was not passed. I understand that my hon. Friends objected to that Standing Order because they wanted to ensure that there would be a debate on the issue and not because they were against it in principle. It is extremely unfortunate that the first measure was not agreed to and that the others were agreed to, and the position should be rectified at the earliest opportunity. Can the right hon. Gentleman arrange for us to have an early debate on the reform of private business?

Mr. MacGregor: We cannot amend votes that have already taken place. I shall check what, as I understood it, seemed to be a disparity in the reporting of what happened yesterday. From the reports that I received, I understood that it was the environmental assessment Standing Order to which there was objection. That measure may have to be debated unless the block is removed.

I am aware of the great interest that the hon. Gentleman takes in private Bill procedure. He will be aware that we have placed on the Order Paper the proposals that have emanated from the Chairman of Ways and Means for making changes to our procedures as they relate to private Bills, to be operative from the next Session. We have been considering the responses to the consultation document from the Department of Transport, and these would involve legislation changes to our private Bill procedure. I hope that before long the Government will come forward with their response to the responses to the consultation document. That is the moment at which we might consider how we debate private Bill procedure in the House.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House confirm that the gathering of hon. Members in the Chamber means that there will be a statement shortly on the Birmingham Six, so that we can celebrate the ending of the outrageous injustice that these people have suffered?

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that he has received and seen the report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, which was published yesterday? I do not expect a debate or a statement on the report next week, but will he assure the House that he will not try to push it to one side but will give it urgent consideration and bring it before the House, along with the necessary changes to Standing Orders that are recommended in the report, so that the private interests of the Chairmen and members of Select Committees, who he will accept perform an important function in the House, are brought under proper scrutiny and control, not only for ourselves but for those outside who expect decent standards of conduct in public life?

Mr. MacGregor: I can confirm that there will be a statement shortly on the Birmingham Six. I think that it would be for the convenience of the House to have the statement, but the court's decision was announced only at 3.30 pm. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will make a statement as quickly as that is convenient to the House.

I have seen the report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests. I have not had time to study it in full, but I can assure the hon. Gentleman that it will have my consideration.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Now that the Home Secretary has arrived in the Chamber—my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) is present and will respond adequately to the statement for the Opposition—I ask the Leader of the House to have urgent consultations with the Home Secretary, after the statement, about rearranging next week's business so as to allow some Government time to debate the lessons and consequences of the release of the Birmingham Six—not least so that my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), who is not in his place, can be rightly given due credit for the pivotal role which he has played in the past few years inmaking today's decision possible, and so that *The Sun* can make an apology to him for having described him and others among us, who have also championed the Birmingham Six, as looney Members.

Perhaps Irish families in my constituency and throughout the midlands can take comfort from the fact that there will be compensation. Most important is the need to stop now the passage through Parliament of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill—the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973 arose from the arrest of the Birmingham Six—to ensure that this never happens again.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman had better await the statement. In so far as he has raised anything for me on business, there is no chance of rearranging the business for next week. That business is clearly related to the War Crimes Bill and, most importantly, to the Budget, which takes up most of the week.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): When the Leader of the House replied to my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who asked for a statement on the poll tax, he referred gloatingly to the majority of 142 yesterday. Does he recall that those 142 included the Liberals, Democrats or whatever they call themselves—the salads—who voted against a motion calling for the abolition of the poll tax only a few days after they had scored their victory in Ribble Valley? Bearing that in mind, does the Leader of the House understand that, although there may be many Tories with different answers to the poll tax problem, there is only one party prepared to abolish it—the Labour party?

Mr. MacGregor: That question is not directed at me. All I know is that the majority yesterday was clear and resounding.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Following that question—I am not sure what relation it had to business—will the Leader of the House accept that those of my party who voted against the Labour motion voted against a hamfisted proposal and that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that has anything to do with the business for next week.

Birmingham Six

4.11 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Baker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Government's response to the decision earlier this afternoon by the Court of Appeal to quash the convictions for murder of Hugh Callaghan, Patrick Hill, Robert Hunter, Richard McIlkenny, William Power and John Walker, arising from the two bomb explosions in public houses in Birmingham in November 1974. A similar statement is being made by the Lord Chancellor in another place. We will arrange for copies of the Court's judgment to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses as soon as it is available.

The case, together with others which have occurred, raises a number of serious issues which must be a cause of concern to us all. It is of fundamental importance that the arrangements for criminal justice should secure the speedy conviction of the guilty and the acquittal of the innocent. When that is not achieved, public confidence is undermined.

Under the provisions of section 133 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, any person whose conviction has been quashed on the basis of a new or newly discovered fact following a reference by me of the case to the Court of Appeal is entitled to apply to me for compensation. The amount will be decided on the basis of advice from an independent assessor. I will, of course, give careful consideration to any application that is made to me by the six men.

We fully recognise the seriousness of the issues raised by those cases, and the Government are resolved to ensure that they are properly addressed. However, it is important to recognise that the Government have already taken a wide variety of measures that ensure the conviction of those who have committed criminal offences and protect innocent suspects. They include the codification of police powers to investigate crime; controls over police interrogations, including the tape-recording of interviews; the reform of the law of evidence as it affects confessions; the setting up of the Crown prosecution service and the Serious Fraud Office; extension of the Court of Appeal's power to order retrials; and improved quality controls over forensic science work.

Many of the cases that have given cause for concern predate those developments. My predecessors and I have demonstrated our willingness to look hard and seriously at any evidence presented to us about alleged miscarriages of justice, and our readiness when necessary to refer that evidence to the Court of Appeal.

Our criminal justice system deals perfectly well with the overwhelming majority of cases. That should never be forgotten. The cases that are now the cause of our concern represent only a tiny proportion of the work that is carried out to very high standards. I would wish that to be clearly understood, so that we do not get carried away with the quite erroneous belief that everything in our current arrangements is flawed. We believe, however, that it is now necessary to undertake a review of the criminal justice process as it at present stands, taking full account of recent reforms. The aim of such a review will be to minimise so far as possible the likelihood of such events happening again.

The review will embrace all stages of the criminal process. It will consider the investigation and pre-trial stages. That will include the management of the investigation by the police and the role of the prosecutor. It will include also the role of expert witnesses and, in particular, that of forensic scientists and the reliability of scientific evidence. It will review the place of the right to silence in criminal proceedings. It will consider a possible role for investigating magistrates, the conduct of criminal trials, and the duties and powers of the courts.

In addition, the review will examine appeals procedures, the powers of the Court of Appeal, and the investigation of alleged miscarriages of justice once appeal rights have been exhausted—including the functions at present carried out by the Home Secretary.

The review, extending as it does over the work of the criminal courts in England and Wales, is of such importance that we believe that it should be undertaken by a royal commission. Her Majesty has accepted that recommendation. We have placed a copy of its terms of reference in the Libraries of both Houses. Her Majesty has approved the appointment of Lord Runciman of Doxford to be chairman of the royal commission. We shall announce the names of the other members as soon as possible.

The Government's decision to establish a royal commission is an indication of the importance that we attach to the work of the review. It is our intention that it should be wide ranging and thorough. It must also be carried out as soon as possible. We have, therefore, asked its chairman to make every effort to complete the commission's work within two years.

The House will, of course, be aware that in October 1989, Sir John May was appointed to inquire into the circumstances surrounding the convictions of the Guildford Four and the Maguires. In July 1990, he submitted an interim report, which led my predecessor to refer the convictions of the Maguires to the Court of Appeal. The court has yet to hear the case, and I would not wish to make any further comment on it while it remains sub judice.

We have asked Sir John May to complete his very important inquiry into the Guildford Four and Maguires cases. The appointment of the wider inquiry that I have announced today is not intended to inhibit him in any way. We think it right, however, to ask him to concentrate his inquiry on the circumstances of the cases themselves, and to contribute his views on the wider issues to the royal commission, of which he has agreed to be a member.

All of us in the House must be disturbed by what has occurred. The objectives of the criminal justice system must always be to ensure that those who commit criminal offences are brought to justice, that the guilty are punished, and that the innocent—including those wrongly charged with offences—are protected. Valuable reforms have already been introduced in recent years. I believe that our present arrangements work well in the overwhelming majority of cases, and I pay tribute to all those who endeavour to achieve that.

The time is right, nevertheless, to take a fresh look at the existing arrangements, to see whether further improvements can be made—and that is why the Government have decided to establish this royal commission.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): The first emotion that we must all feel today is relief, that so grotesque a miscarriage of justice has at last been righted. The second is anger that it ever happened at all—and that it was allowed to continue for so long. The third must be determination that it never happens again.

I express my admiration for all those—principally, my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin)—who fought so long and so bravely to see justice done. Without them, the six men would still be in prison. My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South in particular has been subjected to much vilification. He is entitled to many apologies from both inside the House and outside it, not least from previous Home Secretaries—although I doubt whether he will receive them.

Although it is important to emphasise today that most police officers act honourably, and that our judiciary are generally perceptive and fair-minded, the case of the Birmingham Six, following that of the Guildford detainees, has done much to damage the reputation of British justice. Does the Home Secretary agree that it is essential that that damage is repaired as quickly as possible?

As I understand the Home Secretary's statement, the May inquiry will continue to examine the wrongful convictions in the Guildford cases. Am I right to conclude —although I hope that I am wrong—that such an immediate and urgent inquiry will not be made into the Birmingham convictions?

The Home Secretary talks about the May inquiry's efforts being concentrated on the cases already in hand. Someone must make an urgent investigation, not simply into the principles of British justice—important though that is—but into the reasons why these six men were wrongfully convicted. I hope that he shares my view that, as well as an immediate public inquiry into the causes of this tragedy, those who may be responsible for any breaches of the law which resulted in this miscarriage of justice ought to be speedily brought to trial. I do not believe that a royal commission will have that effect and produce that end.

Does the Home Secretary also share my view that, as well as demonstrating the likelihood of a number of malpractices in the preparation of the evidence, today's decision illustrates fundamental weaknesses in our judicial system? They were vividly illustrated by the judgments in the Court of Appeal in 1987—especially well illustrated by the comments by the Lord Chief Justice during and at the end of that case. The comments made then are now proved to be categorically wrong, and the Home Secretary is wholly wrong if he is suggesting today that recent changes in the criminal law will automatically avoid the recurrence of such a tragedy.

For example, arrests made in similar circumstances to those of the Birmingham Six would not attract the protection provided under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. I regret that in his statement the Home Secretary implied that they would.

I warn the Home Secretary of the dangers of postponing improvements in the judicial system for the length of time inherent in a report by a royal commission. A royal commission would take years to report and even more years would pass before its decision could be implemented.

It is the view of everyone who has examined the matter that the Government ought to take action now, for it is generally accepted that the problem was intensified and prolonged by the process of judges passing judgments on other judges. We now need some sort of independent view on appeals in contentious cases. We need an appeals system for such cases which includes some laymen who can make an objective judgment on how the criminal system and the lawyers and judges behave.

Let me urge the Home Secretary to introduce immediate legislation to set up such an independent appeals system. I promise him that, were he to do so, he would have the support of the Opposition in passing such legislation at the first opportunity. We need something which improves and rehabilitates the criminal justice system immediately, not in five, six or eight years' time.

Too often, royal commissions have been used to postpone action rather than to facilitate it. I urge the Home Secretary to act far more speedily than his suggestion today implies.

Mr. Baker: I thank the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) for his generally helpful response to my statement.

On the question of a further inquiry into the Birmingham Six case, I believe that the essential facts of the case have now been fully established in the Court of Appeal. I do not see a need for any further inquiry. It is not for me to decide, but I understand that necessary inquiries are well advanced. At the request of the chief constable of the West Midlands, the Devon and Cornwall constabulary are already investigating the question of criminal or disciplinary misconduct by officers involved in the original investigation. The question of any criminal or disciplinary proceedings will have to be considered in the light of the report of that investigation.

The right hon. Gentleman hopes that the royal commission will report in a short time. I have said that it will do so within two years, and I very much hope that it might be within that time because I agree that certain changes have to be made. From the wide-ranging terms of reference of the royal commission, he will know that it will cover such matters as

"the conduct of police investigations and their supervision by senior police officers, in particular the degree of control that is exercised by those officers over the conduct of the investigation and the gathering and preparation of evidence".

It will also deal with

"the role of the prosecutor in supervising the gathering of evidence . . . the role of experts in criminal proceedings . . .the arrangements for the defence of accused persons, access to legal advice".

and the access of the defence to forensic evidence and forensic advice.

The final point made by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was an important one, on which I do not think the two sides of the House differ. We need to examine the whole system of looking into miscarriages of justice after the normal processes of law have been exhausted. It is generally agreed that the present system, whereby I refer a case to the Court of Appeal for reconsideration, is not satisfactory. The terms of reference speak of

"The role of the Court of Appeal in considering new evidence on appeal, including directing the investigation of allegations".

The right hon. Member referred to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. The Act has changed, for example, the way in which confessions must be signed by the person who has been arrested in the police cell. Other protections

[Mr. Baker]

have also been introduced: for instance, the handling of forensic evidence has changed substantially since the 1970s. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that it is in all our interests for the royal commission to examine all those matters.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is of the greatest importance for the public as a whole to have confidence in the criminal justice system and process? His announcement of a wide-ranging inquiry by a royal commission into court procedure and the investigation and preparation of cases will satisfy many of the concerns that are felt.

Does my right hon. Friend also agree that the cases that gave rise to this afternoon's statement date from 17 years ago, since when the procedures for the investigation and recording of evidence—as well as the Crown prosecution service and the forensic science services—have changed beyond all recognition? Have not they become dramatically different? Finally, does he agree that the experimental tape recording of interviews under the prevention of terrorism Act is a welcome development?

Mr. Baker: I agree that practices have changed substantially since the inquiries were undertaken in 1974 and 1975. I am glad that my hon. Friend recognises that. I confirm that two experiments with the taping of evidence in terrorist cases are now taking place, in London and Liverpool.

The terms of the royal commission are wide enough for the commission to re-examine those matters and to look at all the procedures. It can examine virtually everything, from the arrest of a suspect to the final examination—in a different Appeal Court from the one now being used, until these matters have been dealt with. I am sure that the commission will use the considerable scope with which we have provided it.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Does not the Home Secretary feel very uneasy about the length of time that it has taken to put right what has been recognised for many years as a palpable wrong? Many opportunities have been provided for that injustice to be redressed. Does not the right hon. Gentleman feel a deep-seated unease about the fact that the system of justice has proved unequal to redressing the wrong that has undoubtedly been done?

Will the Home Secretary take it from me, as someone who has prosecuted and, indeed, defended the perpetrators of serious crime in the High Court in Scotland, that the issue of so-called "confessions" in police custody is by no means new, and no less controversial even as a result of the statutory improvements to which he has referred? That will remain a weakness in our criminal system, both north and south of the border, until arrangements are in place to make it impossible for confessions to be fabricated, or for coercion—physical or otherwise—to be employed to ensure that such confessions are produced by people who the police have decided are guilty, albeit in the absence of evidence to prove it.

Mr. Baker: I agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman that the time taken to resolve this matter gives rise to concern. It has been a long process which has ended only this afternoon, with an appeal hearing in 1987-88 as well; but it was the appearance of fresh evidence very late in the day, substantially forensic evidence, which led the Court of Appeal to quash the convictions today.

On the question of confessions, things have changed since the time when the investigations were carried out into the Birmingham Six. Now, a contemporaneous written record is made of any confession and signed by the arrested man, which was not so in this particular case. Other changes have been made: now, when someone is arrested, he is brought before a custody sergeant who authorises the detention; he must also consider whether a doctor should be called, and things of that sort. Considerable changes have been made.

The royal commission has the power to consider all these matters, and I have no doubt that it will also go into them again.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be wholly wrong for the British public to form the wrong impression from what has happened today about the conduct of our police and our courts? Does he agree with me that the way in which the police have responded to the implementation of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the introduction of the Crown prosecution service shows their desire to co-operate in the improvement of the criminal justice system?

Although it would be wrong to prejudge anything that the royal commission may recommend, can my right hon. Friend tell the House that the Government will implement its findings as speedily as possible?

Mr. Baker: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is generally agreed that these cases are exceptional, although that does not make them any the less serious and I do not want to give any appearance of complacency. These are serious matters and it is important that they be investigated in the way that they will be. The serious way in which the Government have taken this matter is reflected in the fact that we are appointing a royal commission.

PACE has made considerable changes in the actual handling and investigation of cases of this kind. Changes have been made. The various elements of the criminal justice system have co-operated with those changes. Once again, I recognise that they should be reconsidered, and that is what the royal commission is doing. I confirm to my hon. Friend that in the overwhelming majority of cases British justice works very well: a fair hearing is given and the guilty are found guilty and the innocent found innocent.

My hon. Friend asked me whether I would undertake to implement all the recommendations of the royal commission. I cannot give such a blanket undertaking; I will have to consider what the commission says. I would, however, point out to my hon. Friend that the commission will cover some matters on which there will have to be changes, and legislative changes at that. I am quite sure that a major reform Bill will flow from the work of the royal commission.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Does the Home Secretary agree that no compensation will ever make up to these men and their families for 17 years in prison when they were innocent? The other side of that is that, because the system would not face up to the error that it had made, the men who did this terrible bombing—the

worst mass murder in British history prior to Lockerbie —went scot-free. Will there be a new police investigation to try to get them?

Is the Home Secretary not big enough to respond to the invitation by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) to apologise on behalf of many members of his party for the smearing of my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) who has done a fine job in helping our system to reach justice at last?

Mr. Baker: I realise that the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin)—I am sure that he is disappointed not to be in his place this afternoon—along with several others, has over a long period taken a close interest in this case.

The hon. Lady asked me about guilty people possibly getting away with these crimes. I can tell her that investigations conducted by the Devon and Cornwall constabulary have reviewed the circumstances surrounding the bombing of the premises in Birmingham. I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that he intends to appoint a team to review the findings of the Devon and Cornwall inquiry and to follow up any new lines of investigation that may come to light.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): May I congratulate the Home Secretary on the appointment of a royal commission which will make a thorough and radical examination of criminal law, practice and procedure? This will obviously take some considerable time, and the law will have to be changed.

In the meantime, will the Home Secretary consider some alterations to the law? He will be aware that the IRA trains its terrorists in how to react when they are arrested, so that they can put forward a plea of innocence at their subsequent trials. Would he consider introducing a system similar to that employed on the continent, whereby a magistrate would cross-examine a defendant shortly after his arrest, so that the facts could be ascertained and subsequently could not be changed?

Mr. Baker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for welcoming the appointment of a royal commission. Its terms of reference specifically allow it to consider the hon. Gentleman's latter point—the possibility of an investigatory process at an early stage. Of course, that would be a novel departure for the criminal justice system in this country.

It would not be sensible for me to anticipate any of the findings of the royal commission and to introduce changes before it reports. I understand the hon. Gentleman's anxiety, and I refer him to one of the terms of reference that I have laid in the Library. The royal commission is asked to consider

"the opportunities available for an accused person to state his position on the matters charged and the extent to which the courts might draw proper inferences from primary facts, the conduct of the accused, and any failure on his part to take advantage of an opportunity to state his position".

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I sat through the previous appeal for some time, and I have sat through all of this appeal, other than for today when the decision was made. May I express my absolute joy at the release of people who have been wrongly imprisoned for so long? May I also pay tribute to those who have campaigned for their release, especially the hon. Members for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) and for Harborough (Sir J. Farr)? It must have taken considerable courage for the hon. Member for Harborough to support the case of the Birmingham Six, given the political position that he holds.

There is one matter for which we cannot legislate, and that is the hatred and racist attitude that we witness so often, and especially in the cases of the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four, sometimes in political statements and at other times from a prejudiced press. Does the Home Secretary agree that part of the problem with this case, and part of the reason why it went so wrong at the beginning, was the demand made on the police to obtain instant results? Does not that demand stem from a substantially prejudiced press?

Mr. Baker: I could not agree with that point. The hon. Gentleman might recall the circumstances of the 1970s, when there were some substantial, wicked and criminal acts of terrorism that involved the death of many people. There is an expectation—not just by the press, but by people throughout the country—that every investigation should be pursued vigorously. The facts of the case are now well known. Errors have been made, and they have been put right today by the quashing of the conviction. The royal commission will examine the whole operation of the criminal justice system.

Mr. Ian Stewart (Hertfordshire, North): Does my right hon. Friend accept that both parts of his statement will probably receive a general welcome, and that they deserve to do so? Will he ask the royal commission to consider —I say this without reference to the particular case or to particular individuals—whether it might not advantage British justice in England if it were open to the courts to have a verdict of not proven, as is the case in Scotland? The failure to obtain convictions or the overturning of them would then sometimes be viewed as evidence having been unsatisfactory or inadequate. Would not that be better than having to follow the current requirement of an absolute decision one way or the other?

Mr. Baker: I am sure that the royal commission would not be precluded from examining that possibility although I do not know whether it would be entirely appropriate in matters of this kind. Such a sentence has been available in Scottish courts, but there is nothing within the royal commission's reference that would preclude it from considering that if it so wished.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does not the Home Secretary agree that two immediate and urgent steps could be taken in the intermediate period between now and the report of the royal commission, which I welcome? Those steps might prevent miscarriages of justice occurring on this scale.

The first step is simple. Anyone arrested should have the automatic right of access to a solicitor. At the moment, some people in some circumstances are denied such access. As a second step, and as a temporary measure the power in the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 is amended by the Criminal Justice Act 1988 for a judge in the appeals courts to review evidence as a jury would should be sustained. If a case arises in which the Court of Appeal is to review new or existing evidence that would have been reviewed by a jury, that particular case, of which there are not very many each year, should perhaps be returned to a jury for retrial.

[Mr. Gerald Bermingham]

Through those temporary measures, and until the royal commission reports, we might just improve the system a little.

Mr. Baker: I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is trying to be helpful, but it would be imprudent to bring forward piecemeal changes. The royal commission has been invited to consider the full range of the operation of the criminal justice system, including the examination and the right of access to a solicitor, to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, such access can be denied for 36 hours and it can be denied for 48 hours under the prevention of terrorism legislation. I am sure that those matters will be considered by the royal commission, but they will be only part of a substantial consideration.

I will bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's point about the Court of Appeal. I am sure that the royal commission will consider the points made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Stewart) and by the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). Clearly, there must be a separate, different and better system for the final process of examining miscarriages of justice. I have some sympathy with the hon. Member for St. Helens, South when he says that any body that examines miscarriages of justice should not necessarily be just a court as we know one today, but it could perhaps have—I do not anticipate the royal commission in this respect—some investigative powers of its own to consider particular evidence.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): My right hon. Friend will appreciate that this is a very sad day for lawyers. However, as a profession, we are grateful that my right hon. Friend has acted so speedily to investigate the whole system and, we hope, exonerate it by introducing reforms that will prevent such things happening again.

With regard to the Maguire case, the Guildford Four and this case, it is clear that there must be a mechanism by which new evidence can be examined before it is placed before the Court of Appeal, which should be able to act as a jury and evaluate that evidence. It is insufficient to consider the matter from the point of view of irregularities if we are to avoid such things happening again.

Mr. Baker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I agree that we should be grateful that, as I have already said, in the overwhelming majority of cases, British justice works very effectively.

With regard to my hon. Friend's final point, one of the particular characteristics of this very long case was the appearance of forensic evidence very late in the day—in 1988-89—affecting the papers of the confession and in relation to the handling of nitro-glycerine. As Lord Justice Lloyd has made clear, that evidence was available to the Court of Appeal and was no doubt germane to its decision today to quash the convictions. When new evidence is available like that, it is important that it is investigated and made available. As soon as that was known, my predecessor referred the case to the Court of Appeal.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): In his statement, the Home Secretary seemed to say that the royal commission would examine only the legal jurisdiction in England and Wales, excluding Scotland and Northern Ireland. Would any beneficial findings apply rapidly thereafter to Scotland and Northern Ireland particularly because there is grave concern in Northern Ireland about four UDR soldiers in prison there?

When did the police investigating this crime and the others to which the Home Secretary referred, cease their investigations? Why are the West Midlands police simply considering the work carried out by the Devon and Cornwall constabulary? Why are the West Midlands police not making inquiries to discover the identities of the people who actually carried out the crime? Most hon. Members do not share the view of the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) who said that this is a sad day for lawyers. This is certainly a very sad day for the police in this country. If people do not trust the police, there will be real problems. The police are responsible for the mess, not the lawyers.

Mr. Baker: Many things have come to light during this long case. The hon. Gentleman may have misheard one of my earlier replies because he asked whether the West Midlands police are conducting further investigations. As I said earlier, investigations conducted by the Devon and Cornwall constabulary have reviewed the circumstances surrounding the bombing of the premises in Birmingham—the original crime in this case. I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that he intends to appoint a team to review the findings of the Devon and Cornwall inquiry and to follow up any new lines of investigation that may come to light in the actual bombing incident.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): Like the Home Secretary, I recognise that the overwhelming evidence suggests that miscarriages of justice are the exception rather than the rule. However, when they occur there is a heavy burden on society to ensure that those mistakes are rectified.

The Home Secretary did not answer the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) about Northern Ireland and Scotland. Clearly miscarriages of justice can occur in Scotland and Northern Ireland just as they can in England and Wales. What implications might there be in the royal commission's report for Northern Ireland and Scotland particularly as the greatest case of injustice outstanding at the moment relates to four British soldiers who are members of the UDR?

Mr. Baker: In response to the hon. Members for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) and for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), I can tell them that the royal commission will examine the practices and procedures of the criminal justice system in England and Wales. The systems in Scotland and Northern Ireland are different from that in England and Wales, and they are also different from each other. We must await the findings. They may well have a wider application, and I bear in mind what the hon. Member for Belfast, East said. I am sure that the royal commission will consider his comments and those of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East.

I agree with the hon. Member for Belfast, East that miscarriages of justice are the exception. Fortunately, that is the case, but, when they occur, they must be dealt with vigorously, competently and efficiently. The whole purpose of the royal commission is to examine the procedures so that the whole investigative process that

evolves when there is an alleged miscarriage of justice means that it will be dealt with more expeditiously, more fairly and more quickly.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Does the Home Secretary accept that, if it was his aim to establish a royal commission that would fearlessly and ruthlessly weigh the evidence and produce a report that was both comprehensive and of intellectual distinction, he would have been hard pressed to find a better person to head it than the person whose name he announced today?

Does the right hon. Gentleman also accept that we should not underestimate the royal commission's task? if we are to have a system of justice in which we all have confidence, the royal commission's report must be as thorough as possible? Does he accept that we must satisfy the police that British justice is as fair as we would like it to be? If the police do not believe that, some of them—I put it no higher than that—are prepared to tamper with evidence so that they get the justice they think we deserve rather than the justice we should have.

Mr. Baker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments about Lord Runciman. He is a distinguished academic at Cambridge university, and I am sure that he will be a very distinguished chairman of the royal commission.

Several hon. Members have referred to the police, but serious questions also arise with regard to the handling of forensic evidence and the way in which it may or may not be made available to the defence and the rights of the defence to have access to that evidence.

Many changes are already in hand. I visited Aldermaston forensic laboratory a fortnight ago and it was explained to me that the defence now has access to forensic evidence. It can send in its own experts, see what evidence is being prepared, and have it explained. In future, the defence will be able to commission forensic laboratories to work for it. That is a tremendous advance on the system available in the 1970s, so many changes are being made.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, although a terrible wrong has been done, we can take some satisfaction from the fact that a British court has freed those men? Does he agree that, in view of the grave implications of his statement, it would be appropriate in every possible way for the House to debate the matter on Monday instead of the War Crimes Bill?

Mr. Baker: That is not really a matter for me. I simply felt that it was my duty to come to the House at the earliest opportunity to make a statement. The men were released at 3.30 pm. With the full agreement of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), for which I am grateful, we made the unusual decision that a statement should be made immediately. It is right that the country should know the Government's reaction.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Does the Secretary of State agree that the IRA, through its actions, has poisoned the wells of our justice? It has killed and maimed many hundreds in the island of Ireland and our country. However, has not our democracy been found wanting and the hysteria that surrounded events 17 years ago led to convictions that were not safe, sound or satisfactory? The royal commission's inquiry will take three years, but will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider the possibility of the admissibility of confessions—of linking tape recording of confessions with video tapes of confessions—to ensure that they can be neither dubious nor doubtful in the future?

Mr. Baker: Changes have been made in the way confessions are now recorded. Contemporaneous accounts of confessions are now written down and sometimes tape-recorded, but the written accounts are always signed by the arrested person. I am sure that the royal commission will consider that matter.

The hon. Gentleman commented on the IRA and its concern with justice. It is not concerned with justice at all——

Ms. Short: He did not say that. He said that the IRA was undermining justice.

Mr. Baker: In that case, I agree with him. The IRA has poisoned the wells of British justice. It is not remotely concerned with justice but with trying to destroy the democratic process in this country and the will and determination of successive Governments not to give in to it. It will not succeed.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, whatever rejoicing may be taking place in some quarters tonight, deep anger and dismay will be felt in others that, after 17 years, the evil people responsible for the crime that killed 21 people and injured hundreds of others are still at large? Will he confirm that no effort will be spared by the West Midlands police in the inquiry that he has announced to the House? Will he also ensure, in looking to the future, that no effort will be spared and every assistance—financial and otherwise—will be given to police forces throughout the country to root out the IRA, whose evil work we in Staffordshire have had to put up with, at close quarters in the past year?

Mr. Baker: I sympathise with my hon. Friend, because last year saw the murder of a soldier in a station in Staffordshire and the wounding of two other people. There was also an earlier incident in Staffordshire this year. I assure my hon. Friend that no money or effort will be spared in dealing with terrorist attacks and trying to ensure that they do not occur. I assure him that arrangements have been made. I have strengthened the counter-terrorist activity in our country in the past two or three months and further resources have been made available, because we must provide every support to ensuring that people who commit crimes of such an appalling nature are brought to justice. This afternoon, we contacted the chief constable of West Midlands police, who intends to appoint a team to look into the original crime in this matter—the Birmingham pub bombings.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Would the Home Secretary care to express his sympathy for the families of those six men—their wives and children—who struggled for 17 long years, with many disappointments and much of the time alone, to see justice done? Would he care to recall to mind what Lord Denning said in 1980 in one of those appeals, that if those men were innocent, the police were guilty of perjury, violence and threats? The obtaining of confessions involuntarily and

[Ms. Diane Abbott]

improperly has been put in evidence. Will the Home Secretary assure the House that those policemen will be brought to trial?

Mr. Baker: Investigations are being conducted at the request of the chief constable of the West Midlands police, by the Devon and Cornwall police into any allegations that may be made. I am not prepared to comment on them now, but I assure the hon. Lady that the matter is in hand.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend recognise that, without the tireless campaign by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), the Birmingham Six would not have been released today? Is he aware that one of the criteria by which a criminal justice system is judged is its ability to correct mistakes? Far from weakening British justice, today's decision will strengthen it.

Mr. Baker: I recognise the campaign of the hon. Member for Sunderland, South and the books that he produced. I am sure that he will be disappointed that he is not present to see the culmination of his efforts.

Mr. Hattersley: He is at court.

Mr. Baker: He is at the court. I am sure that he will be pleased to know the outcome. It is a test of a judicial system that, when errors are identified, they can be corrected. Errors have been made in this case and have been corrected.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Has the Secretary of State seen early-day motion 518 signed by 69 Members from both sides of the House, expressing disquiet about the sentencing of four Ulster Defence Regiment men? Does he recognise that many people in Northern Ireland will feel hurt by today's news that the royal commission will be restricted to England and Wales? There is no constitutional reason why it could not have included Northern Ireland. As the case in Northern Ireland seems to be moving slowly—as did the Birmingham one—but inexorably towards a similar result as the Birmingham case, will the Secretary of State consider at this stage extending the role of the royal commission to Northern Ireland?

The Secretary of State commented that, for courts to have our respect, they must find guilty people guilty and innocent people innocent. Will he make it clear that guilty people will not be found innocent anywhere in the United Kingdom and that, in some cases, those found not guilty are not automatically presumed innocent?

Mr. Baker: On the right hon. Gentleman's last point, it is not for me to determine guilt or innocence, but those men were wrongly imprisoned. They should not have been convicted on the evidence that was presented to the court and will receive compensation for that.

I shall resist the invitation to extend the inquiry of the royal commission into the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland. I know what the hon. Gentleman has said and will draw his comments to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who has similar powers of referral in such matters.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the Home Secretary confirm that the royal commission will look into the appointment of judges, particularly High Court judges and their backgrounds, and perhaps come up with recommendations to appoint judges from a wider base? Has he seen any sign today that the senior judges involved in the case may be considering early retirement? That might do more than the royal commission to restore confidence in our judiciary.

Mr. Baker: Those matters are not for me, and the role of the royal commission does not extend to considering the appointment of judges.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Many people will be disappointed that the Home Secretary so grudgingly acknowledged the role of my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) in this issue. There were three words that he could have used, were they in his lexic: gratitude, apology and thanks to my hon. Friend for the role that he played. I am afraid and disappointed that the grudging and mean-minded manner with which the Home Secretary responded has done little to improve his stature in the House.

On inquiries, does the Home Secretary accept that while many of us welcome a royal commission and even an investigation into the events surrounding the initial crime, we are more worried about the intervening 17 years than the six weeks or six months of the investigation? Does he accept that some of us find it absolutely impossible to understand how, apparently despite all the evidence, during that period, the establishment refused to accept that six innocent people were in prison?

Will the Home Secretary caution his colleagues on the Conservative Benches? I have listened to accusations that my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) and others, including myself, were supporters of the Provisional IRA when we raised a matter of justice. Will he caution his colleagues that, whether in the case of the Maguires, the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six or the UDR Four, our fight for justice does not mean that we are supporters of the Provisional IRA, or fully paid-up members of the Orange lodge?

Mr. Baker: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's last point. On his earlier points about the length of time taken, I agree that it has taken a totally unacceptable time to resolve this matter. That is one of the matters that the royal commission will consider. If there are alleged miscarriages of justice, they must be investigated in a more expeditious way than has been possible in this case. I remind the hon. Gentleman that important forensic evidence came to light very late in this case. That evidence in particular led the Court of Appeal to quash the convictions.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the royal commission's investigations stretch over the dishonourable conduct of parts of the press? There was a tissue of lies, vilification and abuse of people such as my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), who was described as a loony left Member of Parliament who backed bombers, simply because he raised questions about a matter which has turned out to be probably the most serious miscarriage of justice in the history of our criminal courts. It is important that the journalists who produce such distortions and vilifications are held to

account. Such journalists contributed a great deal to the hysterical atmosphere that resulted in the mistaken convictions in the first place.

Will the Home Secretary confirm that this case demonstrates beyond peradventure, as lawyers are wont to say, that capital punishment has no place in our society and rests only in the minds of a few Tory backwoodsmen?

Mr. Baker: On the latter point, the hon. Gentleman knows my view. When the crimes were committed, the possibility of the capital sentence for them did not exist in British law. Although the terms of the royal commission are wide, they do not extend to the press. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to continue to make the points that he raised—many may feel that they are valid or invalid, but that is not for me to say—he should make a complaint to the Press Complaints Commission.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Is not there a risk that statements from the Home Secretary from the Dispatch Box to a sombre House may have the effect of sanitising the horrow of what has happened in the past 17 years? The horror is not so much that forensic evidence came to light relatively recently, as the Home Secretary just said, but the knowledge, which is familiar to anyone who has any information whatever about the case, that the men were assaulted in custody and thereafter made statements. If people received life sentences on that basis in any other country in the world, we in Britain would express outrage.

Lastly, following the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), will the Home Secretary reflect that, if he were ever sufficiently mistaken as to listen to advice on criminal justice matters from most of his hon. Friends—including his predecessor and the former Prime Minister, who are keen supporters of the death penalty—we should have no cause to rejoice in cases such as this when convictions were quashed? We all know precisely what would have happened in 1974.

Mr. Baker: The capital sentence was not available to the courts when the crimes were committed. It had been taken off the statute book before that. I made my views clearly known on that in the debate before Christmas. I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's strictures about my predecessor or my hon. Friends. Hon. Members on both sides of the House are concerned that there should not be miscarriages of justice and that, if there are alleged miscarriages of justice, they should be examined properly, dealt with expeditiously and, if an injustice has been perpetrated, corrected.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Shersby.

Mr. Skinner: He has just walked in.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. Although the hon. Gentleman was not here for the statement, he assures me that he has read it.

Mr. Shersby: Can my right hon. Friend tell the House whether the terms of reference of the royal commission will be restricted to pre-trial procedures, forensic evidence and other related matters? Or will it provide an opportunity to examine the role of the police in modern society? Is my right hon. Friend aware that there has not been a royal commission on the police force since the Willink report? Is not this a time when such a royal commission could examine the broader issues to which I referred?

Mr. Baker: We do not envisage that the royal commission will be extended into a commission on all the various aspects of the police, which is what my hon. Friend implied. However, I draw his attention to the first two points, and particularly the first point, in the terms of reference. Clearly, the royal commission will look into the conduct of police investigations and their supervision by senior police officers.

Mr. Speaker: Before the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) interrupts me again, I remind the House that the statement was not shown on the screen, so I am allowing a certain amount of latitude.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I apologise that I was not in the Chamber for the statement for the reasons that you have given, Mr. Speaker. May I ask a precise question arising out of the May committee, which is investigating the Guildford case and is examining the police and other matters? It is being held up because of the police inquiry and because there may be court cases. Therefore, the May committee investigation is being slowed down. Will the same thing happen to the royal commission? There may well be—I put it no higher than that—court cases arising out of the conduct of the West Midlands police. As what went on in the police force is germane to the inquiry, will another problem arise? In any event, where will the May investigation slot into the royal commission?

Mr. Baker: I appreciate that the right hon. Gentleman was not present to hear my statement, but I know that he follows these matters closely. Sir John May is looking into the cases of the Guildford Four and of the Maguires. He is held up on the Guildford Four because there is a possibility that criminal proceedings will be brought against certain officers. The investigation cannot continue until that case is resolved. But Sir John May has agreed to be a member of the royal commission, so he will be able to bring his considerable experience to bear on the work of the commission. That is why the royal commission has general terms of reference rather than terms of reference specific to a particular incident or to the Birmingham Six.

Mr. Hattersley: May I offer the Home Secretary another opportunity—he has had five already—to show a little graciousness in this matter and offer congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), without whom the men would still be in prison?

When the right hon. Gentleman has abandoned the mean-mindedness of previous answers, will he deal with another question? Six of his answers referred to the protections provided by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. Will he confirm that, if six men were arrested and accused of similar crimes today, they would not be afforded the protection of PACE? They would be denied immediate access to solicitors, which was one of the problems in the case of the Birmingham Six and would be a problem if the case were reproduced today.

Mr. Baker: I have recognised the work of the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin). He wrote his book and he has campaigned hard. He has every right to feel proud that the convictions have been quashed today.

On the right hon. Gentleman's particular point, considerable changes have been made as a result of PACE —*[Interruption.]* May I reply to the right hon. Gentleman? Those changes would have affected substantially the way in which the original investigations were conducted. For example, there are now custody records. The custody sergeant would have had to read out the clear rights which were available to the person in the police station who had been arrested but not charged. As it was alleged that the men were beaten up, the custody sergeant would have had to decide whether a doctor should be called to examine the arrested men. Changes have also been made on the signing of confessions. On periods without solicitors, as I have already said, two different proceedings are clearly set out in PACE. The period without solicitors under PACE is 36 hours and under the prevention of terrorism Act it is 48 hours.

The right hon. Gentleman should recognise that a lot of changes have been made, but I agree that we must consider the whole procedure of the criminal justice system to see whether other changes should be made. He should be generous enough to recognise that, over the past few years, we have made many changes to ensure that the criminal justice system works better.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Judging from the questions that have been allowed this afternoon, I take it that the basic rule has not been changed. Ordinarily, people must be here for the statement. This statement was notified on the annunciators and it would be regarded critically if people were allowed special privileges, such as being able to read copies of the statement. Copies are not available to ordinary Back Benchers and the House would be regarded critically—not you, Mr. Speaker—if people who are paid about £30,000 a year by outside organisations were given access to the statement so that they could ask questions to earn their money.

Mr. Speaker: I have already dealt with that matter. The hon. Gentleman knows that the statement did not appear on the annunciators until the middle of business questions which was well after 3.30 pm. That is why I allowed a little discretion today. The general rule has not changed. If hon. Members are not here to hear the statement, it is very difficult for them to ask questions and therefore they are not normally called.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not need any help. I allowed two hon. Members who had not heard the statement to ask questions. Today is a private Members' day and they could perhaps have asked questions during the coming debate, but they might not have received an answer.

Mr. Williams: I wish to raise a different matter. I accept your ruling, Mr. Speaker. Personally, I am not dissatisfied as notification of the statement appeared very late on the monitors. A more interesting point is that the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) implied that he had read a copy of the statement. Perhaps the Secretary of State had a copy put in the Library or in the Vote Office concurrently with coming to the Dispatch Box. On previous occasions, Mr. Speaker, you have said that you think it wrong that some Back Benchers should have access to copies of statements which are denied to others. I want to raise that aspect—whether copies of this statement were generally available or whether they were available only as a special privilege for spokesmen for the Police Federation.

Mr. Speaker: I do not know. When the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) came to see me, he said that although he had not heard the statement, he had read it. Where he got it, I do not know.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Education Reform Act 1988 (Application of Section 122 to Institutions in Wales) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Adjournment (Easter and Monday 6 May)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House, at its rising on Thursday 28 March, do adjourn until Monday 15 April and, at its rising on Friday 3 May, do adjourn until Tuesday 7 May.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

5.12 pm

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): This afternoon, we have heard about some grave matters. It will be difficult to bring the House back to other issues, but the Adjournment debate exists for hon. Members to raise issues that they think should be considered by the House before it rises for Easter. I support the motion with enthusiasm, as I suspect the majority of hon. Members do. I hope that the House will forgive me if I now move to other issues and especially to one which is of great importance to my constituency. It is an issue that I have never had an opportunity to raise before and one that I regret having to raise now.

I wish to discuss the attitude of the Eastern Arts regional association, which is funded by the Arts Council with money provided by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts but has used that money in a way that has caused deep distress in my part of Essex. In the past few days, it has withdrawn the grant from the Palace theatre in my constituency, which is now at grave risk of having to close. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House may know the work of Eastern Arts as well as I do. Perhaps he has been more fortunate than I in his dealings with it. I hope that he has. Paradoxically, when I was Minister for the Arts, I was fond of regional arts associations and did my best to promote them. I am not sure in retrospect whether that was a good idea.

The theatre in my constituency has been in receipt of subsidy from the Arts Council for many years. Recently, it has been jointly funded by the Arts Council and the regional arts association. Until devolution two or three years ago, it received funding from both but now it is funded only by Eastern Arts and Southend council. Eastern Arts provided about £100,000 for a couple of years and then reduced the grant to £93,000. A few weeks ago, it announced that it was cutting the grant completely, apart from one payment of £50,000 as a sort of farewell.

There have been disputes between Eastern Arts and the theatre, but as there are only two subsidised repertory theatres in Essex, the decision to take the extreme step of closing one down is absolutely extraordinary. The result of the withdrawal of the grant is that the theatre is in grave danger of closing. It receives generous support from Southend council, and Essex council is now making a modest grant for the first time and is alarmed about what is happening. The theatre has had to place a surcharge of 50p on seat prices. I hope that it will survive. If it does, it will be no thanks to public money.

The debate raging in Essex is about the quality of the performances, which was the excuse given for the withdrawal of the grant. I have examined the repertory of the only other subsidised theatre in Essex—the Mercury theatre in Colchester. There is very little difference between the repertories. Quality is a matter of opinion. I do not see all the productions, but the last one I saw was very good.

The House will be interested to know that attendance at the theatre has gone up in the past 12 months from 55 per cent. to 67 per cent. Very few theatres could achieve such a record at a time when theatre as a whole is going through a difficult patch. I think that the Palace theatre deserves congratulations. Its deficit has also been slowly reduced. Again, I suspect that many theatres have deficits that are increasing, so I believe that the theatre is well run and well managed.

It is very sad that the theatre's grant has been withdrawn. It is especially perverse as it was withdrawn in the same week that the theatre began a new scheme to benefit the blind. I quote from a letter written to me by a blind constituent:

"only last Wednesday . . . I helped to launch the Audio Description Facility for blind people in the theatre. I am totally blind, aged 50, and for the first time in my life I had the opportunity to listen to the thrilling . . . play . . . and feel on an equal footing with the fully sighted people present . . . it is the first theatre in the U.K. to be totally accessible for all disabled people. It has level entrances, a ground floor toilet for disabled people, it has signed performances for the deaf and now it has this new facility for the blind and partially sighted. With ten per cent. of the population being disabled, and with very few opportunities for entertainment if this theatre has to close because of lack of funding, it would be a disaster for the people of Essex. I would urge you to find out why the money you give to the Eastern Arts Council is not reaching the Palace Theatre."

My constituents, those of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) who support me will be deprived. I hope that I shall also receive the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) whose constituents will be luckier than mine. My constituents will be deprived of live theatre if the Palace theatre is forced to close, although it will make every effort to stay open. The theatre has enormous support in the town, and hundreds of letters have poured in. Incidentally, the theatre is beautiful and has recently been done up.

It is ironic that the theatre is under threat because of the actions of a Government-funded body. I understand the arm's-length principle, I have often argued for it and I strongly believe in it. I welcome the efforts of Essex county council to examine the matter to see what can be done. I do not ask the Minister for the Arts to intervene directly. He does not have the power to fund the theatre and I understand that because I have been in such a situation before. However, I ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to ask our right hon. Friend, who has been helpful, whether he can knock heads together. I urge that in the interests of the thousands of people in south Essex who go to the theatre, who like it very much and who will otherwise be deprived of it. The purpose of public money for the arts cannot be to deprive people of existing arts organisations except in exceptional circumstances.

There may be things that should be changed, and there may be faults on both sides. However, I am speaking moderately today. I could say far stronger things about Eastern Arts than I felt that I should today. I ask my right hon. Friend, before we rise for the Easter Adjournment, to turn his attention to the matter. It may be a narrow matter, but in south-east Essex it is deeply felt. It is ironic that an agency which has money from the Government, and which lobbies Members of Parliament in East Anglia for more money, is engaged in the destruction of an extremely popular theatre. I hope that the House will feel that I have not wasted its time by raising the matter briefly. It is a constituency matter of the highest importance and I hope that something can be done to save the theatre before all is over.

5.21 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): An issue that has been of deep concern to me should be the subject of a statement, and perhaps even a debate, before the House goes into recess. This afternoon, we have listened to an extremely important statement about six people who tragically served sentences that they should not have served. I want to put the reverse situation before the House, as I have stumbled across a remarkable saga in which many people who should be serving sentences are not doing so and in which the Home Office is apparently conspiring—I hate to use that word—to keep that information from the House of Commons, as I hope to demonstrate. The matter is even worse than it sounds, because many of the people concerned are convicted drug pedlars or drug offenders who have left prison after serving only a fraction of the sentence. They have literally walked out of open prisons.

In his role as protector of Members' interests, the Leader of the House will recognise my frustration as a Back Bencher that, for three months, I have had to battle with blocking answers from the Home Office as I tried to obtain the information that I wanted to put to colleagues today. It has been a clear example of a determined effort by the Executive to deny the House the information to which it is entitled.

In those three months, as a result of a series of questions, I have managed to establish that, in the past two and a half years—information is not available for earlier than that—more than 2,000 convicted criminals have escaped from open prisons. However, the Home Office will not tell us how many have been recaptured or how many are drug offenders. I have faced a series of blocking answers. That silly situation, which has developed a new dimension because of the difficulties created by the Home Office, could have been avoided if the Home Office had been open with the House at the beginning.

At the beginning of December, I tabled a question based on a casual piece of information that I had received and which sounded incredible to me—that drug offenders were walking out of open prisons. I tabled a question to the Home Secretary asking how many drug offenders had escaped from open prisons in the previous three years and how many had been recaptured. To my surprise, I received a clear blocking answer from the Department, saying that it would be too expensive to provide that information. The House could not be told how many had escaped or how many had been recaptured.

I then went to the Table Office. I want to emphasise that the Table Office has been helpful, but it has to work within the rules that the House lays down. Nothing that I say here is intended as a criticism of the Table Office. Indeed, I have been able to make my present progress only because of the kindness of the officials who work there.

I had to find a way round the blocking answer. The block was that the question was too expensive, so I broke it down into nine component parts. For each year, I asked how many had escaped, how many had been recaptured and how many were drug offenders. I was told that the Home Office could not tell me the figures for 1987 or for the first half of 1988. However, the Department told me that 311 had escaped in the second half of 1988 and that 682 had escaped in 1989. It would—lo and behold—be too expensive to tell me how many had been recaptured and how many were drug offenders. With the support of many colleagues, I tabled a motion asking whether the Home Office did not bother to count the number that came back in. I asked whether it was possible that the Home Office was trying to hide something.

On one of the occasions when fortune smiles on lonely Back Benchers, a piece of paper fluttered into my hand. It was headed "Heathrow Cases". I do not know about cases at Gatwick, at Dover, at Folkestone, at Birmingham airport or at Manchester. The piece of paper referred to cases at Heathrow and was a list of 26 mainly non-British-sounding names. Delighted, I went to the Table Office and said that I wanted to table a question asking the Home Secretary about the 26 prisoners and what had happened to them. I was told, "You cannot table a question about 26 individuals. That is running a campaign through the Order Paper. You can put down only small groups of them and you can put another group down when you have had answers to the first group." Week by week, I have tabled questions about four or six individuals at a time.

I eventually elicited from a reluctant Home Office the information that all 26, 25 of whom were women, were convicted drug offenders and that all 26 had escaped from open prisons. Only two had found their way back again. It took a series of questions to obtain that information, and in the meantime, we had moved into 1991, so I was able to ask how many had escaped last year. I found that the figure of 682 for 1989, which had horrified me, was an achievement by the Home Office. The figure had hit a low. Last year, more than 1,100 escaped from the Home Office —*[Laughter.]* Literally: that is the point. The police capture them and the Home Office mislays them. I do not need to tell hon. Members that it would be too expensive to tell me how many of those 1,100 were recaptured and how many were drug offenders.

As an intrepid Back Bencher, I decided that other ways must be open to me. I had the information about the 26, but another 2,000 were still missing from the past two and a half years. Even if a wedge of paper with the 2,000 names descended from on high—and I was lucky enough for it to miss me and to pick it up—and even if I then tried to pursue the Home Office about the other 2,000 people missing, it would take me five parliamentary years on the procedures available to us to obtain the answers. There would be a backlog problem. In that same five years, another 5,500 would have escaped.

I am the parliamentary equivalent of the man who paints the Forth bridge. As I am a Welshman, perhaps my reference should be to the Severn bridge. Stretching ahead of me is a career that will involve chasing all these people that the Home Office apparently does not chase—or if it does chase them, it does not find them—or if it finds them, it does not know how many it has found.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I am following the right hon. Gentleman's speech with great interest. The most recent estimate of the cost of answering a parliamentary question is £54. Has the hon. Gentleman done a calculation on the basis of that figure? How much is it costing the Government to answer all these questions? Would not rather more forthright answers be easier?

Mr. Williams: In view of what I am about to say, the hon. Gentleman's point is most apposite.

Eventually, I found the secret. I decided to try yet another tack. There are 13 open prisons—three for

women, and 10 for men. I went to the Table Office, and the people there were not pleased when I said that, over a period of three years, I would table nine questions about each of the 13 prisons. The total number of questions would be 117. I let the Department know that I was thinking of tabling 117 questions—all because it would not answer one question on 4 December. I am sure that the Leader of the House will be pleased to know that I have gone up-market.

When I threatened to put down 117 questions, I was told that I could not do so. It was suggested to me that I might try tabling questions about one of the prisons first of all. I did indeed put down nine questions about one prison—Drake Hall. If the Home Office is forthcoming in respect of those questions, I may be able to table the remainder of the 117 about other prisons from which people have been going walkabout.

Perhaps Departments, in answering questions, must keep within their cost ceiling. My going up-market must have created alarm in the Home Office. No longer am I being answered by the Minister of State—a Minister against whom I have no complaint as an individual. Today I have gone all the way to the top—the Secretary of State himself has actually called the case in and given me the answers.

It is absurd, ridiculous, that a Member of Parliament should have to go through such a process. Had I not been given that list, I might never have received the information that I have put before the House today. The whole matter would probably have died in December, because of the blocking answers given by the Home Office. It is appalling that, police officers and customs officers having worked industriously to capture drug pedlars and abusers, and our courts having, at high cost, tried and sentenced them, the Home Office should mislay them. I asked how long 10 of these people had served. The sentences ranged from three years to eight years, but none of the prisoners deigned to remain guests of Her Majesty for more than 16 months. Some of them served only 10 months before going walkabout.

Would not it have been far better if the Department had provided the information in a sensible way? If it were only half as assiduous in looking after its prisoners as it is in coveting and cosseting its information, I should not be making this speech today. I submit that this matter, while I have treated it in a relatively light-hearted way, is serious. It is indeed serious that 2,000 people should disappear from open prisons. It is not a matter to be treated lightly that drug pedlars, having served minute fractions of their sentences, should disappear. The House is entitled to information. The Minister should make a statement and allow us to ask some questions.

5.34 pm

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). The fact that his questions are not always answered—and I hope that that does not happen too often—gives him the excuse to make, and the rest of us the chance to listen to, a most amusing, worthy and very relevant speech. It is perfectly proper that this matter should be raised on the Adjournment.

I hope that the subject that I want to raise, which is very different, is also appropriate for the Adjournment. I do not think that we should go away for our Easter recess until we have had a statement from my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House about the hostages in the Lebanon. I hope that my right hon. Friend has heard from the Foreign Office about my intention to raise the matter. I wrote to the Foreign Secretary, and provided my right hon. Friend with a copy of the letter. I do not want to criticise; I simply seek information. I should like to be given an indication of continuing intent on the part of the Government to do all they can for those in captivity.

I speak not just as a Back-Bench Member of this House but also as co-chairman of the all-party freedom for the hostages group. The other co-chairmen are the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), who represents the Labour party, and the right hon. Member for Tweedale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), who represents the Liberal Democrats. As I go through the full styles and titles of those two gentlemen, it strikes me that our Scottish colleagues might consider making their constituency names somewhat easier.

The names of the hostages are very familiar. On 17 April, John McCarthy will have been in captivity for five years, and will be beginning his sixth year. Terry Waite was taken in January 1987, so he is in his fifth year of captivity. Jackie Mann is fast approaching three years in captivity. I do not want to be emotional about these things. Suffice it to say that many hon. Members may, like me, have listened, in whole or in part, to the very moving press conference given in Dublin castle by Brian Keenan after his release. I do not think that anyone could have listened to Brian Keenan without feeling sympathy for the appalling conditions that these people are no doubt suffering. Indeed, "captivity" is a very polite term in these circumstances. To be a little light-hearted about the matter, I might say that I only wish that we had an opportunity to put down parliamentary questions about these people going walkabout. May they be able to do so fairly soon.

Another person in captivity, although not a hostage in the Lebanon, is Roger Cooper. As a result of a closely related matter—closely related, in that Iran has power to contribute towards a solution—he has been locked up in Avin prison in Teheran for more than five years. There has been no proper trial, and when, from time to time, his release has appeared imminent, our relations with Iran have deteriorated, and he has not been released. I mention this person specifically because I hope that Iran will make the first gesture towards the normalisation of relations by releasing him. The fact that he is entirely under their control puts him in a category different from that of the hostages in the Lebanon.

I am not suggesting in any way that my right hon. Friend should do any deals—open, covert, shabby, or otherwise. That has never been the policy of Her Majesty's Government—and quite right, too. Nevertheless, we very much welcome the practical opportunities that now exist, with the overdue restoration of diplomatic relations with Syria and with Iran. Our relations with Iran are crucial to the release of Roger Cooper.

The case of Mr. Kokabi is now over. That gentleman was released yesterday, the prosecution having offered no further evidence against him. He was an alleged conspirator in arson attacks on book shops in the aftermath of the Salman Rushdie affair. That gave rise to difficulty with the radical elements in Iran. Mr. Kokabi will be deported, and I hope that the Iranians will see fit to release Roger Cooper.

[Mr. Peter Temple-Morris]

This is not an occasion for a speech on foreign policy, but we have to bear in mind the fact that, if we want people's help, it is counter-productive to be critical of them. There are serious difficulties in Iran because of radical elements there. The Government there are trying to help, and it is up to our Government to recognise that and, in pressing them, to realise also that they are a formidible potential ally of the West in that region.

I have dealt with the restoration of diplomatic relations with Iran, and parliamentary contacts with Iran provide another avenue. The British group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union is trying to set up an exchange of delegations with Iran and its Parliament, the Majlis. That can but be helpful. The advantage of that is that a delegation goes out to Tehran not just in order to talk about hostages, but to discuss a range of bilateral relations between the two countries to which parliamentarians can often contribute in a way that Governments cannot.

There are also governmental contacts. I hope that ambassadorial relations can be restored as soon as possible. They are at chargé d'affaires level at the moment. Finally, commercial contacts should be increasing more than they have been. It is no accident that Germany and Japan have been evident in Iran throughout its difficulties and are now reaping the benefit.

I do not forget the gradually improving situation in the Lebanon and our relations with Syria. Syria is now back in the dialogue with the west and more generally. The Secretary of State was there only yesterday. All those countries can help.

I should like some assurance from my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House on behalf of Her Majesty's Government that the four people whom I have mentioned will not be forgotten and, more importantly, that every possible effort will be made to secure their release.

5.41 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I wholly concur with the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris), as I am sure will all hon. Members. A few weeks ago, during a gala occasion at the Fishmongers hall, the Royal National Institute for the Deaf awarded its first communicator of the year award. In the light of the hon. Gentleman's speech, it is particularly appropriate to tell the House that it was awarded to Jill Morrell, who has been the leader of the Friends of John McCarthy group and ceaseless in trying to secure his release and the release of other hostages.

That enables me to move on to the matter about which I wish to speak. Cases which have been brought to my attention and my own activity demonstrate that the needs of deaf people in further and higher education are not being adequately and urgently addressed. Many people are losing out because they do not have adequate provision.

As somebody who has worked with organisations for the deaf for the past few years, I predict that the House will see growing militancy by deaf people in pursuit of their rights to the same education and training opportunities as hearing people.

I have introduced, but not secured time for, a Bill which was published last week and which has all-party support entitled Deaf Persons (Access to Further and Higher Education and Training) Bill. It is very much modelled on the practical legislation that exists in the United States. When that legislation was introduced in 1975 in the United States, it led to a tenfold increase in the number of courses for deaf people and the number of deaf people pursuing further and higher education within the United States. Matters are improving in the United Kingdom, but we are way behind that level of participation.

It is difficult to obtain figures showing how many deaf people are participating and how many are being shut out. A survey carried out by the RNID suggested that there are only about 20 deaf people in each academic year in further and higher education in the United Kingdom. That represents about one fifth of what might reasonably be expected given their profile within the population. It is worth saying that those statistics hide and disguise a great deal of personal frustration and misery of which I have evidence. Some students who secure entry to colleges or universities are forced to drop out through lack of adequate support, and many others—we do not know how many—are deterred from even trying, and are forced to settle for training and subsequent employment well below their capabilities.

I freely admit to a little plagiarism from a lecture delivered at the end of last year by the professor of education at Reading university, Professor Brian Palmer, who is active in trying to promote the interests of higher education for the deaf. Unusually, I shall follow his example and ask hon. Members who do not know what it is like to be deaf to watch my lips while I mouth words without using my voice. I then said, "This is unfair because it is difficult to lip-read at a distance. But deaf people watching an interpreter would know what was being said because they would see what was being signed." That demonstrates the frustration that deaf people will have in trying to participate in full-time education, as intelligent as any hon. Member but unable to do so because they do not have the support and assistance that they need.

Only a limited number of institutions in Britain provide for the deaf. I have already mentioned Reading university; Durham university is another. Lancashire and Sheffield polytechnics, Derbyshire college of higher education, the Open university and Doncaster technical college also make such provision. But, across the board, provision remains abysmal.

My Bill proposed the establishment of an education and training council for deaf people which could produce statistics which are not available and co-ordinate the development of provision. It would also give deaf people an absolute right to the support that they need to pursue courses. It would block discrimination and recognise British sign language, the right to interpreters and all support aid at no cost to the student.

The Leader of the House may be interested in what I am about to say given his former role as Secretary of State for Education and Science. I genuinely welcome the recent changes that the Government introduced to the allowances which provide for £3,000-worth of equipment per course and £4,000 per annum towards interpreters. Those sums are necessary and they are welcome, but they remain means-tested, and that is unfair. They do not secure the co-ordination of development which the proposed council would achieve. Not only that, but before I came into the House this afternoon I was advised that they were not working in the interests of deaf people, as the

Minister, when he announced them, assured us they would. Deaf people are not getting access to those funds as they hoped they would and believe they should.

Rather than just giving bald statistics, I will cite some cases to show what that means to individuals. There is the case of a female student taking a BA in sociology at a university, who received the disabled students' allowances, but they were not sufficient to cover all interpreter and note-taker costs. She needs an extra £1,000 this year. Under the existing provisions, she should be getting that, but she is not.

A male student taking an MA in environmental planning has been refused funds by his local education authority, and he needs more than £4,500 to cover interpreting and note-taking costs for the year. A female student doing a three-year qualification in youth and community work at a polytechnic does not qualify for the disabled students' allowances because she is part-time. The voluntary organisation by which she is employed as an assistant youth worker can pay only her fees and she needs just under £4,000 to pay for an interpreter this year.

That means that deaf people are effectively doubly disadvantaged. It is more expensive for them to take a course and, if they are not funded, other organisations which raise money for the deaf have to divert money to support them. There is also a severe shortage of interpreters for the deaf throughout Britain. The director of the National Deaf Children's Society, Harry Cayton, told me that when he needs an interpreter for a meeting at his office it takes his secretary an average of 14 phone calls to find one. It must be borne in mind that deaf people do not have the same facility with the telephone as a hearing person.

Those examples show the problems that deaf people face. I shall not detain the House with other examples that the Royal National Institute for the Deaf gave me that show the shortfall in funding.

My Bill has all-party support and the backing of all the major organisations for deaf people—the RNID, the National Deaf Children's Society and the British Deaf Association. It would help in improving the role and aspirations of deaf people. When I meet deaf people abroad, it is a source of shame to me that Britain is regarded as the poor relation in providing facilities for deaf people.

I am glad that some of the campaigning has had an effect, which I acknowledge, but there is more to do. I pray in aid Professor Brian Palmer, who said in his lecture that, if my Bill

"were enacted, it would largely achieve in legislation what is necessary to equalise opportunites for deaf people in post-school education."

I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this subject. I appreciate that, as the House is preparing to adjourn, many people may regard it as a narrow, esoteric issue that does not justify detaining the House, but the problems of many deaf people require urgent attention. I have been given examples of deaf people being accepted for courses of higher education and training who have experienced difficulty in keeping up or have been forced to drop out. Many others do not even try, because they know that, without support, they would not cope.

As many hon. Members will know, I have a direct personal interest, as my daughter, who is 14 and is profoundly deaf, may go on to further education in the next two or three years. I am not making a special plea on her behalf, but because of her I have encountered so many other people who face this deprivation.

The Government have moved in the right direction, but they should take on board that the deaf community are not satisfied with the support they are receiving or the way in which the additional support that was recently offered is working. Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science to ensure that more applications from deaf people for educational support are granted so that they meet the need for which they were intended, because that is not happening at present?

5.52 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): Before we rise for the Easter adjournment, I should like to mention the problems that are facing tourism, particularly following the crisis in the Gulf. Those problems present an opportunity for the Government to assist, perhaps as never before, those working in and dependent on tourism.

When agriculture experienced difficulties with BSE, the Government paid £587 compensation for each mad cow. In 1989, the last year for which statistics are available, each overseas visitor to the United Kingdom brought £397 into this country, yet I am afraid that the Government have given the British Tourist Authority a derisory £800,000 to promote the United Kingdom out of the tourism crisis. We are not giving good value to those who are employed in Britain's fastest-growing industry, and are risking the long-term future of tourism.

The position nationally and in York and Yorkshire is extremely worrying. I should declare an interest as the parliamentary consultant to Consort Hotels, which is based in my constituency and is the largest consortium of independent hoteliers in this country. It is appropriate that it keeps me in touch with developments.

I have calculated that as many as 20,000 jobs in tour operators, airlines and hotels could be lost, representing an estimated whole-year cost to the Treasury of £6,000 per job.

The knock-on effects of that on jobs in retail and other sectors have begun to show. Overseas earnings are very important but are often neglected when commentators consider invisible earnings. Of whole-year earnings of £8 billion, £700 million has been lost in the first quarter, and of £1·5 billion of earnings from the United States, we expect £500 million to be lost. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor must take into account the dramatic effect of that on tourism when he prepares the Budget for Tuesday. I should not be surprised by a year-end loss in earnings of £1·5 billion unless—this is the important opportunity for the Government—the Government support a major promotion of tourism.

Those who reside in London during the week are aware that 38 per cent. of London's theatregoers and 44 per cent. of people who attend London art galleries are overseas tourists. Sadly, the figures for the first three months of this year are down. The retail sector derives up to 20 per cent. of its income from overseas visitors, and the Treasury derives more than £60 from each visitor in value added tax.

The earnings and jobs of every constituency are affected by tourism. In Yorkshire, there has been a worrying fall in bookings by overseas visitors. Tour operators, hoteliers and coach companies have all received cancellations. But our message should be that Britain is a safe destination for

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

business travel or recreation. We have increased security at our airports, ferry terminals and railway stations. We must follow that with a high-profile marketing campaign targeted on north America, the far east and Australasia, so that we have not just quantity but quality of visitors.

Tourism is worth £14 billion in England and £994 million in Yorkshire and Humberside. Investment must continue. York has been fortunate in attracting new construction and venues such as the museum of automata, and other sites have been imaginatively developed. I would welcome my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to Fairfax house and the Yorkshire museum, both of which have been extensively developed in recent years. However, more hotels are being built in Paris than in London.

Too many local authorities are unsympathetic to tourism and will not carefully interpret planning applications which seek to turn former warehouses that are of no use into potential hotels.

Do the Hastings, Folkestones or Cliftonvilles have the infrastructure that we expect and see in Blackpool and Bournemouth? Sadly, they do not. Devolution from London to the regions will need a co-ordinated national campaign.

The Gulf crises will help in other respects. Many more British people will take short breaks not only in the delightful constituency of Norfolk, South—my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council was my Member of Parliament when I lived there—but in centres such as York. Given the strength of the United States dollar, we must look further afield. Anyone in Britain can enjoy our theatres and, except for "Phantom of the Opera", which I have been unable to see, can get into any London theatre. That is a very worrying development.

To achieve a boom in tourism, there must be a campaign. The uniform business rate is not helping small travel agents who wish to move from one site to another and sell their premises. The stepping-stone principle, which particularly affects the constituencies of City of Chester, Bath and York, effectively cripples the ability of small businesses to move, which is a great problem.

We must also abolish red tape. I commend my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment for securing the removal of visa requirements for visitors from the United States and for those travelling from this country to North America. That improvement must spread to other countries. Far too many youngsters do not know on which continent a certain country is to be found. If they want to visit, for example, Aruba on a package holiday, they do not know on which continent it is to be found. I hope that before too long they will pass their GCSE in tourism—at the moment offered by only one examination board—and that they will then know where such places are. I hope that they will also learn to appreciate the benefits of tourism in the United Kingdom and the opportunities that this country provides for them.

All too often, a person who goes into a Chicago or Tokyo travel agency when considering booking a holiday in the United Kingdom does not receive correct information. If that person books his holiday with a particular airline, he may find that it is locked into a hotel group, which may result in him not visiting the United Kingdom. Paris is increasingly becoming the central attraction for people coming to Europe. If they go to Paris—and shortly to Disneyland—will they then come to London and the rest of the United Kingdom?

Tourism is an international issue. Unfortunately, my right hon. Friend is unable to discuss it with the World Tourism Organisation. We are one of the very few developed countries that is not a member of the WTO, though I have yet to discover why. By the payment of a very small sum of money, we could have a major influence, in terms of British consultancies, on world tourism. The WTO is based in Madrid. It has master plans, apart from environmental issues which include blue tourism—a reference to safe beaches—and green tourism. If we are to have a major voice in world tourism, I hope that in due course my right hon. Friend will announce that this country intends to play a leading role in the World Tourism Organisation.

We should place emphasis on attracting quality markets. We should not attempt to exert pressure on eastern European visitors to come here. Many coachloads of people already enter Venice with their packed lunches. Those many thousands of people use its public facilities and see some of the wonders of Venice, but they spend not a single lira there. That form of tourism would be an unwelcome development here, though it would be nice to see people from Poland, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia coming to this country on "fam" trips, as they are termed, to visit friends and relatives.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will discuss with the Secretary of State for Transport the environmental problems that assail north American and Japanese visitors to this country. I refer in particular to coach parking. When the changing of the guard takes place at Buckingham palace, we see coaches there belching out diesel fumes. That is an improper use of coach facilities. Coach parking has been neglected, but that problem could be tackled if a Minister were to be given responsibility for tourism throughout the United Kingdom.

Junior members of the Government—usually in the other place—are responsible for tourism. I want elected Members of Parliament to be given that responsibility. They ought not to change their portfolio every 10 months or every year. They rush around at a great rate of knots, but by the time they have scoured the whole of their territory, they are promoted to another job.

The facilities available at our ports of entry are still poor. At our busiest port of entry, Dover, people have to find the road out of England en route for France if they want to visit the tourist information centre.

I could give many other examples, but I realise that this is not 1 April—All Fools day. Sadly, such examples ought more appropriately to be given on that day. People's jobs are at risk from such inefficiencies. I hope, therefore, that before Easter the Government will give a strong lead to this key industry, having recognised the jobs that depend upon it, and that, from Easter onwards, the tourist industry will enjoy a substantial revival.

6.4 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): The House of Commons ought not to rise for Easter until it has fully discussed the Gulf war. I do not intend to trespass on the issues that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow

(Mr. Dalyell) will raise in the debate that he has secured. However, I wish to refer to a few consequences of the Gulf war.

For many families, the ending of the war has been marked this week by funerals, not least by the funerals yesterday in Coventry of two teenagers—Lee Thompson and Jason McFadden—who were killed in the Gulf war. Such deaths are deeply felt in Coventry and throughout the country. Those two teenagers will not be forgotten by their families, by their friends or by people in general. My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes) will, I know, want me to place on record the fact that we intend to ensure that the Ministry of Defence conducts a full public inquiry into the deaths of Lee and the other eight teenagers who, we were told euphemistically, died as a result of "friendly fire."

The war ended with light casualties on the allied side, and there is relief among people throughout the world that the war is over. However, that relief has been soured by growing realisation of the enormous number of deaths and the scale of destruction in Iraq. Some of us complained for many years about the vicious, repressive regime in Iraq. It imprisoned, tortured and murdered many tens of thousands of trade unionists, socialists, communists and ordinary people. However, Iraq has not been "liberated" by mass bombing on a scale that has not been seen for 50 years. According to information provided to me by the Library, during the 39 nights of allied bombing, half the tonnage of the bombs dropped on Europe during six years of war was dropped on Iraq.

Specific instances of that bombing ought to be examined. For example, 400 women and children were killed in the Al Amerieh bunker. That, too, has been euphemistically described—as "collateral damage". That number was surpassed by the thousands, perhaps tens of thousands who died in soft-topped lorries, cars and other vehicles at the Mutlaa gap on the road to Basra. Those people were retreating or fleeing from Kuwait. There was a seven-mile line of vehicles at that point. At about 12.40 pm on Monday last, there was a report on ITN, which I have not seen repeated, of a column 60 miles long north of Kuwait city. Tanks and armoured cars were reported to have been burnt out and no survivors were to be seen.

After 30 armies knocked seven bells out of Iraq, why are the Americans and everyone else still imposing sanctions on Iraq? What are they supposed to achieve? If the B52 planes that dropped the bulk of the 900,000 tonnes of bombs on Iraq did not achieve what their role in Vietnam was said to be—to knock that country back into the stone age—they certainly bombed Iraq back into the 19th century. There is little or no power and clean water, or health and emergency services. Raw sewage floats in the Tigris. Massive international relief must be organised for the country. Cholera, typhoid, hepatitis and polio outbreaks are already to be seen. Unless something is done quickly, they will reach epidemic proportions.

The right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) announced on Tuesday that Britain is giving £420,000-worth of aid to the International Red Cross. That compares with £3 billion spent on the war, and an estimated £50 billion to be spent on the restoration of Kuwait. One wonders how much of that will go on building palaces and luxury dwellings for the unelected al-Sabah dictatorship; I give the figures merely to put the amount of aid in its context.

For the people inside Iraq, the war has not stopped. The Iraqi intifada goes on—in the north in the Kurdish areas, and in the south and south-east of Shia areas. Saturday marks the third anniversary of Saddam Hussein bombing the village of Halabja, an incident in which 6,000 or 7,000 Kurds died when chemical weapons were used against them. In October that year several thousand marsh Arabs north of Basra died under the same chemical weapons. To the shame of our Government, within days of the second attack the present Secretary of State for Social Security, then in charge of trade and industry, announced an increase of £340 million in trade credits—almost as a reward—for the Saddam Hussein regime.

In the past 10 or 12 days, the eyes of the world may have been turned away from the affairs of Iraq. That is understandable perhaps given that, following the expulsion of many media personnel, it is becoming more difficult to see what is happening there, but a deliberate policy to leave Saddam Hussein in place is emerging. In *The Guardian*, a senior United States diplomat is quoted as saying:

"Better the Saddam Hussein we know than an unwieldy weak coalition or a new strong man who is an unknown quantity."

It is, however, possible to get news of what is happening in Iraq. Today, for instance, I met people, including constituents, who are naturalised British citizens who originated from Iraq. They gave me two faxes from Iran dated yesterday. The first was an appeal from the people of Basra to everyone:

"We are fighting for all Iraqis and for all humanity everywhere. We are in full control of Basra, but your families, children, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers from Basra —they are in great need for food and medicines."

Much more follows in this handwritten fax.

The second fax was a letter from Mr. Hakim, head of the supreme command of the Islamic revolution in Iraq, a group based in Iran and fighting in the south of Iraq. The letter is addressed to Perez de Cuellar, head of the United Nations, and it speaks of the republican guard in Iraq—this has not been carried elsewhere, so it is news for those who will hear it—tying women and children on tanks and using them as human shields so that the Iraqi insurrectionists cannot defend what they have gained in Basra. According to that fax, in Basra's Sa'ad square, 45 resistance fighters have been executed, and in two areas outside Basra, chemical hand grenades have been used. Napalm has also been used and its victims have been taken to Iran for treatment for their injuries. So it is possible to find news from Iraq, given the will to do so.

Food, medicines, equipment and chemicals to purify water are all desperately and urgently needed. That is why I believe that sanctions should now be lifted by the British Government. My speeches on the subject in the past few months show that I have never agreed with sanctions, but no Member of this House can now defend their continued use against the ordinary people of Iraq.

I make only one exception to my view on sanctions, and it concerns the arms trade. A couple of weeks after the war ended articles in newspapers and television programmes have begun to claim that "showcase", "combat-proven" weapons used in the middle east are now on sale elsewhere. "Newsnight" carried an item yesterday which spoke of a possible $50 billion to $150 billion-worth of United States arms sales to the middle east. It is worth recording that half of all the oil wealth accumulated in the history of middle eastern oil extraction has been spent on battlefields.

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

For the millions of people in the region, let alone the hundreds of millions more close by in north Africa, that is a tale of misspent money, which could have been better used in other ways.

We need a full examination of the arms trade. Who armed Saddam in the first place? This House does not even have what the United States Congress has—a Javits amendment, under which arms sales of more than $7 million have to be reported to Congress. Had such a measure been in place in this country, the £12 million sale of lathes to churn out shell casings which went from Matrix Churchill, via Chile, to Iraq a couple of years ago would have been exposed. Had such a measure been in place, we could have questioned the Department of Trade and Industry when it allowed the same firm, Matrix Churchill, to be taken over by the Iraqi secret service three years ago. When sanctions were imposed, the Department allowed that firm almost to collapse. No one would trade with the firm given the uncertainty surrounding contracts with it, and more than 100 workers in Coventry lost their jobs because of the Government sanctions imposed on the firm.

Defence jobs have never been secure. There have been about 150,000 redundancies in the industry in the past 10 years. Workers at the Filton plant in Bristol must be worried that their plant may be threatened in the same way as Preston and other British Aerospace plants have been in the past couple of months. My party is beginning to come to grips with the issue. When we look into ending arms sales, we must parallel that activity by guaranteeing defence workers alternative jobs, through diversification, so that they and their families do not pay the price for the cuts in defence spending that we want. We should end arms sales to repressive regimes, and we should stop promoting arms.

In the meantime, we should ask why, in July 1979, days before Saddam Hussein was promoted from vice-president to president, Lord Carrington went to Iraq to sign deals. We should ask why, in October 1979, the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson), then a Trade Minister, was in Iraq doing business. We should ask why, in July 1981, the present Foreign Secretary was in Iraq selling arms—and why, after the war, the present Secretary of State for Social Security allowed Iraq more trade credit. Why did the Government sponsor the arms fair in Iraq, in Baghdad itself, in 1989—a fair which 13 British firms attended? Why, after 91 Opposition Members from six parties tabled an early-day motion opposing Government help for the fair, did not a single Tory Member sign it? Since 2 August we have been subjected to lectures suggesting that the Opposition support dictators because we opposed the war.

My final question is why, on 14 May in the national exhibition centre in Birmingham, there is to be a British arms fair of defence components and equipment. Countries no less repressive than Iraq are due to attend it—perhaps, for example, new-found "allies" of ours such as Syria, with its vicious police force; or old "allies", such as Indonesia, where 200,000 people—one third of the civilian population—have been murdered in East Timor since 1975. Perhaps such countries will show up for two or three days to buy equipment——

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Nellist: I am afraid that I do not have time.

I am against such exhibitions, as are many of my hon. Friends who have signed the early-day motion to that effect. It is not as though we are against war. We are not pacifists. Plenty of regimes in the middle east and elsewhere need toppling. To paraphrase the Prime Minister, I shall not shed any tears if the al-Sabah royal family goes, if all it promises to do is to restore the 1962 constitution which allowed only 8 per cent. of men, and no women, to vote. We did not go to war for freedom and democracy on that basis.

But there are wars to be fought—against poverty, ignorance and disease. One Tornado costs the same as 80 hospital wards, one Lynx helicopter costs the equivalent of 880 hip replacements, and one Warrior infantry fighting vehicle of the kind in which Lee Thompson and his eight teenage colleagues were killed by "friendly fire" costs the same as training 200 ambulance personnel.

Before we rise for Easter, the House should debate the international trade in arms to repressive regimes, which must be stopped. The House should lift the sanctions that Britain is still imposing on Iraq. If we want peace and stability in the middle east, as I and my hon. Friends certainly do, it will come about only when democracy and socialism are brought to the people of those countries, allowing them to determine their own future. That has not happened through a war waged by 30 countries against Iraq; it will not happen as a result of the sanctions still being imposed on Iraq and the Iraqi people; and it will not happen if America is allowed to sell $50 billion to $100 billion-worth of arms to the middle east. Who will be next after Iraq goes down?

6.20 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I am tempted to take issue with some of the arguments that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) advanced, but in the interest of brevity I shall not do so. The House will at least be grateful to the hon. Gentleman for underlining the appalling atrocities that are still being committed in Iraq. Many of us feel deeply unhappy that, although the war is over and, relieved though we are at that, that evil man, the butcher of Baghdad, remains in power. There will be no semblance of democracy or freedom and no semblance of humanity in that terribly torn country until that man has gone.

I wished to contribute briefly to the debate, because I wanted to give support to my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris). We had a pact that whoever was called first would raise the subject, and whoever was called thereafter would endorse. I too wish to talk about the plight of the hostages. Over the past weeks, we have all been preoccupied with events in the middle east, and during that understandable preoccupation, we have not spent enough time, perhaps, discussing the fate of the three men—the four, if we add Mr. Cooper. Although Mr. Cooper is not strictly a hostage, he is held in similar and terrible circumstances.

I well remember attending a meeting organised by Christian Wives before Christmas 1986, when the guest of honour in Mr. Speaker's house was Terry Waite. It was a moving occasion, attended by Members and their wives of all parties. I think that everyone who met Mr. Waite and

listened to what he had to say was greatly impressed by what he had achieved and deeply troubled by the fact that he was returning to the middle east. He made it plain in his public remarks to those of us who were at the meeting, and privately to some of us afterwards, that he was returning with a sense of foreboding. We all know what happened. It is proper that, before the House rises for the Easter recess, we should remember that Terry Waite has been incarcerated since a few weeks after the meeting to which I have referred in Mr. Speaker's house. We should remember also that John McCarthy has been incarcerated for even longer, and that Jackie Mann has been incarcerated for about three years.

I am talking of three men who were guilty of no crimes, who have been sentenced without trial to the most appalling form of imprisonment. The events of the past few weeks have made us all conscious of the need to try to work for stability in the middle east. Although there has been a genuine and respectable difference of opinion in the House on what specific methods should be used, I believe that there is universal relief that the war is over, and a universal desire to see peace and stability in the middle east.

Peace and stability in the middle east demand various preconditions. One of those is that the countries of the middle east—this is why it is impossible to conceive of proper peace and stability while Saddam Hussein remains in power—should accept certain basic civilised values. I would like to think that, before the Easter recess, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will communicate specially—I know that he has done it many times before—with middle east ambassadors in the United Kingdom and with our representatives in the middle east to stress that it is incumbent upon us all to bring whatever pressure can be brought to bear upon those who hold the hostages.

We cannot move into a new era while people are allowed to behave like those who hold the hostages. I am not making any criticism of the Government's general stance, because I believe that they have been wholly right not to talk about deals. Terry Waite impressed upon us in his moving speech that, if he fell victim, he did not want deals to be done. He told us that he did not want his position to weaken the resolve of the west. The Government have been right not to do deals but as we move, perhaps, to a middle east peace conference, we must intensify the pressure upon all those who have any influence to recognise the uncivilised nature of those who hold the hostages.

I am sure that it is not very often that a Member of this place feels that he speaks for everyone who is present in the Chamber and for most of those who are not present, but I am sure that I speak for all those who are in their places now and for most of those who are not when I say that those outside who think that we have forgotten about the hostages are wrong. Those who think that the hostages are out of our minds are wrong. They are very much in our minds and on our minds. Many of us received special cards at Christmas that were sent by the friends of John McCarthy to remind us of the hostages. I say with great respect and understanding to those who sent the cards that it was a nice gesture, but we did not need reminding of the hostages in that sense.

Last week, my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster presided at a meeting in the House which was organised by a committee set up to secure the release of the hostages, of which he is a joint chairman and of which I am an officer. Many hon. Members attended the meeting, although it was a day when we were not whipped and there was not heavy business in the House. Those who attended included the shadow Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and the foreign affairs spokesman of the Liberal Democrats, the right hon. Member for Tweedale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel). Also present were many of my right hon. and hon. Friends.

We were brought together because we had one overriding concern, which was to see the three men and Mr. Cooper, reunited with their families. It must be understood that the families have gone through hell while not knowing but knowing at the same time. They have not known precisely what was happening, but they have known that their loved ones have been in darkness, with little or no opportunity for any dialogue. They know that they have been subject to the most intolerable pressures. We all learned that when Mr. Brian Keenan ceased to be a hostage last year. I am sure that we were all greatly moved by what he said.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will heed the message from my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster and myself. I hope that he will recognise also that we are speaking on behalf of colleagues of all parties in the House of Commons and for both Houses of Parliament in asking that everything possible should be done to intensify the pressure and to bring home to all parties in the middle east the fact that there can be no move towards a stable, secure and civilised middle east while those who behave in a barbaric manner are tolerated in any way.

6.29 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I would echo everything that we have heard this evening about the hostages. It is tragic that they remain incarcerated and separated from their families. I hope that the hostages will be released before Easter. The problem for their relatives and friends is not knowing. It is not only those people who are in that position, because many thousands of people throughout the world have relatives in Iraq and have no knowledge of what is happening to them. Many of us have constituents who are in that position. It is to be hoped that all those who have friends and loved ones in Iraq about whom they have no information at present will receive that information as quickly as possible.

It is ridiculous that the House should go away for 18 days at Easter and an additional day for the spring bank holiday. I understand why the Government are keen to get us all away; there is so much ferment on their Benches and so much in-fighting in the Conservative party that they prefer to send hon. Members to their constituencies to simmer down. It is nonsense for the House to go away for 18 days when we should be getting to grips with so many important issues. For example, we should spend time trying to find a solution to homelessness. We should try to deal with the problems of people who are sleeping in the streets of London and the homeless within our constituencies.

It is ridiculous that we cannot have a proper debate to assess the military implications of what is happening in the Gulf. We should get to grips with the points stressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr.

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

Nellist). We need a proper debate about arms sales and the whole question whether the middle east is to be re-armed. We should face up to the fact that we should be stopping arms sales to other countries and seeking alternative jobs for those involved in arms manufacture.

I would willingly give up all 18 days away from the House over Easter if we could have legislation to get rid of the poll tax and to put something else in its place. I am sure that all Opposition Members would willingly give up their time to deal with such legislation.

The House might debate less dramatic issues. I raised at business questions the reform of the procedure on private Bills. Again, I should have thought that it would be a good idea for the Leader of the House to give us only a week off at Easter and to devote one day to that subject.

I regret particularly that we shall not have a chance to debate satanic abuse and the cases that have appeared in the newspapers in recent weeks. I shall not deal with what has gone on in Nottingham, Rochdale or the Orkneys; I leave that to the hon. Members who represent those areas. Unless we have a proper debate on the matter, we shall find that the same problems will crop up elsewhere. I plead with the Leader of the House for an early opportunity to debate the Government's guidelines and to make sure that there is proper debate in the country on the whole issue of satanic abuse.

We should try to ensure that teachers and social workers put the issue into the context of the normal behaviour of normal children and into historic perspective in relation to the way in which such allegations have recurred century after century since Roman times. We should also learn from the witch persecutions of the middle ages. If there were to be a debate, I should want to emphasise that teachers, social workers and others should be aware of children's behaviour in relation to the telling of scare stories.

I am concerned that not enough parents, teachers and social workers understand the phenomenon. I have been aware of it as a parent and as a teacher. I have also had the opportunity to listen to a tape recording made by a folklorist of a group of children telling scare stories. Once an adult is involved, that changes the behaviour of the children, but it is important to understand that children tell scare stories.

As a child, I was conscious of the practice. I remember that, when I was about seven, a group of children used to congregate at every playtime in a corner of the playground to tell stories. The whole question was whether one had the courage to stop and listen or was too frightened and would run away during the telling of the story. Later, I was aware of a group of older girls telling similar stories, with young boys hanging around to listen to them. Later still, when I was in the scouts, I remember my first camp when scare stories were told until someone got upset.

Sometimes I still wake up at night, remembering a story that horrified me as a seven-year-old at the end of the war. People had in mind Hitler as a bogeyman. The story was that, to celebrate his birthday, he cut off children's fingers to stick on a birthday cake; then he lit the fingers and watched them burn away. That story was told, by older children to scare the younger ones. I remember other stories that the girls told about babies with two or three heads. In the scouts, we heard various ghost stories.

As the stories were being told, someone would say, "You must be kidding." That is an interesting phrase. Half the time the children knew that a story was being made up as the teller went along. When someone interjected, "You must be kidding," the other youngster would say, "No, I'm not. My brother told me." Very often, the child would call on a brother or an older person to justify the story. Most of us knew that the story was being made up, but some children were in the odd position of not knowing whether it was true. I suspect that horror films and videos come into the same category, between fantasy and reality.

The problem is that the moment an adult enters the scene, everything changes. If a child is so frightened by a story that he tells it to an adult, he is almost forced to believe the story and it ceases to be fantasy. Most children listen to the story and go away, but the odd one ends up repeating it to an adult. Once that happens, the danger is that the adult asks the child to justify it, and the child gets caught in a mechanism of trying to say that the story is true. He cannot admit that it was fantasy because, if it was fantasy, why should he be frightened by it? I make a plea to social workers, teachers and others to spend a little time considering how children normally tell horror stories and not to be taken in by the idea that behind the story there is reality rather than fantasy.

Social workers should bear in mind the way in which people have been writing recently about satanic abuse. I asked the Library to dig out for me all references to satanic abuse in a national daily newspaper over the last two or three years. I chose *The Independent* because I was aware that it had published quite a few articles. The computer produced well over 100 entries about satanic abuse. Having looked at the headlines, I got the impression that at the beginning the reporters on the whole believed the stories. As time went on, the accounts showed a growing disbelief among reporters. Eventually it became clear that that newspaper's reporters did not believe the stories.

I will not go through all the articles, but it is worth drawing attention to one which appeared on 13 January in *The Independent on Sunday*, by Rosie Waterhouse, on the spread of charismatic Christianity in Britain under the heading:

"Hungry for Souls: The evangelicals are on the march—out of the church, down the corridors of power and on to the air waves. But is their fervour bringing with it a dangerous intolerance?"

Rosie Waterhouse observed:

"Evangelical Christian groups are also largely responsible for spreading stories lat year that children were being sexually abused by satanists in black-magic ceremonies, and that teenage girls were being used as 'brood mares' to produce foetuses for sacrificial rites. No evidence in support of these allegations has been found by the police".

That seems to be a carefully worded reference to cases that were recently published in newspapers. The article concludes by suggesting that there was a conspiracy to put across such allegations.

The same allegations have appeared over many centuries in folk lore. They have particular resonance as traditional libels that were pinned on a variety of minorities by often powerful groups that the authorities or the Government of the day considered to be deviant, subversive, or otherwise dangerous. I recommend to any right hon. or hon. Member who takes an interest in the subject Norman Cohn's book, "Europe's Inner Demons".

He traces such accusations with great thoroughness, from Roman times to the present day, over 2,000 disgraceful years.

Norman Cohn's book points out that the early Christians and dissident Christian sects, Cathars, Templars, and those persecuted for witchcraft in the middle ages were all accused in turn of engaging in orgiastic sex, baby killing, and cannibalism in the service of evil. Originally, those who followed the Christian Church were accused of such activities, but gradually that situation reversed, so that the Church came to accuse other groups. Descriptions of so-called satanic activities go back to the year 1000.

Century after century, the same allegations were made of satanic abuse, yet evidence was never produced to substantiate them. One thinks also of the blood libel legend, which was a regular element of anti-Semitic folk lore in medieval times. It appears in Chaucer's work, "The Prioress's Tale" and in the traditional ballad, "The Jew's Daughter". Blood libels have no sexual element, but sometimes involve cannibalism. In 1255, Jews in Lincoln who were the victims of blood libels had to be taken into protective custody against the mob.

I plead with social workers to be aware of the continuing retelling of such myths in presenting a particular point of view in society, as a means of criticising or attacking a particular group. Before we rise for the Easter recess, time should be found for a proper debate on satanic abuse, not only to help devise guidelines for the Government in dealing with such allegations, but so that when they are made, social workers also will have at the back of their minds the fact that it is a natural activity of children to fantasise and to manufacture scare stories, and that we try to force children to justify them at our peril.

Allegations of satanic abuse have endured for more than 2,000 years with no evidence to support them, but to persecute others either in trying to promote a particular religion or to suppress the beliefs of others. Before social workers are taken too far down the line of satanic abuse, they should see Arthur Miller's play, "The Crucible", which presents the background to the witch persecutions in Salem and elsewhere in the world. They will then realise how amazingly easy it is to persuade children to make allegations that have no basis in fact. I urge the House to debate the whole question of child abuse, and of satanic abuse in particular, at an early stage.

6.44 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I want to raise an issue that affects more than 400 of my constituents—the fact that permanent residents living on seasonal caravan sites are liable to value added tax on caravan pitch rentals. I have raised this issue with successive Treasury Ministers over the past four years. I did so first with my right hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley), now Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, then Economic Secretary to the Treasury; then with my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Caithness, now Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, but formerly Paymaster General; with my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder), when he was Paymaster General; and with my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard), the Minister of State, Treasury now responsible for such matters.

Their replies have a depressing similarity, which bears the imprint more of civil service minds than of independence of mind. However, that has not prevented each of them from being promoted to higher office—probably leaving them greatly relieved that they did not have to deal further with my representations. In case my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House feels that I am picking on him, I may point out that he is the sole remaining Member for a Norfolk constituency to whom I have not presented my case. I do so now, in the hope that I will be third time lucky.

Three years ago, the Government decided to introduce VAT on seasonal caravan pitches to bring them into line with other holiday accommodation and services provided by the tourist trade. It was never the Government's intention that VAT should apply to residential caravan owners. They wanted and meant them to retain relief from VAT, in line with that extended to other permanent domestic accommodation. As the then Economic Secretary to the Treasury, my right hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans, wrote to me on 27 June 1989:

"I should emphasise that VAT is only being applied to seasonal caravan pitch rentals which, because of the seasonal nature of the site, can only be used for holiday or recreational purposes. VAT will not be charged on pitch rentals where the caravans can be occupied as the owner's permanent residence, i.e. where it can be lawfully occupied throughout the year."

However, that is exactly what happens.

Seasonal sites can be, and frequently are, used by those whose caravans are their sole permanent residence. The problem arose because the Government decided that the sole and most equitable yardstick for those liable to VAT was the nature of the licence granted to the park owner—that is, whether the site was licensed as seasonal or permanent.

VAT legislation was drawn deliberately to apply to all pitch rentals at seasonal sites, without regard to the precise length of the season or the personal circumstances of individual caravan owners. It also assumed that all permanent residential caravan owners would seek the protection afforded by the Mobile Homes Act 1983 and choose to live on sites licensed under that legislation, specifically designed to accommodate them. In fact, many permanent residents do not have that choice.

In my own constituency, only one site offers permanent pitches for permanent residents who number just 40. In fact, 387 of my constituents are distributed among just three caravan parks—Talacre Beach, Willow Grove, and Point of Ayr—and a few others are spread throughout smaller sites in the area. They would all prefer to live on a permanent site, but none is available.

Talacre Beach caravan park has about 120 to 130 permanent residents, but it is not currently licensed as a permanent site, and must close for about eight weeks each year. That means that the permanent residents can lawfully stay on that site only for about 10 months. In midwinter they have to move to temporary accommodation—this year it was from 5 January to 2 March—which is usually in bedsits or flats in neighbouring towns, such as Rhyl. They frequently have to pay high rents for accommodation—£80 or more. They would also certainly rather not move out of their permanent homes to the seaside in the worst possible weather, when no one else is there. Most of them are retired, many are pensioners and none of them is well off. The Government are aware of the position, but are not prepared to make permanent residents of seasonal caravan parks a special case.

[Mr. Keith Raffan]

On 6 March, my right hon. and noble Friend the Earl of Caithness, who was then Paymaster General, wrote to me saying:

"It is our understanding that seasonal sites are not designed or intended for use by residents as their sole home, although clearly this does happen."

Indeed it does. It happens to more than 400 of my constituents.

There must be many other constituencies throughout the country, especially those in tourist areas, where this problem occurs. My constituency is predominantly industrial and is on the edge of the so-called north Wales tourist belt. The problem is even more severe in many other constituencies. Thousands of people must therefore be affected throughout the country.

The Government must reframe the law to take caravan owners' individual circumstances into consideration. VAT liability should depend upon the personal circumstances of each caravan owner and not on the planning status of the park.

The Government say that that would cause considerable extra administrative and accounting burdens for park proprietors. I have spoken to many of them in my constituency, and they disagree. Most of the parks are computerised, and proprietors would not have to spend an inordinate amount of extra time dealing with these problems. All the proprietors I have spoken to say that they would be glad to do so.

The Government say that there is a verification problem. Again, park proprietors disagree. They know the residents. They know who are permanent residents, and they know immediately when their circumstances change. Most of these caravan parks are not large, few containing more than several hundred people. The caravan park proprietor and his staff keep close tabs on what is going on within the park, and know immediately if someone ceases to reside there—they certainly know within 24 hours. They can produce lists immediately from their computers to show which people are permanent residents. I am talking about small businesses, not large ones.

The Government say that if they were to change the law and to reframe it to take each caravan owner's personal circumstances into account it would lead to a "plethora of anomalies". Again, park proprietors disagree. They think that anomalies and unfairnesses exist at the moment and they want them to be corrected.

Finally, the Government say that park proprietors

"have a right to expect clear, workable guidelines."

All the park proprietors I have spoken to would say, "Hear, hear" to that. They do not think that the guidelines are workable at the moment, nor do they think that they are fair.

The Government are wrong to say that it is "impracticable" and "totally unworkable" to grant VAT relief to caravan owners who make seasonal sites their only home.

In conclusion, I quote my right hon. and noble Friend the Earl of Caithness, who said in his letter of 6 March:

"It is the intention with any taxation system to implement it fairly and impartially whilst giving full regard to any potential injustices which might arise from it."

As I have shown to the House, the injustices are not potential but actual. The Government may intend to have a fair and impartial taxation system, but that is not the reality in this case. They are certainly not giving full regard to this injustice—they are not even giving partial regard to it. More than 400 of my constituents are affected. The local economy of my constituency is not based on tourism. How many more people must be affected in neighbouring constituencies along the north Wales coast, or along the south coast of England and in tourist areas in other parts of the country? I am sure that the problem also exists in the county in which the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is situated.

Many people are affected by this unfairness, by this injustice. Most of them are retired, many are pensioners and none of them is well off. The Government must redress this injustice. I am not over-hopeful that they will do so immediately. Having spent two years shelving it in correspondence with me, it is probably too much to ask the Government to redress it before Easter. Although, technically, those are the terms of this debate, I shall not insist upon that, but will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House bring this matter once again to the attention of the Treasury?

In a recent notable speech in Bonn, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister quoted—I think it was the only Conservative he quoted—his hero and mine, that great Conservative the late Iain Macleod, when he spoke of creating a society

"more efficient, more tolerant and more just."

The VAT law is unjust to these people. I ask the Government to correct that injustice.

6.55 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I thought that the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) about Iraq was tremendously moving. He revealed the massive suffering which has occurred because of the bombing and the war that has taken place in the Gulf, and he stressed the terrible problems of disease, further destruction and destabilisation that still exist in the area.

I feel especially affected by the devastation that has occurred in Basra, which is where I did my national service for most of 1955 and 1956. The sons, daughters and grandchildren of the people I mixed with during that period are among those who have gone through tremendous devastation and destruction.

I wish to deal with the poll tax and electoral registration. The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) said that nothing is ruled out and nothing is ruled in in the review of the poll tax, but that does not seem to apply to me. I wrote to the right hon. Gentleman on 10 January, asking for an opportunity to discuss the problems of electoral registration and the community charge. Finally, the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) replied:

"I regret that diary pressures prevent a meeting at the present time."

So I have been ruled out, or perhaps the issue begins to be considered as nothing.

I am prepared to meet the Secretary of State, or anyone else within that office, to discuss the key item of electoral registration and the impact that the poll tax has had upon it. Hon. Members should be tremendously worried about that issue.

The community charge undermines the operation of the Representation of the People Act 1983—certainly de facto, and perhaps even de jure. I must also point out that the 1983 Act has a higher legal status than the Local

Government Finance Act 1987 which introduced the community charge; the 1983 Act should be considered as the prior piece of legislation dealing with these matters.

I feel that it is hon. Members' duty to consider this matter closely, and it is the duty of the Secretary of State and of the Government to consider the electoral consequences and franchise consequences of what they have been up to in the past few years, during this review.

The evidence that the Representation of the People Act 1983 is undermined is contained in the Local Government Finance Act 1987. The exemptions from the poll tax register and the electoral register are almost similar. For instance, certain handicapped people are excluded from electoral registration and from poll tax registration—the severely mentally handicapped. Physically handicapped people appear on both registers. They are not excluded from the poll tax register, although they may be badly in need of financial assistance. Their condition is not taken into account, because they are entitled—rightly—to exercise their franchise. Certain concessions have been made—for instance, to monks and nuns—but in general the two registers are almost interchangeable. Some people will be listed on different registers; students may be on the electoral register in one area and on the poll tax register in another.

The other problem relates to the much-vaunted principle of accountability—the principle that everyone living in the same district must pay the same, except those who receive rebates. There is a danger that other legislation will also include that principle, even if smaller payments are involved. One of the worst aspects of the poll tax legislation is the fact that it covers everyone. That does not apply to other forms of taxation.

Obviously, people who find it desperately difficult to pay the poll tax will duck for cover. There is evidence that attainers—those who are about to appear on the register for the first time—are disappearing in large numbers. The fact that those who avoid poll tax will also avoid electoral registration should worry a House of Commons that prides itself on its involvement in the extension of the franchise, and in the battles over the great Reform Acts of the 19th century and the extension of the franchise to women in the 20th.

I am not talking only about theoretical evidence; there is increasing evidence of a link between electoral and poll tax registration. According to a circular issued by the Home Office to electoral registration officers on 10 August 1990, people will be removed from the electoral register if they have not yet registered, and if their names cannot be found on the community charge register. That is surely a clear recognition by the Government of the connection between the two.

The Census (Confidentiality) Act 1991 provides, reasonably, that census information cannot be used by poll tax registrars. The aim is to protect the census, but we should be equally anxious—if not far more so—to protect the franchise. Both should be protected, because both are necessary in society; but the franchise has an additional constitutional importance.

The Caldey Island Act 1990 highlighted the exclusion of monks and fishermen on the island from either register. The statistical evidence backs up the evidence in section after section of that Act of a connection between the two registers. In the Finchley constituency, for instance, there has been a reduction of 8·5 per cent. in the franchise over two years; over the same period, some 600,000 people have disappeared from the electoral registers in England, Scotland and Wales. That takes into account the number of people aged over 18. There has been no such development in Northern Ireland, which has no poll tax.

I believe that the undermining of the 1983 Act is illegitimate. The Act has an important constitutional status. We have no written constitution, but it is generally recognised by a host of constitutional authorities that certain measures have such status. If time permitted, I could quote such authorities as Dicey, Blackstone and De Smith, but I shall content myself with a reference to the Statute of Westminster, the First. That 1275 statute says: "because Elections ought to be free, the King commandeth upon great Forfeiture, that no Man by Force of Arms, nor by Malice, or menacing, shall disturb any to make free Election." The statute does not say who should have the vote, but it establishes the importance of free elections under sovereign authority. Such statutes were used by constitutional authorities such as the 18th-century Blackstone to establish the significance of electoral provision as a cornerstone of the British constitution.

That cornerstone is under serious attack from a measure that should be repealed. I have been refused the right to meet the Secretary of State for the Environment; I therefore hope that the Leader of the House will convey to him what I have said tonight, which should be taken into account in any review of the poll tax. If we are to re-establish and protect the full franchise, the poll tax must go.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this evening, Independent Television News reported that the Prime Minister had made a statement in the House to the effect that the poll tax was to be abolished. It is a simple matter of fact that no such statement was made. This may be no more than misreporting by ITN; but reports that a decision has indeed been reached, and that it is a decision to abolish the poll tax, are being carried this evening by the BBC, and also by some of tomorrow morning's newspapers.

What appears to have happened is this. The Prime Minister had intended to make a statement during Prime Minister's Question Time this afternoon, but failed to do so. The obvious explanation is that he had so little confidence in what he had to say that he funked it. He says that no one asked him the right question—notwithstanding the fact that he was asked, on the first question, whether he believed that the poll tax would endure. The statement that he had intended to make was, however, issued in his name later in the afternoon. That statement, of which we have a copy, makes it clear that no decision has yet been reached.

This is the position. The Prime Minister did not make a statement, and the statement that he did not make does not mention any decision to abolish the poll tax. Nevertheless, Lobby and other journalists have been briefed to that effect. A Prime Minister who was too frightened of the House, his own party and of the country to make the statement in his own name has nevertheless found a behind-the-stairs way of making a statement which goes well beyond the statement that he was too frightened to make to the House. If a decision has been made on the most pressing political issue of the day, should it not be made to the House by a Prime Minister prepared to defend it?

If the Prime Minister's explanation of his failure this afternoon to make a statement is that no one asked him the

[Mr. Bryan Gould]

right question, I am glad to remedy that deficiency right now. Will he now come to the House and answer the many pressing questions about the decision that he claims to have taken?

If the Prime Minister continues to duck and weave, if he continues to refuse to face the House, is this not a fittingly disreputable and cowardly end to the whole disreputable saga of the poll tax? If the Prime Minister has at last nerved himself to take a decision that the poll tax must go, why will he not have the courage to come to the House and face the music?

Will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, inquire whether a statement is now to be made either by the Prime Minister or by a senior Minister—the Leader of the House is present—so that the House is not treated in this contemptuous way, so that the people of this country are offered both an explanation and an apology, and so that the Prime Minister can at least explain whether it was a lack of honesty or a lack of nerve which led to that disreputable subterfuge?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I was almost inclined to say that it was a contemptuous abuse of those of us who have been engaging in a debate in the House, because it really is a tortuous question that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has raised. However, in view of what the hon. Gentleman has said, I will make the position absolutely plain.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister may often have the opportunity to say many things at Prime Minister's questions if he is asked particular questions and if he has the time to do so, so there is absolutely nothing significant in that whatever. I made our present position on the community charge clear in business questions. I made it quite clear this afternoon—this is what I think is the guidance that has been given—that the Prime Minister chaired a meeting of ministerial colleagues this morning, that he will chair a further meeting of ministerial colleagues next week, that the committee's conclusions will need to go to the full Cabinet and that we will announce our proposals after that.

Because I have been in the Chamber all afternoon, I have not seen what has been on the news bulletins tonight, but if they are saying either that the Prime Minister has made a statement to the effect that the poll tax is being abolished or that authoritative sources are saying so, I can say that there is no truth in that at all. The Prime Minister has not made such a statement, and nor have authoritative sources.

We seek to achieve proposals which are fair, which will not impose undue burdens on local taxpayers and which will provide a practical and lasting basis for the relationship between central and local government.

I think that I have made the position absolutely clear, and that we should not proceed further with this point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are in the middle of a debate in which other hon. Members want to take part.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): We must now resume the debate. It is quite irregular——

Mr. Gould *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall listen to the hon. Gentleman in a minute. I remind hon. Members that we are cutting into valuable private Members' time. I deliberately allowed much more flexibility than I would normally allow on points of order.

Mr. Gould: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall not detain the House long. We have at least established, with regard to the reports based on briefing of Lobby journalists—and there is no question that that has happened, because all the radio and television journalists and the reporters for *The Times* and other newspapers have told the same story—we have now had it on the authority of the Leader of the House that the briefing is to be withdrawn and is inaccurate. If we are now to be told that no decision has been taken and the poll tax survives for the time being, we can at least establish that the House still awaits a statement from the Government—from the Prime Minister—when it is taken, on when the poll tax is to be abolished.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We now resume the debate.

7.14 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): It is outrageous and an abuse of our procedure, when I and other hon. Members have sat here waiting to make speeches, for Opposition Members to produce that sort of pantomime. Perhaps we can now return to the Easter Adjournment debate.

There are three brief constituency points that I hope the House will consider before we adjourn for the Easter recess. The first is what I describe as the protection of the consumer from unfair and misleading timeshare promotion schemes. Many hon. Members will have received complaints from their constituents about unsolicited mail, but I think that the present level of letters coming through our doors bearing American postmarks and inviting us to attend timeshare promotion schemes has got out of hand, and many of my constituents have made representations to me.

My wife and I have been invited to three such schemes. We are very lucky people. The first letter told us that we are category A winners and that we have won either a Volvo sports car, an Electra sport boat with outboard motor or £2,000 in cash. The next piece of mail told me that I have won a 1991 Ford Escort or a Bahamas cruise or £1,000 in cash. The third, which arrived this morning, tells me that I am a gold card winner and that I have won either a Ford Fiesta or an Electra sport boat. What on earth my wife and I will do with all these electric motor boats I do not know. Perhaps we will be able to sell them off Southend pier.

On a more serious note, my wife and I responded to one of these invitations, which told us that we had both won cars. I telephoned the company to find out if that was the case. I then engaged the company in correspondence and we received the following reply—I shall not mention the company's name on this occasion—

> "I was very surprised to learn you went as far as discussing what colour Fiesta you and your wife would choose and how excited your household were on the morning that you received the letters. I did however detect a certain tongue-in-cheek tone and if you were truly under the impression that you have both won Ford Fiestas, which I seriously doubt, I should bring to your attention two main points included in the letter"—

in very tiny print, of course—

"Firstly, the opening line begins 'If you bring the number' and, secondly, in the sentence below the first box section, it clearly indicates that this is an illustration."

What utter nonsense. Many of my constituents and, I am sure, other constituents represented by hon. Members are deliberately being misled by these promotions.

Mr. Cormack: Name the company.

Mr. Amess: At the end of the letter, it says that if one wants evidence from some of these so-called winners one should telephone them. When I asked for the telephone numbers of these individuals I was told,

"You request finally to take advantage of my offer of contacting Mr. Noakes and Mrs. Aspinall. This is purely a figure of speech, but if the purpose of contacting them is to verify whether or not they were genuinely awarded motor cars, I can assure you that written and photographic evidence has been submitted to the Office of Fair Trading and the Advertising Standards Authority."

I have two other brief points to make and do not want to deprive other hon. Members of the opportunity of taking part in the debate, but——

Mr. Cormack: Name the company.

Mr. Amess: I am applying for an Adjournment debate, and on that occasion I may very well seek to name the company.

My second point is about hospital radio broadcasting. I have the honour to be the unpaid spokesman for Hospital Broadcasting. There are 312 hospital radio outlets throughout the country. My right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) has an excellent radio at his hospital, and I have an excellent one in Basildon. It is the largest national charity to possess no paid workers and the third largest radio network after the BBC and the independents. The therapeutic effect of hospital radio broadcasting is proven.

I plead with my right hon. Friend to pass a message to our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer that when he comes to the Dispatch Box next Tuesday, he should say that he will treat hospital radio broadcasting in exactly the same way as he treats talking books for the blind and zero-rate hospital radio broadcasting equipment for VAT. That would mean an enormous saving to voluntary bodies. Currently, the organisers of hospital radio are having discussons with the IBA in the hope of obtaining a separate frequency. I hope that they will make good progress.

My final point relates to dyslexia. I understand that as a five-year-old I was unable to communicate with my peers. My class teacher pointed out that I had special learning difficulties, and I had speech therapy for three years—"How now brown cow," and so on. Dyslexia is a problem which concerns many of my constituents. The Department of Education and Science categorically recognises dyslexia but, sadly, Essex county council does not believe that it exists. It has no clear policy for helping children who suffer from word blindness. It will accept only that there may be learning difficulties. Many of my constituents came to my previous surgery and expressed concern about that.

I am happy to say that this Saturday we are launching the Basildon dyslexia association. The Government are encouraging county councils to provide special tuition for dyslexic children, so it is not their fault that it is not provided in Essex. We intend to lobby Essex county council until we obtain a centre of excellence within the Basildon constituency to help those children identified as suffering from dyslexia.

7.22 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I wish to bring the debate back to the subject of local government finance, and in particular to local government finance in my area. I do not think that the House should adjourn until the question of the poll tax is settled. The issue concerns many people in many ways. I make no apology for speaking emotionally about the poll tax, because it is a broadly based tax that affects people in different ways in different areas, depending on how they live, where they live, and what they live in. It is a more complicated problem than is generally realised.

My local authority has, once again, been capped, and quite unfairly. When the Secretary of State announced the criteria for poll tax capping, my authority complied with them and set a figure just below the capping level. Before that, the Department of Transport was considering a light railway system for Sheffield. The fact that there is a South Yorkshire transport executive affects the finances for the whole of south Yorkshire, which includes Sheffield, Rotherham, Barnsley and Doncaster. My authority was assured that the provision of a light railway system would not be taken into account for poll tax capping. It came as a complete surprise when my authority was capped, and especially as the reason was the expenditure on the light railway system in Sheffield. It had nothing to do with Barnsley, which simply happened to be the clearing station for the method by which local government finance was determined for the light railway system.

My authority is now faced with deciding between whether to try to save £368,000 in its budget or to say no to the light railway system—a system that the Department of Transport wants and that is essential for Sheffield. I have made my feelings clear. I could not justify to my constituents the closure of six schools so that £368,000 could be spent on a light railway system. I could not persuade them of the justice of so doing. The issue must be examined quickly and clearly.

If the Department of Transport wants the light railway system to proceed, it must remove it from the capping criteria. I have discussed the matter with my colleagues who represent Doncaster, and they are of the same opinion. Of course, the problem is one for local government, not for us, but I felt it necessary to make my position clear, because I have to justify what happens to my constituents. Barnsley has not built a nursery school for five years, simply because finance has not been available. It closed schools in the last session, and it is closing schools this session. In no way can I justify the expenditure of £368,000 on a light railway system.

I want the Government carefully to consider what is happening to Barnsley and Doncaster. We would love Sheffield to have its light railway system—it would be opportune for the world student games. Sheffield is a neighbour in many, many ways, and my local authority will have to consider the matter very carefully. There is need for a light railway system, and that need has been accepted by the Department of Transport because it has approved the finances for it.

The problem is not just that my authority has to find £368,000 this year; the light railway system is a

[Mr. Allen McKay]

multi-million pound project. It will affect us not just this year, but next year and the year after. I do not believe that my local authority can go along with that, although that is for it to decide. It will have to reconsider its budget. Before it does so, the Government should think carefully about the way that it is being treated. My authority has been unfairly dealt with, and unfairly and unwisely advised. The assurances given by the Department of Transport have not been honoured, and matters look bad for my authority.

We must consider the whole system of local government finance. I hope that, as has been rumoured this evening, the poll tax is to be abolished, but we will have to wait a week before we have the official verdict. We must examine what has happened to local government finance since 1979, why it has happened, and what system should be introduced. There has been a war between central and local government. They have battled about finance since 1979. Central Government grant to local government has been reduced from 79 per cent. to about 35 per cent. That is why local government is in trouble.

We must ask why that has happened. The only reason is that the Government realised that the majority of local government was Labour-controlled. They felt that if they could turn the blame towards local government and local councillors—which they unfairly tried to do—the local populations would get rid of their authorities. In fact, that did not happen. The local people rumbled what was happening and wisely said to the Government, "Not on your Nellie. We will vote for the authority we want, for the councillors we want, and for the policies we want." It is the local people who, since 1979, have said no to the Government. That is why the Government introduced the poll tax. The former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), was shooting from the hip. She said, "Get rid of high rates," rather than trying to find out the cause of those high rates. That is why the Government quickly introduced the poll tax.

I attended the first sitting of the Commitee that considered the poll tax legislation. The right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) was taking the Bill through the House. We told him that it was a silly mistake, and that the Government did not realise what they were doing. Conservative Members know that we warned the Government at that time. We asked the right hon. Gentleman to abandon the Bill and, instead, to put our heads together to find a system for local government finance that would not have to be changed year after year. We wanted a system that would last for decades.

We wanted to keep the old system. We wanted to identify the anomalies and remove them without throwing the baby out with the bath water. The right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury decided arrogantly that the poll tax was the Government's flagship and that they would go ahead with it. Once the Government had the poll tax around their neck, they realised that they were wrong and they decided that they had to get rid of it. The Government will have to eat humble pie. They must recognise that they have made a mistake.

The Government must also recognise that there is merit in the argument that everyone must pay according to his or her ability to pay. Clearly the poll tax is not based on the ability to pay. If we accept and recognise that local government is right and central Government are wrong, that the poll tax is wrong and that there is merit in asking everyone who has the ability to pay to do so, we can put our heads together once the political aspect has been removed and find a sensible way to finance local government.

Central Government must be big enough to say that they were wrong. They must say that the poll tax should not have been introduced and that they will get rid of it. We must then introduce a different system to finance local government.

7.30 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Before we adjourn for the Easter recess, I want to raise an issue of great concern to a major community in my constituency—the Sikh community of Gravesend and Northfleet.

My constituents are becoming increasingly anxious about the rising tide of violence and disorder in their homeland of the Punjab. The House will recall that at the time of independence for the sub-continent, it provided for a Muslim state of Pakistan and for an independent India for the Hindus, Sikhs and other minorities. At the time of independence, the Sikh leaders acquiesced to that arrangement following solemn assurances by Nehru and his associates.

In practice, as soon as India became independent, the majority Congress party broke all its promises of justice and equality made to the Sikhs before independence. The two Sikh representatives to the Indian constitutional convention refused to sign the final draft of the constitution because it contained no guarantee of the rights of minorities. In the Indian constitution today, the Sikh religion is not recognised, whereas Hinduism and Islam are.

The province of Punjab saw two new Hindu-dominated provinces hived off it—the provinces of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. The residual state of Punjab no longer has its own Government and is subject to direct rule from Delhi. That has led to a bottling up of Punjabi political pressures. Inevitably, some argue that the only solution is secession from the republic through the creation of an independent Sikh state of Khalistan. Both the Khalistan campaigners and the moderate Sikhs, the latter who want only their human rights and to live in peace and prosperity that they are more than capable of creating for themselves, have no democratic outlets for their views. Their views are repressed within the Punjab.

The House will appreciate that that has led to political unrest, protest, reaction, violence and repression. In Britain we were shocked in 1984 by the terrible violence and desecration at the Sikhs' most holy shrine the Golden Temple at Amritsar. Subsequent events, the violence, murders, emergency laws and detentions without trial have resulted in a torrent of reports of infringements of human rights about which the human rights groups in the House has heard. Those infringements bring shame on the republic of India which prides itself on being the world's largest democracy.

The Punjab has traditionally been the bread basket of India. In recent years wheat production in the Punjab has doubled and doubled again. The province is potentially very prosperous and its Sikh population has been

described as the Scots of India. How sad it is that that land is being stalked by the spectres of death, fear and extortion.

On 5 January, *The Economist* reported:

"The death toll in Punjab was almost 4,500 in 1990, the highest for any year. Not all killings should be blamed on the militants or police. With the breakdown of the administration, crime syndicates have come up in a big way."

The Punjab needs its own representative legislative assembly which can give democratic expression to its people and appoint its own chief Minister and Government. In particular, it needs law and order. The present rule of gun law must be ended. The militants and the Government must call a halt to the carnage.

The Indian Government must accept that things cannot proceed as they are and that they cannot achieve anything on current trends. The brutality of the police and armed forces is achieving nothing. They are alienating the civil population by providing no protection to the law-abiding citizen and by condoning, and in some instances participating in, murder, rape and intimidation.

The Government of India must also show some concern for the police force. As *The Economist* reports:

"The police are demoralised. They unofficially pay bounties to armed freelances willing to take on the terrorists. Officially, any youngster willing to wield a gun can join a police team for 30 rupees"—

less than £1—

"a day. Unfortunately, many youngsters disappear with their guns, and some have joined the militants."

The republic of India is to hold another general election in May. I hope that the new Indian Government will learn the bitter lessons of the Punjab's recent history and restore to the state its representative legislative assembly which is a member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and restore to its long-suffering people law and order and a respect for human rights.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will ensure that those hopes are endorsed and transmitted by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the incoming Indian Prime Minister.

7.37 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On 24 July 1986, I asked 17 specific questions about the forensic evidence of Dr. Skuse in relation to the Birmingham pub bombings. This is not the occasion to pursue that matter, although I sometimes wish that speeches in this place were examined more carefully. The proper thing for me to do is to submit evidence to Lord Runciman and Sir John May in their royal commission inquiry, and I shall do that.

The point, about which I have given notice, that I want to raise with the Leader of the House concerns the bombing on the Basra road. I became concerned about this when I read the news tape which stated:

"WARPLANES SWOOP ON FLEEING IRAQIS

American warplanes swooped on Iraqi forces streaming 'bumper to bumper' north from Kuwait City today picking them off with cluster bombs and other weapons, pilots on the US aircraft carrier Ranger reported.

'It looks like the Iraqis are moving out and we're hitting them hard. It's not going to take too many more days until there's nothing left of them,' Captain Ernest Christensen told pool reporters aboard the carrier.

The pilots said the Iraqis were fleeing north towards the city of Basra in southern Iraq, presenting a bounty of targets for A-6 Intruders and other war planes.

Huge B-52 bombers were also dropping 1,000-lb bombs on the highways north of Kuwait City, they added.

'We hit the jackpot,' one pilot said.

Captain Christensen described Iraqi movements as both 'a withdrawal and a retreat'."

I genuinely asked questions about that instead of jumping to conclusions. However, on 7 March the Prime Minister said:

"Allied forces had instructions to attack retreating Iraqi units which could continue to pose a threat. We have no information on casualties sustained in these attacks."—[*Official Report*, 7 March 1991; Vol. 187 c. *247*.]

That needs amplification before the House goes into recess.

In the Gulf war, there were 131 allied dead, an estimated 2,000 people were killed in Kuwait and 150,000 Iraqis were killed. To find an equivalent imbalance, one must go back to the Conquistadores. A large percentage of those people were killed in the land war launched by Washington after Iraq had agreed, in Moscow, to an unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait.

Colin Hughes spoke of

"the glee with which American pilots returning their carriers spoke of the 'duck shoot' presented by columns of retreating Iraqis from Kuwait city."

That troubles many of us. The American pilots used Rockeye cluster bombs, which dispersed 247 bomblets containing needle-sharp shrapnel designed for soft targets —people. Their targets included many contract workers from the Indian subcontinent—that was discovered from the nature of their luggage—who had no air cover. Did allied aeroplanes deliberately bomb people who were running away on the road to Basra? That question is also asked by the Kuwaitis.

I am indebted to Dr. Stephen Pullger for bringing to my attention a quote by Martyn Lewis, a BBC presenter, who said:

"The Kuwaitis fear that many of the hostages taken from Kuwait by retreating Iraqi troops may have died in Allied air attacks. Hundreds of the vehicles they used were trapped and bombed at the Mutla Gap as they poured out of Kuwait City, heading north on the main road to Basra."

A reporter, Michael MacMillan, was filmed on location as saying:

"About an hour's road journey out of Kuwait City and heading north, the Al-Mutla Gap is where the Iraqi Army came to a standstill, paralysed by a relentless Allied air offensive.

What concerns the Kuwaitis is that buses like these had been used in the round up of people from Kuwait in the last three days of the Iraqi occupation."

I shall not read many of the other current reports in my possession.

I am not the only person asking such questions. Sir Michael Howard, former professor of the history of war at Oxford and now professor of modern history at Yale, said in *The Times:*

"Ever since the first world war, our primary concern has been to minimise our own casualties by using superior technology and industrial power to inflict crushing losses on our opponents—including their non-combatant populations."

Apparently, Sir Michael Howard is among those concerned by the bombing. The consequences of the bombing—not merely probable but certain from the outset—were the opposite of proportional or utilitarian behaviour, even in the context of war.

One of the cruellest ironies of the conflict is that as many Kuwaitis may have died in this grotesque carnage of the allied bombing of that retreating army on the road to Basra as died at the hands of their Iraqi abductors. Would

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

anyone, on either Front Bench, care to justify the proportionality, logic, necessity or morality of that massacre?

Ruth Wishart wrote a moving article in *The Scotsman*, entitled "Ashamed of war's offensive aspects" in which she said:

"I am ashamed of how we have been led to behave in the past 48 hours, and I am ashamed that we no longer appear capable of independent thought. Surely the answer to atrocities and war crimes is to bring to justice the perpetrators, not indiscriminate, wholesale slaughter."

That is how it looks. Why were B52 bombers used by generals said to be devoted to pinpoint bombing? They laid mile upon mile of carpets of death. Pilots who dropped high explosives through clouds from 20,000 ft were, on one air force reckoning, achieving "circular error probability" of one or two miles. That means that only half their bombs could fall in that radius.

I refer to a moving letter in *The Times* from Alison Buirski, who said:

"There is much talk about Saddam Hussein using civilian buildings, such as schools, for military purposes. I recollect with horror my own experience during the Second World War. At the end of 1943 in West London, I gave birth to my first child in Queen Charlotte's Maternity Hospital, Hammersmith, across the road from where we lived.

My baby was barely four-weeks-old when suddenly the area was subjected to a fiercely intensive series of air raids. I spent two nights crouched in my basement flat with my baby and then rushed away to my mother who lived in the country, taking with me a friend and her baby. We were lucky as my mother made room for us. We learnt that the target for this return of the Luftwaffe to our skies over Hammersmith was St. Paul's School just up the road, which was being used as headquarters for General Eisenhower's D Day preparations.

I need hardly add that even to write about this memory is hard. It is something I would prefer to leave buried but reading about the air attacks on Baghdad, I know it is forever with me and I must protest against the bombing of all cities, by they London or Baghdad."

The House of Commons, at least, deserves an answer. John Lehman, former secretary to the United States navy, said:

"Pentagon contacts had told him the laser-guided bombs were hitting their targets about 60% of the time. If you get a cloud coming between the airplane and the target or a burst of smoke, that breaks the laser-beam."

My colleagues and I are not ashamed to be called dogs of peace. The dogs of peace say that someone, some time, must answer those awkward questions.

7.46 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Having often had the job of responding to debates such as this, I have come to the conclusion that it is an almost impossible job. This debate has covered such a wide range of subjects that it is impossible to respond to all of them. I shall therefore concentrate on the subject that has undoubtedly been the theme of the week—the poll tax.

Before doing so, let me acknowledge the speeches on the middle east and the Gulf war that have been made by two or three of my hon. Friends including my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), and on the hostages issue, which concerns so many of us and was mentioned by several Conservative Members. Clearly it is appropriate that those issues should be reflected in a debate that is a sort of end-of-term report. The two or three months since Christmas have been dramatic.

I make no apology for concentrating on the poll tax. When I summed up a similar debate at Christmas, I could report with pleasure and pride—with the confidence of knowing that I had the House behind me—that we had managed, in the period since the autumn break, to get rid of the Prime Minister. It is not often that an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman can say that, knowing that he has the support of the majority of the House. All my hon. Friends, plus a fair number of Tory Members, supported me on that issue. I am rather bewildered but pleased to say now that I can look forward with pleasure to the demise of the poll tax. Once again, I can speak, with the majority —perhaps with one or two late converts—of the House behind me. I hope that the Leader of the House will respond to the two or three points that I shall make on the poll tax.

The Government cannot dismiss the poll tax as if it were a peripheral policy they got wrong and for which they now mildly apologise. It has been central to the Government's legislative programme since 1987. They cannot say, "We sold you a second-hand car in 1987 and now we are sorry that a couple of tyres are bald." Rather, they should be saying, "We sold you a second-hand car in 1987 and it is now a total write-off." In any other walk of life, a substantial response would be required for such an error of judgment and such an infliction on the people of this country. The experiment has been a hugely expensive failure. Our estimate is that it has cost £10 billion.

In the past couple of weeks my constituency has been told that we cannot have our education capital allocation of £17·4 million because the financial position will not allow it. Instead, we are to have about a third of that—£6·5 million—which is considerably less than the single capital allocation to the city technology college, the one school which received massive Government handouts in the constituency. When I discovered that frugality was the order of the day on those matters, but that the Government had £10 billion to waste on the ludicrous experiment of the poll tax, I got some idea of the warped values of Conservative Members. I am glad to see that the Leader of the House agrees that so far £10 billion has been wasted on the poll tax in relief payments and implementation costs.

I know for certain that, in any walk of life other than Conservative Cabinets, if an error of the magnitude of the poll tax occurred, heads would roll. If the board of directors of a company or a local authority made a horrendous mess of its financial calculations, or if the management of a football club said that it intended to build a new stand that would cost a few million and that stand fell down after two years, someone would be held responsible. Why is that not happening in the Government? Who is responsible for what has happened? Who will own up and say, "Fair cop, Guv; it was me"? We see no sign whatever of that happening, yet undoubtedly if it happened in any other walk of life the Government would look for a scapegoat. The Government are ducking their responsibility.

It seems that there will not even be any resignations. Conservative Members will do their triple somersaults and stand on their heads and feel no obligation to resign because the principle that they supported has been turned over. I would certainly feel much better if the Government did one simple thing—I am sure that the Leader of the House will not do it, but perhaps someone else will. They

should simply say, "We are sorry. We got it horribly wrong and you in the Labour party—look me in the eye, watch my lips—were spot on in all the criticisms you made."

My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay), is a reliable witness. He has stated this evening that he warned in Standing Committee—I was not there, but I am sure that his statement is accurate—what would happen if the Government went down the path they proposed. He said that it would be vastly expensive, grossly unfair and totally unworkable—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members are becoming more and more agitated, except those who did not vote for the poll tax throughout.

Mr. Raffan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Grocott: I shall not give way, because the Leader of the House and I have only eight minutes each to reply to the debate.

It is astonishing that the Government could be so dreadfully wrong and we could be so entirely right, but the Government do not apologise. I see Conservative Members' indignation.

Mr. Raffan *rose*—

Mr. Grocott: I give way to the hon. Gentleman, as he clearly wishes to explain.

Mr. Raffan: The hon. Gentleman paints a mythical fantasy picture of the unity of his party, yet we all know that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) resigned because he disagreed with fellow Labour Members on the Front Bench about the Labour party's original proposals, to which we have already had 62 alterations.

Mr. Grocott: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has been around to witness recent developments on these matters, but he is delving into ancient history now. We know perfectly well what his party said and did. We know who is culpable.

I make one appeal to the Government, as we are in a mood of conciliation. We shall not be too triumphant about the poll tax; we shall just say, "We told you so." But how about a little fairness in the tactics employed in the pre-election mood which seems to be gripping everyone at present? Let us have a little honesty about the way in which programmes are being costed.

I listened to the Secretary of State for the Environment yesterday. I noticed that, not surprisingly, all his effort was directed at seeking to destroy our policy documents on local government finance. Of course, he has the whole weight of the civil service to cost our proposals. Unashamedly the Government constantly use their civil servants—6,000 of them in Marsham street—to cost and examine everything we do. If the Government want to do that, fair enough. I suppose that we will do it after the next election when we are in government.

I should like the Government to adopt a little consistency. I listened with interest to my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) about his endeavours in the matter, but I have been trying in vain by means of parliamentary questions to have some of the Tory election pledges costed. One would think that one could do it by means of a parliamentary question. I understand that, if the Tory party wins the next election, one thing that it will do is to allow all schools to opt out, as it is so fond of schools opting out. Of course, the Leader of the House is particularly well qualified to answer on this matter, because he was responsible for some of the errors made.

I should have thought that it was reasonable to seek to find out from the Department of Education and Science what it would cost if all schools opted out, given that Ministers have told us repeatedly that there are costs associated with opting out. There are many costs, but one of them is the transitional grants which are paid to schools which opt out. I asked what I regarded as two simple questions, and one does not need to be a top-ranking civil servant to answer them. I asked what would be the average cost in transitional grants of schools that opted out. The Government found difficulty in answering that question, but eventually I was given a list of the schools that had opted out and the cost in each case. I worked out the average, although perhaps the Government could not. The average cost was about £25,000 per school.

I hope that the next question is clear to the House. It was obviously not clear to the Ministers or officials at the DES. It was:

> "To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science . . . what would be the total cost in payment of . . . transitional grants, assuming that the present average payment was maintained, if every local education authority school opted for grant-maintained status."

Reading between the lines, I was trying to find out what the Tory party's election manifesto, as it developed, would cost us. The answer that I received from the DES was:

> "The levels of these grants are reviewed annually in the light of the Government's spending priorities for education and other services. It is not therefore possible to project a figure for the total cost if every local authority school opted for grant-maintained status."—*[Official Report,* 7 March 1991; Vol. 187, c. *229.]*

My word, I bet it would be possible to determine the cost if that policy was in our manifesto. I have not the slightest doubt that Ministers would be jumping up at the Dispatch Box with the figures. In this slightly frenetic pre-election atmosphere, let us have some consistency in the Government's approach. If they cost election manifestos, let them cost their own as well as the Labour party's manifesto. Let us have a little humility from the Government too.

It would be wrong to sit down without mentioning the other piece of bad news for the Government this week, although they do not seem to be too worried about it. Perhaps they represent seats where there are no problems of unemployment. The bad news this week is the unemployment figures. Again, a central plank of the Government's case is that all the misery they have put us through in the past 12 years can be excused because they are good at managing the economy and can be tough. They are not very good at managing employment in the economy. Unemployment is now 2 million, even on the Government's fiddled figures, and we know well enough how the methods of calculation have been changed over the years.

Representing a constituency in the west midlands where we have been hard hit twice by the recessions engineered by the Government in the past 12 years, I always find it amusing that the Government talk as if the 85,000 people thrown out of work since the previous month's figures were published are not really 85,000 people because the figures have to be seasonally adjusted. I wish that the Government would distinguish between people, who have lost their jobs in the past month who are actually out of

[Mr. Grocott]

work and the people who are merely seasonally adjusted. It is apparent to the people who have lost their jobs. That is the scale of the economic failure that we have suffered under this Government. Hardly a day goes by without some further evidence arising of the way in which they have mismanaged our affairs in the past 12 years.

We end this Session until the Easter recess with a little election atmosphere in the air, which is reflected in the comments of several hon. Members. We are told that the Prime Minister has been reading the opinion polls and that they tell him that he is the most popular, warm and caring human being since polling began. I hope that he believes those polls. I understand that he thinks that there may be a window of electoral opportunity. If he believes that, I invite him, please, to jump. Perhaps he feels that he will have an electoral opportunity in the next few months. I hope that this is the last time that we shall have a debate such as this under this Government. Like all my right hon. and hon. Friends, I look forward to a general election to put some of these problems right, and the sooner it comes the better.

8 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): I agree with one comment—and one comment only—made by the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott). I have learnt that this is an impossible debate to answer, because so many different points are raised and I do not have the luxury that the hon. Gentleman has of not answering most of the questions.

Were it not for the disgraceful abuse of procedures—not only bogus points of order, but the bogus point made by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould)—I should have had longer in which to speak. Several hon. Members specifically asked me to draw certain issues to the attention of one of my right hon. Friends. I shall do so if I cannot deal with all the points tonight.

I shall begin by dealing with one of the points made by the hon. Member for The Wrekin because it was absolutely ludicrous. He mentioned the figure of £10 billion and used the word "wasted" in relation to the community charge. In the same breath, he talked about honesty in figures. I do not think that I have heard a more dishonest figure for a long time. It is typical of the outrageous misinformation campaign waged by the hon. Gentleman and shows how little the Labour party understands about these issues.

How did he reach the figure of £10 billion? It must include much of the money spent by central Government on rebates, benefits to students and others and the transitional relief scheme. Those schemes are designed to reduce the community charge for those on lower incomes. If he describes that as money wasted on administration, he has hit the wrong target. It is typical of the way in which he tries to distort the facts. It is worth bearing in mind the fact that what he calls waste has benefited many people and has been well targeted.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) spoke about his local theatre. I am a strong supporter of local theatre, so I understand why he chose to speak on that subject. As he said, I am familiar with the Eastern Arts regional association. While he was speaking, I wrote down that I would respond by making it clear that, although I should pass on his comments to my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts, it is an issue for Eastern Arts. My right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West knows that the arm's-length principle applies to arts funding. He acknowledged that and he knows that my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts has no direct power to intervene. I hope that the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West will be drawn to the attention of Eastern Arts, and I understand his constituency interest.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) raised a couple of points in his entertaining speech. I shall deal first with his comments on parliamentary questions, to which I have two responses. He said that he had experienced some difficulty with the Table Office about what were described as campaigning questions. The Procedure Committee is undertaking an investigation into oral questions—I have given evidence to it—and he will be able to put his points to it.

The right hon. Gentleman also said that he had been told that questions were too expensive. There are good reasons for that, because there must be a limit to the expense of any one question. However, I have told the Procedure Committee that we must have a more accurate figure on the cost of answering questions. Perhaps we shall have to make a few changes.

The right hon. Gentleman's point of substance was about people escaping from open prisons. I understand that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, who has responsibility for prisons, will shortly discuss it with him directly. I hope that that will help to overcome some of the procedural problems that he encountered.

In their moving speeches, my hon. Friends the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) and for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) referred to the hostages. I fully understand why they raised that important matter on the Adjournment debate. We all hope that progress can be made before we rise for Easter. My hon. Friends were right to remind us of the plight of the hostages and we share their concern. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster that the four he mentioned are far from being forgotten. I shall pass on my hon. Friends' comments, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South said, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs needs no reminding.

I have one or two comments to make about the hostages, because it is one of the most important points to be raised tonight. As the Prime Minister told the House on 28 February, the fate of our hostages is ever present in our minds. We are determined to secure their release and we are doing everything that we can to bring it about. We believe that Iran has decisive influence. We are pressing the Iranians to live up to their undertaking to use their humanitarian influence to achieve the release of our hostages. We have made clear to them the importance that we attach to this issue and we have told them unequivocally that there can be no prospect of developing a bilateral relations until if the hostages are freed. The freeing of the hostages would transform our relationship. We are also encouraging the Syrians to maintain their helpful efforts on our behalf. The extension of their influence in Lebanon lends importance to their role.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leominster mentioned especially the case of Roger Cooper. We remain concerned about his continued imprisonment in Tehran since 1985 and regard it as wholly unjustified. We hope that the Iranians will release him soon. Following reports in the *Tehran Times* which refer to him, we have been in contact with our chargé d'affaires in Tehran. We have made it clear to the Iranians that further advances in our relations are impossible unless Roger Cooper and our hostages in Lebanon are released. I hope that that makes our position clear and I am grateful to my hon. Friends for raising the issue.

I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). There is currently a substantial expansion in higher education and, clearly, we wish the deaf to be included in that. Several things have been done to help the disabled, including the deaf. Under the loan scheme there was special treatment for people with disabilities. The Department of Education and Science offers a capital grant scheme to enable independent colleges of further education to improve facilities for the disabled. The hon. Gentleman referred especially to the new disabled students' allowance which, when I was Secretary of State for Education and Science, increased significantly from £765 to £1,000 a year. He also referred to the two new allowances—one for equipment of up to £3,000 over the whole course and one for non-medical care costs of up to £4,000 a year. The latter two are likely to be especially useful to the deaf.

I was interested to hear what the hon. Gentleman said about the allowances not working and about the people for whom they were meant not having access to the funds. I shall draw his comments to the attention of the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) raised the issue of tourism. I know of his great interest in tourism, which plays a considerable role in our constituencies. I have seen the effect of the Gulf conflict on tourism in central London and elsewhere. People from overseas had unnecessary fears about coming to this country. However, they are coming back, and I hope that they will continue to do so.

My hon. Friend knows that tourism is achieved by a mixture of public and private expenditure—especially private sector expenditure, and I shall comment on that in a moment. He referred briefly to the grant to the British Tourist Authority, but I am sure that he will acknowledge that direct Government support, through the statutory tourist boards, amounts to much more than he said. Indeed, it amounts to about £74 million. The Government contribute in a number of other ways to tourism. It is estimated that Government support for other tourism-related activities exceeds £380 million. I want to get the figures on record to show——

Mr. Gregory *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I am sorry that I cannot give way.

The Government make a substantial contribution. My hon. Friend the Member for York and I know that many of the excellent examples in tourism, and so many of the substantial changes and developments in recent years, are due to the efforts of private enterprise and to entrepreneurial activity. We have done much to encourage that. The far better facilities and services have come about through a mixture of private enterprise and of public support, especially the former.

I was determined to make the point to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) that has been made on so many occasions and must be made again when one listens to his remarks. It needs to be rammed home again and again whose fault it was that the situation arose and how many opportunities were given to Saddam Hussein to avoid a conflict after his aggressive invasion on 2 August and before 15 January, which he did not take up.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East raised two points about sanctions. It is too soon to say how or when sanctions should be modified. The Security Council will need to consider carefully and will need to see Iraqi compliance with the Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 686. Thereafter, a selective and progressive approach is required. Clearly, that is a condition.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East referred to the defence components exhibition. It is organised by the Defence Export Services Organisation, which was set up under a Labour Government in 1966. All proposed arms exports are considered case by case and are subject to stringent licensing procedures. Before a licence is granted, a wide variety of considerations is taken into account. It does not follow that, because an item is exhibited at the defence components and equipment exhibition, an export licence will be granted.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) raised a number of points about homelessness. As I have only another 30 seconds, I cannot give much response, except to say that he will know that substantial sums are now being devoted to that by the Government. The hon. Gentleman also took us into an interesting discourse on the history of satanic abuse. His main point was to draw some of that to the attention of social workers. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health has said that firmer guidance will be issued this summer to local authorities in a new version of the publication "Working Together".

My hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) tempted me by saying that I was the only remaining Norfolk Minister to whom he had not made representations on his issue. I will have to give him a different, but equally disappointing, answer tonight. He will know that we are in the period of Budget purdah, so it is not possible for me to say anything on the matter this evening.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House, at its rising on Thursday 28th March, do adjourn until Monday 15th April and, at its rising on Friday 3rd May, do adjourn until Tuesday 7th May.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order during a debate that is dedicated to Back Benchers for a Front-Bench Opposition spokesman to waste our valuable time in playing silly games for the benefit of journalists?

Is it in order for another Front-Bench Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott), to wind up by covering subjects such as city technology colleges and unemployment, which were not raised in the debate, and to ignore important issues, such as the one that I raised about the Punjab, the one raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) and Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack)

[Mr. Jacques Arnold]

on the hostages and the one raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) on the interests of caravan dwellers? Is it in order that our debate should be wholly subverted by the Labour Front Bench?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): It occasionally happens that points of order are raised during private Members' time. The Chair always regrets that, because it cuts into private Members' time, which is especially relevant when debates are timed. This is one of the few occasions in the parliamentary year when virtually any point can be raised as long as it is prefaced by the comment that we should have a debate on it before we adjourn.

CONSOLIDATED FUND BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Motion made, and Question proposed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 54(1) (Consolidated Fund Bills), That the House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Telecommunications

8.14 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): I want to speak this evening on the important subject of choice and competition and the British telecommunications industry. This is not the first time on which I have been fortunate enough to win a place in the ballot for the Consolidated Fund Bill, but it is the first time on which I have won a place at the civilised hour of 8.15 pm. The other occasions have involved the hour of 5 am.

I am probably as pleased as my hon. Friend the Minister and my hon. Friends are that this debate has been called rather earlier than it might have been. I am especially pleased that my hon. Friend the Minister for Corporate Affairs is on the Front Bench. He is well known in industry, in the City and in the telecommunications industry for the skill and experience that he has brought to this important area. I am sure that he will take us a little further in the direction in which the Government are minded that the telecommunications industry should go. That will be of great benefit for this debate.

I am glad that my hon. Friends the Members for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs), for Wyre (Mr. Mans) and for Cornwall, North (Sir G. Neale) will contribute to this debate. They will cover a number of areas, and each has far greater expertise than I do. I want to look at the facts and draw together a number of strands of Government policy in this important area.

This debate is extremely difficult and embarrassing for the Labour party, because it goes to the heart of the difference between the two parties. This debate is about not only the telecommunications industry——

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): No.

Mr. Mitchell: If the hon. Gentleman will contain himself, I will explain why it is so difficult and embarrassing for the Labour party. The debate goes to the heart of the difference between the two parties. Our debate is not only about the British telecommunications industry, but about choice. Therein lies one of the great differences between the two parties. The Conservative party believes passionately in choice and opportunity, and in spreading power and opportunity, which results from choice. The Labour party does not believe in that. The telecommunications industry is an excellent area in which to explore the fundamental difference between the two major parties in the House.

The telecommunications industry represents in the clearest way the Government's political and economic priorities. It makes it clear that we are intent on enhancing competition, on reducing the scope of the public sector and on promoting choice for the consumer.

Those policies have been an unambiguous success in telecommunications. Since British Telecom was privatised in 1984, the British telecommunications industry has become one of the most dynamic and open in the world. There has been a wide range of benefits, including lower prices, more choice, better service, more investment, more competition and a more fulfilled work force. It is a measure of the Labour party's embarrassment that its Benches this evening are so empty. Labour Members have stolen away into the night, ashamed of their record and embarrassed by the terms of my motion.

I mentioned earlier that the debate was about choice. Choice is the hallmark of Conservatism. It is choice not only in the area of telecommunications, but in a range of other areas that affect so many people in their everyday lives. In housing, choice is personified by the Government's right-to-buy policy, which has spread choice, opportunity and ownership to many people. More than 1 million homes have been sold under that scheme. The council tenants—tenants of the state—who have been enabled by that Conservative policy to enfranchise themselves into home ownership are the first to comment with great approval on that aspect of choice.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): A minute ago, the hon. Gentleman referred to investment. Is it not the case that investment in new technology has lagged behind that of our competitors? British Telecom, for example, spends only 1·9 per cent. of sales on research and development, compared with 4·7 per cent. spent in France, 3·8 per cent. in Japan and 3·9 per cent. in Sweden. Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that our telecommunications equipment industry has gone from a trade surplus in 1979 to a trade deficit today?

Mr. Mitchell: If the hon. Lady will bear with me a little longer, I shall give her an explanation that I hope will be to her satisfaction. Those statistics are not only meaningless but bogus. I intend to dwell at some length on particular areas of the telecommunications industry where Britain is a world leader. In the meantime, I want to return to what I was saying about choice.

I have talked about housing, but choice is very evident in our schools as well. One has only to consider the tremendous opportunities that local management has unleashed. At present, many schools are considering whether grant-maintained status could be very suitable for them. Grant-maintained status has been catching on perhaps a little more slowly than some of us anticipated at the beginning. However, I believe that it will gather pace and, in terms of public support for a policy that extends choice, will be the educational equivalent of the right to buy. One thinks of the assisted places schemes. Dare I mention my ten-minute Bill, which was given an unopposed First Reading yesterday? The purpose of that Bill is to compel all schools to make their examination results available in common form for publication. Thus, in education, too, choice is at the heart of the policies of the Conservative party.

In the case of the health service, one need only look at the way in which provider resistance to the Government's health reforms has evaporated to see how GP budget-holding is gaining in popularity, how trust hospitals are gaining in popularity, and how the health reforms have helped patients. Provider resistance has slowly but surely disappeared. Competition, improving standards for the public, choice, opportunity for the many rather than privilege for the few—these are the hallmark of 1990s Conservatism, and they are at the heart of this debate, although it refers specifically to the British telecommunications industry.

Privatisation has quite simply been a brilliant success—and not only for telecommunications. One thinks of the privatisation, in the last few days, of the electricity industry, which has been such an outstanding success. This policy has been copied all around the world. Even in Russia, people are beginning to wonder whether privatisation policies would help their enormous and ailing economy. Only from the Opposition, whose Members are too embarrassed to be here tonight, do we get an indication that this policy, which is popular all round the world, has failed to penetrate. British Telecom is a very good example. The Labour party opposed every change we made: it is all quite clearly on the record.

I want to take the House back to 1981. In July of that year, the British Telecommunication Act separated British Telecom from the Post Office, and the Secretary of State took powers to license competitors. That was opposed by the Opposition. In October of that year, the first tranche of Cable and Wireless shares was sold, the remainder being sold in 1983 and 1985. That too was opposed by the Labour party. In February 1982, Mercury was licensed as a Cable and Wireless/Barclays/BP joint venture, later becoming wholly owned by Cable and Wireless. That was opposed by the Labour party. In March 1982, terminal equipment supply was liberalised, and the British Approvals Board for Telecommunications was set up. In October, value-added services over fixed networks were liberalised. In November 1983, we had the duopoly statement, and the first broad-band cable franchises were announced.

In April 1984, we had the Telecommunication Act, establishing Oftel and the current licensing regime. In June of that year, new licences were issued to BT and Hull. In November, 51 per cent, of British Telecom shares were offered for sale. That was all opposed by the Labour party. In June 1985, two cellular radio licences were issued. In October, the BT-Mercury interconnect determination was issued by the director-general. In March 1986, two national private mobile radio operators and five additional national radio pagers were selected, four existing operators having already been licensed by British Telecom. In October 1986, the 100,000th cellular subscriber appeared. In December, equipment approval powers were delegated by the Government to the director-general.

In February 1987, data services over fixed networks were liberalised. In October, the first television cable franchise—Windsor, I think—was permitted to start trial telephone services. In November, Mercury was permitted to provide public call boxes. In October 1988, specialist satellite service operators—United Kingdom services only—were announced. In January 1989, four telepoint operators were announced. In the same month, the consultation document "Phone on the Move" was issued. In September, the telepoint services began.

In November, the full resale of British Telecom and Mercury leased lines was permitted. In the same month, specialised satellite services operators were permitted to provide European services. In December, three personal communication network operators were announced. In 1990, the one millionth cellular subscriber came forward. In July, arrangements for the duopoly review were announced. In November, the duopoly review consultative paper was published.

At this point, we can see the hand of the recently appointed Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at work. The Secretary of State deserves a very special tribute for his personal style and success. His contribution is quite clear from the changes that have been made in the White Paper since the consultative document was published. I have traced six such changes.

[Mr. Mitchell]

First, whereas the Government were going to support progressive introduction, equal access is now to be introduced as soon as possible.

Secondly, the Secretary of State has decided that, for the foreseeable future, BT and Mercury will not be allowed to provide entertainment services at a national level in their own right. In the past, as I understand the position, the proposal was to permit provision after 10 years, with the possibility of a review after seven years.

Thirdly, "neighbourhood telepoint" is to be licensed. That too represents a change from what was proposed in the consultative paper. Now retailing is to be permitted —another change. Interconnection arrangements are to be streamlined and strengthened. That is the fifth change. The sixth is that number portability is to be introduced, subject to a cost-benefit study. Number portability will be very helpful to many hon. Members who live in two places—in London during the week, and in their constituencies at the weekend.

The entire White Paper on telecommunications policy in the 1990s is a great tribute to the skill, beliefs and dynamism of my right hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley), who is a very good Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. In my view, the key measures in the recently announced White Paper have received insufficient attention. They are staggering. They mark the ending of the present duopoly policy. New companies will be allowed to apply for licences to run new telecommunications networks. That is a very major and substantial change.

There will be new, tougher annual call price capping. Increases will be limited to the retail price index figure less 6·25 per cent., whereas previously it was that figure less 4·5 per cent. That represents a staggering fall, in real terms, in the cost of using the telephone. It is a remarkable success.

There is to be a 10 per cent. cut in charges for international calls. That, too, is remarkable. As I shall demonstrate shortly, it is very different from what happened when British Telecom was nationalised and was under the control of the Labour party. There will be a more effective low-user scheme, benefiting up to 2 million customers who make the least use of the telephone but may rely on it as a lifeline. This is an enormously important change. It should also be welcomed by the Opposition, as it relates to many very poor folk who, without a telephone, would be in very serious danger. It is a great tribute to the Government and to British Telecom.

There have been a host of other developments that I shall not deal with in this short debate. A wide range of new satellite services serving niche markets will be permitted—that change will be greatly to our advantage. All this comes on top of the many other changes that have been achieved over the past 12 years. In 1984, there were 20 million British Telecom phone lines. In 1990, there were no fewer than 25 million—an increase of 26 per cent. That is most impressive. Since privatisation, prices have fallen by more than 20 per cent. in real terms. That too is a most impressive statistic.

Mercury is established as a serious competitor and has installed a national digital network that exceeds the company's coverage by far. Seventy-five per cent. of customers can have a choice of trunk operator to carry their calls. That includes the magnificent Gedling Conservative Association headquarters, recently opened by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe), which has to its great advantage benefited from that excellent change.

BT is today investing about £3 billion a year in modern equipment. That is part of the answer to the hon. Lady's earlier intervention. In 1984, BT had 13,000 km of optical fibre in its network; today, it has 1·1 million km. In 1984 we could dial 137 countries direct. Now there has been a 45 per cent. increase, and we can reach 99 per cent. of the worlds 700 million phones.

In 1979, less than half of all installation orders were completed within two weeks. We can all remember what it was like then. Now 96 per cent. are completed by the day agreed with the customer. Now 96 per cent. of phone boxes work—an amazing change. Equipment is much cheaper than elsewhere in Europe and call charges are lower. The United Kingdom now has the two largest cellular radio networks in the world.

All that is against a background of innovative services —satellite news gathering, store and forward fax machines, call follow-me and the development of the 0800 numbers. That is a most impressive performance.

What of the Labour party? While Telekon Malaysia is shortly to pass into the private sector, while Mexico has sold its biggest telecommunications company, Telecons de Mexico, in 1990, while Argentina sold Entel last year, while the eastern bloc is considering the advantages of privatisation, the Labour party specifically commits itself to renationalise BT. Its policy document "Meet the Challenge, Make the Change"—known affectionately to my hon. Friends as "Duck the Challenge, Fake the Change"—makes it clear that it is intent on renationalisation.

Moreover, Labour would renationalise on the cheap. Labour leaders recognise the vast expense of renationalisation and have tried to devise schemes to realise their aims without paying the full price. The Government's successful policies of liberalisation and deregulation of telecommunications have inspired Governments throughout the world to follow a similar course.

Meanwhile, the Labour party is moving in the opposite direction. It has put forward no convincing rationale for its threat to renationalise BT. It cannot be justified on monopoly grounds because BT operates in an increasingly competitive market. It cannot be justified on the grounds that BT is a utility because the Labour party appears to have dropped plans to renationalise British Gas.

The form of words used in "Modern Manufacturing Strength" the Opposition's latest policy document, suggests that the Labour party wants to renationalise BT because of a

"long-term commitment to technological advance in telecommunications and elsewhere."

The hon. Lady will find that on page 16. That is no justification at all. BT's investment has soared since its successful privatisation.

The Labour party has still failed to come clean on the cost of its policies. Statements in "Modern Manufacturing Strength" that a Labour Government would not be "dirigiste"—page 5—are difficult to take seriously when contrasted with Opposition's policy on telecommunications. Labour has committed itself to the view that

"a national fibre optic cable network . . . cannot be left to the free market". That is on page 12. Therefore, BT must be empowered and directed to undertake this major investment programme in the public interest.

The Labour party's plans could cost the taxpayer as much as £20,000 million. It is high time that the Opposition put a price tag on their promises. They would pour taxpayers' money down the drain. Britain is already benefiting enormously from private sector investment without charging that bill to the taxpayers. Fibre optics and broad band cable should be developed at the speed and in the way that the market demands. There is no point installing capacity that will not be used, or offering people services that they do not want. The rapid growth of telecommunications systems in Britain shows that the Government's policy works. Britain already has more fibre installed than France or Germany which, geographically, are rather larger countries than we are.

But above all, we know from experience that the Labour party's industrial policy does not work, because we have the example of what happened in the 1970s. Britain had a nationalised monopoly. We have the record. We know what happened. Labour put up prices by more than inflation and, if I am correct, in one year it doubled prices. A quarter of the 77,000 call boxes did not work. The nationalised BT was starved of money for investment in those days—that is another part of the answer to the hon. Lady's earlier intervention—and it was cut off from international technology. What an amazing contrast.

We have ensured that the customer comes first. BT has put the days of subsidy and state control behind it. It is no wonder that Labour Members are too embarrassed to attend tonight in any number to debate the motion with me and my hon. Friends. I invite the hon. Lady to cast off the Labour party's absurd and ridiculous policies. After all, there are not many hon. Members here to witness that tonight if she does. She can recant publicly tonight and end the absurdity of the Labour party's policy in this area.

The British public will not be deceived by the Labour party's absurd proposals, however they are dressed up. We know perfectly well, and so does the British public, that beneath the veneer of respectability the Labour party cannot cast out the nakedness of socialism in all its ugliness as revealed by its telecommunications policy.

The Labour party's electoral appeal at the next election will depend on persuading the public of two key factors. The first is that the Labour party is a true supporter of markets and free enterprise, and the second is that it can run a liberal market economy better than Conservative Members who believe in it and always believed in it before it became so popular not only in Britain but around the world.

The Labour party's telecommunications policy stands as a beacon, a monument to the fact that nothing could be further from the truth.

8.36 pm

Sir Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): I declare my interest in this subject and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on the spirited way in which he has addressed the subject and on his success in the ballot which has allowed him to introduce this important subject.

Last week marked yet another mutation in the development of telecommunications policy in Britain. As my hon. Friend has said, it saw the ending of the duopoly policy, the beginning of the end of restricted access and a whole range of other measures which he so ably listed. But the process started back in 1980. In another incarnation, my hon. Friend the Minister for Corporate Affairs was very much involved in that at the time and he has been following it enthusiastically since, even when he has not had ministerial responsibility for it.

It was Lord Joseph, when Secretary of State for Trade and industry, who saw the great need to introduce competition and he made the statement in July 1980 which shook many people and started the process of liberalisation. It certainly rattled the Opposition to their boots. They could not come to terms with the fact that not only were the Post Office and BT to be separated—to be fair, they were not against that policy—but we were about to embark on the liberalisation of the monopoly.

As my hon. Friend has pointed out, there were a series of landmarks or mutations in the development of that telecommunications policy. Successive Secretaries of State and Ministers, the Home Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher), who unfortunately is not too well at the moment, right through to my hon. Friend the Minister, have pushed and pushed to ensure that our telecommunications policy has become more conscious of competition and consumer choice.

Those who served on the Committee which considered the legislation will remember that it was lost because of the 1983 election. It was reintroduced in 1984 and was subsequently enacted. I do not think that the hon. Member for Gateshead (Ms. Quin) was a Member at that time, but Labour Members defended British Telecom to the hilt without being aware of the cost of supplying the service to a consumer. It transpired that British Telecom had only one qualified accountant. Its knowledge of the cost of the service that it provided was lamentable, but it has been driven to change by the policies of Ministers, wholeheartedly supported by Conservative Members.

Rather than go over the ground that was more than ably covered by my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling, I shall deal with the statement that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry made last week. I find it difficult to dislike the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), and because of his performances at the Dispatch Box, I find it difficult to disrespect him. It was extremely unusual, therefore, that he crashed in against my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, which showed either that he had not studied his brief as carefully as he should have or—I hope for his sake that this is not true—he cannot make Labour policy on industry and telecommunications stand up. One of his first points was on research and development. British Telecom is a private company. It is not for the Government to dictate its research and development policy, any more than it is for them to dictate the policy of Mercury or any other company.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling said, British telecommunications products and services lead the world. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will confirm that the Department is bombarded by people from around the world who want to study the way in which our policy has opened up telecommunications. My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling mentioned the countries that have followed our example, and some of the countries that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East used to show that our policy is wrong are in the process of not only liberalising but privatising.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East mentioned prices. He has a considerable grasp of economics and cannot be unaware that inflation is falling quickly. British

[Sir Gerrard Neale]

Telecom's prices are not increasing by the rate of inflation but are falling. It is extraordinary that he did not grasp that point. The hon. Gentleman said that domestic consumers would not gain from the reduction in the cost of international calls. I do not know whether he imagines that domestic users never make international calls.

The most extraordinary feature of the hon. Gentleman's speech was a question that he put to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State:

"Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the difference between us is that, while he supports competition with reduced regulation, we believe that the real issue is that competition should be accompanied by proper regulation in the interests of the whole public."—[*Official Report*, 5 March 1991; Vol. 187, c. 140.]

He put that point as if he were trying to elicit from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State an admission that that was the Government's hidden agenda, but we have been pursuing that policy since 1980. I am sure that Ministers have sometimes been frustrated by the length of time that it has taken to implement it, but we have been proud to promote it, because we want more competition and choice and because we believe that strong private sector companies will create competition and strength without regulation. The purchasing power of the consumer must be encouraged to create the choice that we are seeking.

We recognised in 1983 or 1984 that, because of its dominance of the marketplace, British Telecom had to be regulated by Oftel. I was sad last week to hear one of my hon. Friends impugn the operation of Oftel. Doubt was expressed in 1983 or 1984 about whether it would be strong enough, but no one who is involved in telecommunications can doubt that it has performed extraordinarily well. Tribute must be paid to Sir Bryan Carsberg and his team for the way in which they have assisted Ministers to achieve further choice.

I can only echo the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling on Labour policy—nothing has changed. On the Second Reading of the British Telecommunications Bill, Labour's spokesman said exactly the same as the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East:

"The loss of the monopoly will mean a worse service for the majority of more people. Once again, the rural services will be at risk. It also means something else. The right hon. Gentleman"—

my noble Friend Lord Joseph—

"tries hard to reassure us on this matter, because of this, at least, he is aware. It means the decline of our industries in a special way."—[*Official Report*, 2 December 1980; Vol. 995, c. 151.]

We have heard numerous examples—my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling could have been given many more—of how British Telecom's performance has improved dramatically over the years.

Amusingly—I must draw the attention of the House to this—in the same debate, Labour's spokesman, John Silkin, who, tragically, is now dead, made it plain that Labour would buy back not only British Telecom but Cable and Wireless. He said that, on the strength of that policy, Labour would win the next election. As we know, the Conservative party had a majority of more than 100. That shows that Labour has learnt nothing from the performance of British Telecom and other players such as Mercury. Labour Members will never fool the public that they have a sensible policy, but perhaps they will go on fooling themselves.

Although we have created choice for Members of Parliament in their various walks of life or in their homes, it is still almost impossible for any competitor of British Telecom to gain access to the Palace of Westminster to provide alternative services for us. I make that comment because the House ought to reflect on the choice that is available outside the Palace of Westminster. In making that observation, I do not seek in any way to cast any reflection on the Officers of the House; the responsibility falls upon Members of Parliament.

A comment by the then chairman of British Telecom shortly after British Telecom was privatised epitomises the debate. The hon. Member for Gateshead, East might wish to reflect upon it. He said that the great challenge that faced him was to get all his staff, from top to bottom, to treat people at the end of the telephone, who pay the bills, not as subscribers but as customers. As long as the hon. Lady and all her parliamentary colleagues seek to treat people as subscribers—on the basis that, if they benefit from state services they should think themselves lucky—they will fall into the trap of not giving people the choice they deserve in terms of competitive products and services and of not treating them as customers, as they ought to be.

8.51 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the debate. I intend to make three points. First, I want to look back over the past 12 years and to see what we have achieved. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), whose description of what has happened was a tour de force. Secondly, I want to look forward to what we shall do in terms of providing cabling and an increasing variety of services for our customers, as opposed to subscribers. Thirdly, I shall say something about the product. We must always remember that we are trying to serve the consumers of this service—private individuals in their homes and businesses. If the telecommunications industry manages to do that, it will succeed. If all that it wants to do is to go in the direction that the Government or outside forces suggest, it will fail. The industry must always be clear about what the customer wants.

It is worth looking back at what has happened during the past 10 or 12 years. There was one monopoly supplier in the public sector. We were not even allowed to buy a telephone. In the mid-1970s British Telecom—part of the Post Office—reluctantly allowed us the choice of three colours of the same type of telephone—black, ivory or red. If, however, we asked for an ivory or red telephone, almost certainly we got a black one. It was perfectly clear that there had been no research into what consumers wanted. Now there are literally hundreds of styles, colours and different types of telephone. Moreover, we can buy our telephone. As an example of what we have done about the pricing of telephones and services, there are telephones on the market now that cost less than a year's rental. The rental system was much promoted by the Opposition and, as far as I am aware, they still promote that policy. That is an example of what has happened to the pricing structure of the telephone industry.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) asks what we have done for the less fortunate members of

society, such as pensioners and those on low incomes. We have made both the product cheaper and the service cheaper. I could quote figures, going back over many years, to show that that is so. Between 1987 and 1990 the price of telephones and calls has risen less than the rate of inflation. In 1987 and 1988 the weighted average of telephone calls did not rise, and in 1986 it fell. Those figures were provided by Oftel. During this Government's period in office, and particularly since the industry was privatised, clearly efficiency has increased and the service has become cheaper.

That has to be compared with what the Opposition have done. They have consistently opposed every move that we have made to give the consumer choice, to make the service cheaper and to provide competition. In the early 1980s, they did not support the privatisation legislation. Then they tried to persuade all British Telecom's employees not to buy shares. However, 90 per cent. of them did so. During the election campaign in 1986, they said that they would renationalise the service.

It is interesting to note the comments of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East in exchanges with my right hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley). He referred to an extension of competition and then showed what he meant by that. He said that he believed that British Telecom should be set clear performance targets. Who is to set those targets? Not the consumer, not businesses using the service; the Government would set those targets. He also said that there should be an increase in telephone connections. There was no thought to whether telephone connections were required by the consumer, or what kind of connections the consumer required. Moreover, no thought was given to whether the market would lead the desire for such connections. It was simply a target—set, no doubt, by a new Department of State for the number of connections that should be made by the year 2000, or whenever.

Finally, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said that that would ensure that telecommunications benefited not just a few competing companies but the country as a whole. What did he mean by "the country as a whole"? Over the past five to 10 years, and with several competing companies, consumers and businesses that use the telecommunications system have been seen to benefit.

So much for the past. We now have a highly competitive system that is responsive to the market, and we can move forward to provide a variety of services. In the not too distant future, people may not have to be given hard-wired installations in their homes; they may be able to take advantage of the sort of facilities that the Telepoint system is increasingly providing around the country. That will bring down the cost of connections and make them more easily available.

The fact that we have a highly liberal and competitive telephone and telecommunications system is already encouraging companies to set up headquarters in this country instead of in Germany, France and the rest of Europe. Unlike Opposition Members, they look at the figures and see that that will benefit their companies. That shows the success of what we have achieved, and it will help business in this country in the future.

When cabling comes, it must be in response to demand, not in response to documents cobbled together by politicians who believe that we need the whole country cabled by a particular year at huge cost to the public purse. Cabling must follow demand by business and by the people who want to pay for it.

I must also mention the products themselves before I end. This is an area of which we cannot be quite so proud as we can of the others that I have mentioned. Far too many products today are manufactured abroad, not as a result of a lack of research and development here but because of the lack of marketing skills in companies such as GEC. I exempt Plessey, which could call on considerable marketing skills and made quite a number of telephones in this country. In future, we must improve on that record so as to ensure that we can supply more of our large and liberalised market with indigenous products. I hope that, after 1992, such products will move out from here into Europe, and that we will not import large numbers of instruments from the far east.

Over the past 10 years, we have experienced a telecommunications revolution. Now we point the way forward for the rest of Europe, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling said, is following our example. It is a pity that the Opposition cannot admit their mistakes of the past and that they want to renationalise British Telecom and give it set targets instead of letting the market do that. Why cannot they go forward with us and show the rest of Europe how these things are done? We in this country pioneered the way forward, and I am convinced that it represents the way forward for telecommunications.

9.2 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) not only on initiating an important debate and on his Mexican—or was it Spanish?—pronunciation, but on making the important point that the Labour party's recent apparent conversion to the market is bogus and hypocritical. On this issue, as on so many others, that party is walking backwards into the future, eyes firmly fixed on the past and on the ideologies of the past.

I should also mention what my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) said. He emphasised that the huge revolution, especially of the past six years, has resulted from the market being flexible to consumer demand. It has been a market-led, not a centrally regulated, expansion. It has been led by the demands and needs of the consumer. That is why British Telecom is in the middle of a £3 billion investment programme; it is why competition has so successfully produced dividends for the consumer.

We have already heard that, as a result of this competition and liberalised approach, prices have fallen by 20 per cent. in the past four years. What is more, it is estimated that, over the next three, they will fall again by about 26 per cent. in real terms—and they may even fall in absolute terms. We have also heard how 75 per cent. of the country is now open to competition from Mercury, and that 96 per cent. of customers' installations are fixed on time. Fewer than half of them were in 1979. We have heard, too, how the network of phone boxes throughout the country has grown by a third.

Possibly more significant than all these figures is the fact that because new products have been developed—Cellphone, Vodaphone and Cellnet are classic examples—the growth in this market has been stupendous. Between 1986 and 1990, there was an increase from 100,000 to

[Mr. Anthony Coombs]

1 million cellphone users. There is a huge variety of equipment, and investment has been of a consumer variety. In 1984, we had 13,000 km of optic fibre equipment and now we have no less than 1·1 million km.

Sir Gerrard Neale: Is my hon. Friend aware that, because the Government grasped the challenge offered by cellphones and set standards that were marketable around the world, products made in Britain are being exported, even to Japan?

Mr. Coombs: Precisely. That is the result of a policy that is competition and consumer-based.

British Telecom is a private company, but it would not be right to say that everything about it is perfect. I wish to show why it is by no means perfect and why the measures that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry brought forward last week were necessary and extremely important in extending the idea of consumer choice and competition still further.

British Telecom says that domestic calls are subsidised by international calls, and international comparisons made recently show that domestic or short-range calls—not trunk calls—are five times more expensive here than they are in France, Italy and Germany. It costs £148 for the installation of a telephone in Britain whereas it costs only £20 in France and Germany. Admittedly, long-distance calls are cheaper in Britain than in those two countries. On revenue per employee and the number of BT employees per 10,000 lines, we lag behind the best. British Telecom has a revenue of $97,000 per employee per year. Pacific Telesis in the United States has a revenue of $147,000, while NYMEX, which is also in the United States, has a revenue of $166,000. The revenue of STET in Italy is $129,000. The figures show that there is a great deal to be made up by BT.

BT has nearly 100 employees per 10,000 lines, Pacific Telesis has fewer than 50, and STET of Italy has fewer than 60. When BT mentioned that it had no fewer than 12 layers of management, it was clear that there was a great deal of scope for improvement. That is despite the fact that it is making £2·3 billion in profit, which is a 22 per cent rate of return on capital. That is significantly more than is made by its German or French counterparts. The Government are right, as was the Secretary of State last week, to call for more competition in what is still a highly monopolised sector. After all, 95 per cent. of domestic calls still go through BT. It is to the credit of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that he has identified that as a problem which requires radical action.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is right to allow licences to anyone who is qualified to operate networks. He is right also to introduce price caps. That will mean that domestic calls will decrease in price over the next few years, while the cost of international calls will fall by 10 per cent. I hope that those reductions will happen quickly. The profit margins of BT on international calls vary from 43 per cent. to calls to France to 86 per cent. on turnover to Italy and 76 per cent. to South Africa. There is significant room for improvement in providing value for money on international calls.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is right to push for more equal access. I urge him to examine the proposals, by Mercury which imply that equal access can be gained immediately. That is admittedly by the substantial investment, which I am sure it would be happy to make, of £300 million through System X into the domestic telephone market. It would then be able immediately to compete meaningfully with BT.

The Secretary of State is right to allow time for cable companies to build investment for their telephony services by being protected from competition from British Telecom and Mercury for seven years. It has not been mentioned so far, but he is also right to allow reduced rental charges and 120 minutes of non-peak time per quarter for low-rate users of the telephone service.

Most of all, the Secretary of State is right to recognise that making further inroads into the market demands still further opening up of the telecommunications market to new technologies. That is what it is all about. If the market is opened up and new technologies are provided, that will inevitably lead to the competition and choice that the consumer wants.

The personal communication network licences, of which there are three, will revolutionise the telephone industry. I understand that some big players are already coming into the market. As to very small aperture terminals, VSATs, I understand that in America there are 30,000 whereas in Europe, with a bigger population, there are only 600. They will bring further competition and technological innovation into the telecommunications industry.

I want to make four brief points on where the telecommunications industry should be going. First, British Telecom is, by its own definition, still grossly overstaffed. Its Sovereign operation seeks to reduce the number of workers from 240,000 to 160,000 over the next five years. That shows that there is significant overstaffing. I hope that it gets on with the reduction of staff in the interests of the consumer.

Secondly, although we have seen an expansion in quantity of Cellnet and Vodaphone services, I am afraid that the quality in many areas is not good. In London people often have to make four of five calls before they get a proper connection. Even then they may be interrupted by crossed lines. I urge the Government, through Oftel, to ask Cellnet and Vodaphone to provide a better quality service.

Thirdly, there is scope for British Telecom to reconsider the charge of 45p for a directory inquiry. I know that the service costs £250 million a year. Those who make most use of it—companies which use it to subsidise their activities—should be charged, but there is a case for a lower rate for consumers who make up to only 10 directory inquiries per quarter.

Fourthly, and most important in view of what we heard earlier, there is a strong case for the Government to make further disposals of its 48·7 per cent. holding in British Telecom. On the current market value of 335p per share, that holding is worth about £10 billion. I see no justification why, in an increasingly competitive market, the Government should have a 48·7 per cent. holding in any company——

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: My hon. Friend makes a very important point. Can my hon. Friend give any indication, when he replies to the debate, of the Government's thinking on further sales of a proportion of their shareholding in BT? It would be eminently sensible not only for the reasons set out by my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) but because it would make

it more difficult, were we ever to suffer the inexplicable circumstance of a Labour Government coming to power, for them to privatise the company.

Mr. Coombs: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is unlikely, given Labour's policies and the esteem in which it is held by the electorate, that that eventuality would come about, but on grounds of principle it is wrong for the Government to have a 48·7 per cent. holding in any company that can make its own investment and which is properly regulated. The Government should make swift disposal of their holding, and the money should be reimbursed to the taxpayer.

We have heard some excellent speeches. The recurring theme has been that Labour's policies on public utilities generally, and particularly in respect of British Telecom are irrelevant, inefficient, and ideological. They belong not to the 21st century but the 19th century, and that is where we should consign them.

9.14 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on his good luck in winning such a high place in the order of tonight's debates, though I can hardly congratulate him on the wild misrepresentation of Opposition views in which he indulged. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should display more humility when reviewing the Government's overall industrial record, particularly given the current economic recession.

The hon. Members for Cornwall, North (Sir G. Neale), for Wyre (Mr. Mans), and for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) —perhaps I should resist the temptation to make puns about Conservative Members' crossed wires—were at least rather more measured in their comments, which I welcome. The hon. Member for Gedling referred to the size of the attendance for these debates, but right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House acknowledge that they are the province of the Members of Parliament who introduce them, and that attendance by right hon. and hon. Members of all parties tends to be similar, depending on the subject.

Despite the Government's fine words, they have given no real guarantee that consumers will benefit from the extraordinary advances in telecommunications technology, which can bring down costs and increase the range of services. There is a danger that the Government, who are very ideological, may end up supporting competition for competition's sake, even at the expense of proper regulation to ensure that all consumers benefit from new technology. The Government risk sacrificing regulation on the altar of free market ideology.

The Government have not helped either British telecommunications equipment manufacturers. I referred earlier to the trade deficit in that sector, details of which were made available to my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) by the Library, using official statistics. Nor have the Government assisted telecommunications research and development. We accept that private companies must take responsibility for their own R and D, but their European competitors work closely in partnership with private industry more positively than is the case in Britain.

Seven years after British Telecom's privatisation, Britain still has the highest charge for local calls in Europe, according to a national utility services report published on 5 March—and despite the remarks of the hon. Member for Gedling about call costs. Britain's installation and rental charges are also higher than in Europe. The installation charge in France is £21, and in Germany it is £24, but it is as much as £129 in Britain.

Mr. Mans: Will the hon. Lady comment on the availability of phones for sale on the continent? In quoting figures, the hon. Lady should take into account the cost of renting phones on the continent, compared with buying them in Britain; otherwise, she is not comparing like with like or making a fair comparison with the cost of operating a telephone in France or Germany. If the hon. Lady knows the figures, perhaps she will give them.

Ms. Quin: I only partly accept the hon. Gentleman's argument. I was making the point that installation and rental costs in Britain deter people on low incomes. While it is possible to purchase telephones more readily in Britain than on the continent, our particular concern is people on low incomes. If the hon. Gentleman will be patient, I will give statistics relating to that aspect.

We believe that installation and rental charges are too high in comparison with our competitors. We are worried that there are no proper proposals to bring charges down and that the new low-user scheme will not do enough to help those who need a telephone as a lifeline.

Britain has slipped badly in terms of the number of households with telephones. Household connections stand at only 86·4 per cent. in the United Kingdom, compared with 92·2 per cent. in the United States of America, 90·7 per cent. in Germany and 97·7 per cent. in France. The rates of telephone usage are especially low among low-income groups.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: I do not want to be unkind to the hon. Lady, because I know that the Minister will do that when he winds up. She described the Government's approach to this matter as ideological and cited her concern for people on limited means or low pay; I share that concern. However, surely the facts are there for all to see. We do not need to look at the crystal ball; it is in the book. We have records to show that, when BT was a nationalised industry, phones were not installed on time, it took a long time to get anyone to come along, and prices went up enormously—they doubled in one year.

Now, it is completely different. Prices are going down in real terms, installations are made quickly, phone boxes work, and there is a specific scheme to help the least well-off—low users. Will she at least give credit for the tremendous progress that has been made and acknowledge that the Government's record and British Telecom's record are a great deal better in those specific areas which I have cited than when the Labour party was last in power?

Ms. Quin: In developed countries everywhere, telephone ownership has increased greatly during the past 15 years—*[Intervention.]* I should be grateful if Conservative Members would stop shouting and would listen to what I have to say. When the hon. Member for Gedling was speaking, I listened carefully courteously, and I do not think that I interrupted him once. I should be grateful if hon. Members would do me the courtesy of listening.

We are worried about the fact that we compare unfavourably with other countries as regards the number of people who have a telephone. I represent a constituency

[Ms. Quin]

which is not especially well off, and I know from people who come to my regular constituency surgeries that many of them do not have telephones. When they come to see me, I ask for their address and whether they are on the telephone.

My experience bears out some of the figures that I have been given. For example, four out of 10 single pensioners do not have a telephone. Those figures show considerable geographical variations from one part of the country to another. In some of the poorer areas, telephone ownership is very low. For example, on council estates in the Northumberland coalfield, only 40 per cent. of people have a telephone. That is a low level of telephone ownership, and many people who would benefit from a telephone do not have one.

Judging by the figures that have been supplied to me, I am certain that our position is not good when compared to that in many other countries. I am sorry that the duopoly review has not specifically recognised the need for an increase in the penetration of telephone equipment.

When the Minister made a statement—I think it was a week ago—many hon. Members referred to the fact that we had an extensive mobile telephone network. While I welcome the fact that that network exists, I am aware that many consumers have had unsatisfactory experience with the mobile telephone network. If I may introduce a personal anecdote into the debate, I bought a mobile telephone from a company which has now gone into liquidation, Excel. It was not made clear to me, or to many others at the time that that equipment would not work in many areas, especially hilly areas—and that covers a substantial part of the north of England, of Scotland and of Wales. There ought to be stronger consumer safeguards to warn the customer of some of the difficulties associated with the mobile equipment being sold to them.

There have been many examples of unsatisfactory service agreements, partly because service arrangements have been separate from the supply of equipment in many cases, they have been unsatisfactory and have involved the consumer both in a long-term commitment and to substantial service charges. Does the Minister feel that increased consumer safeguards can be built into the mobile network system?

One service agreement between Excel and Systems Contracts Ltd. involved the consumer's making a commitment to pay substantial quarterly charges for seven years. It may be said that the consumer should read the small print; in this instance, the small print was minute, and appeared on the reverse side of the agreement. It could easily be missed by a busy purchaser of mobile equipment. Consumer legislation, as well as consumer regulation, must be strengthened.

There are now too many different types of public call box, and I hope that that will change. Many of us will have observed the long queues outside the few call boxes that now exist, and the availability of the many card phone boxes of various kinds that not many people have the cards to use. Clearly the telephone companies have a considerable incentive to go over to card phones: the purchase of cards in advance means that they get a lot of money up front. Less well-off consumers, however, may wish to make a one-off call with a coin and find that the equipment that they require is increasingly unavailable. I should add that the problem is not restricted to the United Kingdom; the card system is increasingly used in other countries. None the less, it should be borne in mind that consumer demand for certain types of equipment is as important as consumer choice, as are the needs of those on low incomes.

The hon. Member for Gedling did not mention the charges that are being introduced for telephone inquiries —unlike the hon. Member for Wyre Forest, with whose comments I largely agreed. It is surely unjustified that such payment should be exacted from people who merely want information that will make them use the service anyway. As has already been said, people would find it very unsatisfactory if they were charged for telephoning British Rail to obtain timetable information that they wanted solely for the purpose of buying a ticket and getting on to a train.

Like directory inquiry charges, mobile telephone charges can be considerable. Indeed, people may incur charges simply by ringing the network, to be told that the telephone in question has been switched off—or, sometimes, that it is "not responding", which gives the caller hope that it may respond in a few minutes, although it may indeed have been switched off. That is another example of the need for increased consumer safeguards.

We do not feel that the British telecommunications equipment industry is in a satisfactory state. In 1979, we had a trade surplus; this year, we have a deficit of several hundred million pounds, which we consider very much part of the Government's failure to assist manufacturing industry. Earlier, I mentioned investment in new technology, in which regard—despite recent advances—we are still lagging behind our competitors. We are not happy about that.

The framework of our response to the duopoly review is that we believe that stronger and more balanced regulation is necessary to secure the best possible public service for the British people; that further competition can be endorsed when it is proved to be in the public interest; that new targets should be set for increasing the penetration of basic telephony to bring the United Kingdom up to European levels; that policies to meet the widest range of customer needs and to encourage the faster spread of new services are needed; and that development and research into telecommunications technology, including fibre optics, to help British Telecom and the United Kingdom industry to compete in the world market are essential.

Despite comments made by Conservative Members, we would like the Government to establish clear performance targets for telephone companies, but this can be done in consultation with the industry. It can also be done in consultation with consumer interests. We would like the Government to give a clear commitment to improving investment in research and development. Instead of ensuring that telecommunications benefits just a few competing companies, will the Government now give a commitment to all consumers and to the country as a whole?

9.30 pm

The Minister for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): We have had an excellent debate and I am very grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) for choosing this subject, for winning the ballot

by whatever means and for moving the motion with such ability. I am grateful to him for his comments about me, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North (Sir G. Neale) for remembering that I have pursued an interest in these policies for a number of years, as many of my hon. Friends have done with such success. As we can see, their support has been crucial in delivering such a good policy for the telecommunications industry in this country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling told us of the many great improvements that we have seen in the telecommunications industry and in the service to customers in recent years. He explained that these were based on opening up choice and opportunity, and he asked why Labour Members were not here to discuss this vital industry, one of the fastest-growing and most important in the modern economy. The Labour party is represented just by the shadow spokeslady and one of her hon. Friends. It is a sign that they are not that interested in this crucial industry and are ashamed of their policies in this important area.

The hon. Member for Gedling told us that the Labour party is in favour of nationalisation, an old-fashioned policy which every other country in the world is in the process of abandoning; and he explained just how out of touch the Labour party is with the trend of international policy towards the harnessing of competitive private capital and the introduction of liberalisation. Labour wants to nationalise on the cheap, but we note that the Labour Government never provided telephones on the cheap when they were in charge of a nationalised monopoly in the 1970s and in a position to do so.

Perhaps the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) agrees with her hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) when he said only recently that the Labour party was against all privatisations because they provided for the element of private profit-making. That is one of the big divides between hon. Members on the two sides of the House; we believe that profits are important in order to encourage investment and to send the right signals about where that investment should be made. The restoration and growth of profitability in all sorts of industrial sectors in the past decade has underpinned the great growth in investment and the improvement in industrial prospects in many areas.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North expressed surprise at the remarks of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) in the recent exchanges in the House, when our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made his important statement. I share his surprise. I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. He seemed to think that prices going down meant that they were going up. He seemed to think that, if one said that prices would have to go down by 6·25 per cent. it real terms each year, people would be worse off. He seemed even to suggest that, although inflation would be well below 6·25 per cent. and cash prices would be going down, people would be worse off.

All I can say is that, if that is being worse off, I would like to be worse off. I like my prices going down, and I am very glad that there is a strong regulator there, backed by a strong Government who say that these prices shall be put down rather than up, as always seemed to happen under the Labour Administration in the 1970s.

I am also glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling praised the work of the Office of Telecommunications. Like him, I think that it has done a marvellous job; I know that there were divided counsels about that in the early days of the policy, but I think that we would all agree now that Oftel has come through triumphantly, has been the customers' friend and has been the guardian of the competitive market. My hon. Friend was right to remind us just how wrong Labour was when the Bill went through the House, and also at the time of subsequent announcements. It was wrong then, and it is still wrong in the policies that it is peddling for such an important industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North was right to say that the crucial breakthrough was to regard the individuals who were taking the service from British Telecom as customers. We made that important transition, and service quality and other matters have generally improved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) gave a lucid description of what it was like to have a telephone service under a nationalised monopoly compared with the choice, better service quality and lower real prices of the liberalised marketplace of the late 1980s and early 1990s. He reminded us of the importance of wider ownership and the crucial role that the telecommunications privatisation played, both in this country and worldwide, in promoting the idea of the mass sale of shares to the investing public. It involved the important participation of the employees of British Telecom, who responded magnificently when they were given the opportunity to take a stake in what is partly their company.

Our policies have encouraged a major surge in inward investment into this country, both in the telecommunications industry and in others. It is now an important magnet both to the City of London and to the wider nation that we have such a good telecommunications system. People are aware that it will improve even more as a result of the new capital, the innovation and the new ideas that are in that dynamic marketplace.

I also agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre that when cabling the country, it is crucial that it is introduced as and when there is a demand for its use. The Labour party has the strange idea that someone—presumably the paying customer or even the taxpayer—should pay an additional tax to run cable past people's homes when they do not want it. What an absurd proposition. We will cable the country rapidly as a result of private capital and of the free choice of individuals and businesses. Indeed, that is happening—there are now 135 cable franchises, some of which have many customers and are up and running. Other franchisees will do the same quickly now that they have their franchises.

A large amount of fibre-optic cable is already in place for trunk telephony, because the demand is there. It would be crass folly to waste the nation's and the telephone customers' resources providing cable for people who do not want it, and before the demand exists. The costs would be so large that it would be one way of bankrupting British Telecom and the nation.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East raised a point about research and development that had already been mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre. British Telecom spent £228 million last year on research and development. It is not possible accurately to compare its percentage with that of some of the other telephone companies around the world because we must take into account what those other companies do. The companies

[Mr. John Redwood]

with which the hon. Lady compared British Telecom are also manufacturing and designing new equipment for the industry, and those functions take place in different companies in the United Kingdom.

Is the hon. Lady aware that, for example, in 1989 Standard Telephones and Cables spent £271 million—a very large sum in relation to its turnover—on research and development? That shows that we need to consider manufacturing as well as service provision if we want accurately to measure how much research and development is taking place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) drew attention to the large price reductions that have already taken place, and there are more to come under a more aggressive pricing formula than we enjoyed in the 1980s. He also drew attention to the improvement in the quality of service. He said that more competition was needed, and how right he is. That is the whole tenor of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's policy and of the document that he recently presented to the House. On behalf of my right hon. Friend, I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his praise of our policy and statement.

My hon. Friend asked whether I had any further news on the sale of British Telecom shares. I cannot add to the position that the Government have made clear over the years, which is that the shares will be sold when the circumstances of the company and market conditions permit.

My hon. Friend also drew attention to the great opportunities available through the personal communications network licences and satellite services. I agree with him, and I believe that equal access is very important. When it is up and running, someone with a phone in his home or business will be able to gain access to all the routes around the country no matter who owns the trunk or local network. The billing would be sorted out and the customer would get the best possible deal, the best quality of service and best value for money as a result of that equal access process. We will be pioneers in that respect in comparison to our partners and colleagues in western Europe.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East gave a surprising insight into Labour policy. She attacked our policy as competition for competition's sake at the expense of proper regulation. Labour did not have a separate regulator for the telephone system in the 1970s when it could have had one. Labour did not worry about price control and there were no price controls on British Telecom in the 1970s. The real prices usually rose, often by a great amount as my hon. Friends have said, when they were free to do so in respect of general price control policies. Under our liberalised market, prices have decreased in real terms every year. Under Labour's stage-managed market, they usually rose in real terms.

Ms. Quin: We would not return to the 1970s in terms of not having a regulator attached to the industry. However, does the Minister accept that this Government have reduced the status for consumer protection within the Government below the status that the Labour Government attached to it? The responsibility for consumer protection lies with a junior Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry. Under the Labour Government, a senior Minister could investigate prices.

Mr. Redwood: What people do matters. We have introduced enormous consumer protection in the telecommunications industry.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Redwood: I fear that I do not have time to give way, because I want to answer the points raised by the hon. Member for Gateshead, East.

We have introduced substantial improvements by giving customers new rights, by insisting on payments for unsatisfactory performance and, above all, by introducing extremely firm price controls. The Labour party never suggested real price declines like those introduced under our price control formulas. We have heard no criticism of the strengthening price control from 4·5 to 6·25 per cent. apart from the extraordinary fact that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East—the hon. Member for Gateshead, East's boss—seemed to believe that that involved prices increasing. However, there has been no formal critique from the Labour party of our tough price controls.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East said that more people should have access to phones. That is precisely why we supported the policy of competition and price control on the dominant producer in the marketplace in an attempt to lower prices so that people could have more access to phone use. That has been happening year after year in the later 1980s and early 1990s.

We have now with BT—I pay tribute to BT for this—produced a better scheme, the low-user scheme. The rental will be halved for those who qualify for the scheme and they will receive 30 free-call units a quarter. If they use that entitlement to the full, they will have the benefit of more than £45 a year off their phone bills. That is a sharp improvement and it must improve access to phones, which is exactly what we want. I should have thought that instead of running down BT and the industry, the hon. Member for Gateshead, East might have a few nice words to say about that excellent low-user scheme, its generous terms and the way in which it would spread phone usage among the people she and I would like to see using phones.

The hon. Lady also made adverse comments about mobile phones. The mobile phones that I have used have been extremely good. They provide an excellent service and offer us new choices and facilities. I am sorry that the hon. Lady had a disappointing experience. She obviously chose the wrong one. I hope that she will try again, because 1 million people are using mobile phones. They seem to find them most acceptable; they provide those people with new opportunities to stay in touch with their businesses and other engagements. I have noted the hon. Lady's comments about lease agreements and their terms and clauses.

The hon. Lady then complained, quite extraordinarily, that there are now too many call-boxes—or did she say that there were too many different types of call-box? Choice is a good thing. One of the main criticisms when liberalisation and privatisation were announced was that there would be no more call-boxes. It was said that they would all be closed down and that none of them would work. We were told it would all be a disaster. Instead, the number of call-boxes has soared from 77,000 to 100,000 and the number that work has increased even more. Practically all of them—some 96 per cent.—now work and we admire the way in which the improvement has been achieved.

Anglo-Soviet Relations

9.45 pm

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): This debate is important, not because I have anything to do with it but because it deals with world affairs and the relationship between this country and the Soviet Union.

Any breakdown in world relationships can have serious effects, as we saw in the Gulf war. I do not expect the Minister to agree with any of my arguments. My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), who will reply from the Labour Front Bench, may also experience difficulties. Nevertheless, in a so-called democratic society, I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, will, as always, defend my right to express my view on behalf of all the minorities in our society. If a vote were taken at the end of the debate, it would be stretching the loyalty of the left of the Labour party to hope that they would go even three quarters of the way along the road with me.

In a debate on the Soviet Union and eastern Europe on 4 March, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) said:

"The distorting prism of Marxist theology lies shattered on the ground. The old style of Soviet Government has failed the Soviet people and, for that reason, is finished."

That bogus linkage was made intentionally to confuse the two issues when the events in the Soviet Union are analysed.

The Minister went on to say that Great Britain's

"policy is to encourage, to stimulate and, where we can, to reward political and economic reform in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe."

Those remarks smack of imperialism, paternalism and even a little impudence. We say that we do not want to interfere in the internal policies of those nations but that, so long as their policies are conducive to our way of thinking, we shall reward them.

The Minister of State continued:

"We have no right—indeed, we lack the capacity—to influence the way in which the Soviet peoples will ultimately determine their future."

A little further in the debate, the Minister outlined the Government's proposals for a policy on the Soviet Union:

"We must recognise that within the Soviet Union the greatest shortage is not of food, but of expertise and that is precisely what we have to offer. We can offer knowledge to develop an entrepreneurial system; training and advice to those engaged in new projects and market-oriented enterprises; and assistance to those engaged in constructing the legal framework for a market economy. That approach is the objective of the United Kingdom's know-how fund for the Soviet Union and it was also the purpose of the Community's technical assistance programme."—[*Official Report*, 4 March 1991; Vol. 187, c. 82-84.]

That is a clear, capitalistic analysis of a capitalist programme to resolve the problems in the Soviet Union.

The theme of the debate is Anglo-Soviet relations in the light of recent developments in the Soviet Union. If we want to look to the future, we must examine what is happening today and has happened in the past, in the light of what the Minister of State said. We must consider the economic and social conditions that prevail today, which might prevail in the future and which certainly prevailed in the past. The Minister outlined the Government's programme. Let us make no bones about it—it is a Conservative, capitalist policy. I am not a capitalist, but a member of the Labour party, which I joined to change the nature of society. I propose a policy for workers in this country and in the Soviet Union which is far from the agenda that the Minister will propose tonight.

In my book, foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy, and I do not believe that the majority of workers in this country have much confidence in the Government's domestic policy. It logically follows that they can have no confidence in the Government's foreign policy. Therefore, we have to establish the veracity of the prognostications of the British Government and the programme of world capitalism.

I do not want to go into the Gulf war in detail but it impinges on world relations. Exactly what was the United States doing in the Gulf? With the demise of the Warsaw pact, the National Security Council in the United States, in a paper to President Bush, said clearly:

"We shall need to replace the Warsaw Pact. Saddam Hussein and Iraq are the rationale for the continuation of cold war spending with the decline of the Warsaw Pact."

That is a written fact and a policy of the United States.

Our relationship with the Soviet Union has implications for not only the United Kingdom but the world. The Minister talked about the prism of Marxism being smashed on the floor in Russia, but neither Marx, Engels nor Lenin ever imagined that a state with the grotesque totalitarian character of Stalin's dictatorship would arise in the course of the world's transition from capitalism to socialism, which is part of my perspective. In my perspective, the establishment of the first worker state through the revolution in Russia in 1917 was the highest achievement in human history. The Minister will not agree, and others in the Chamber tonight will also disagree. Yet, under the rule of bureaucracy, the same state of which I applauded the inception has degenerated into a form of rule which is barely distinguishable from Hitler's fascism.

Leon Trotsky, one of the joint leaders of the Russian revolution in 1917, said in 1936, 20 years after the revolution—but he could equally make the same points today—

"However we may interpret the nature of the present Soviet state, one thing is indubitable. At the end of its second decade of existence, the state has not only not died away but not even begun to die away. Worst than that, it has grown into a hitherto unheard of apparatus of compulsion. The bureaucracy has not only disappeared, yielding its place to the masses, but it has turned into an uncontrolled force dominating the masses. The army not only has not been replaced by an armed people but has given birth to a privileged officer caste crowned with marshalls, while the people, the armed bearers of the dictatorship are now forbidden in the Soviet Union to carry non explosive weapons."

Trotsky went on:

"With the utmost stretch of fantasy, it would be difficult to imagine a contrast more striking than that which exists between the schema of a worker state according to Marx, Engels and Lenin and the actual state now headed by Stalin"—

and today by Gorbachev.

While they continue to publish the works of Lenin, which espouse the ideas of Marx, in excerpts and distorted by the centre, the present leaders of the Soviet Union and their ideological representatives do not even raise questions about the causes of such a criminal divergence from the programme and the reality of the situation there. The Marxist programme of the Bolsheviks in 1917 and of

[Mr. Terry Fields]

Lenin and Trotsky and the group at the head of the revolution have been diverted and diffused, all allegedly in the name of socialism and communism.

Today, Soviet workers believe in neither Stalinism, Gorbachevism or Yeltsinism. I do not say that academically but as someone who has been over to Russia and discussed with Soviet workers. I continue to correspond with people in that part of the world. Workers understand in the Soviet Union that Gorbachev and Yeltsin are but different wings of the same bureaucratic elite, who are responsible for the crisis both in the past and at present. What were at first mere distortions in the system developed into the system itself. Quantitative change became qualitative change and the bureaucracy entrenched itself in state power as a force with material interest.

Bourgeois law on distribution prevailed, but the means of production after 1917 was in state property as it remains today. In the first years of the workers' state, Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks feared that, if the Russian revolution remained isolated, capitalism would be restored. We have seen elements of that today in the Soviet Union. That possibility remained inherent in the conflict between bourgeois and socialist tendencies in the state that existed at that time.

The counter-revolution developed in a different way. The bureaucracy usurped power from the working class, but continued to rest on the same basis of a nationalised and planned economy. It carried through a political, not a social, counter-revolution. That showed the superiority of a nationalised and planned economy over capitalism. The bureaucracy defended that economy, because they feared to provoke the Russian working class by moving towards capitalism and also because, with an expanding economy, it was assured of its increasing privilege. Again, that has been exposed by Yeltsin and others in analysing his and Gorbachev's defects.

With nationalisation and planning—even though at huge cost—the Soviet economy developed rapidly under the rule of bureaucracy at a rate of 15 per cent. and 20 per cent. a year at its height. That rate has never been achieved in the history of capitalism. In contrast, between the first and second world wars, capitalism made no fundamental breakthrough in developing the forces of production but lurched from crisis to crisis.

As I shall show later, the conditions in which the Soviet bureaucracy exists today are different. On the basis of a nationalised and planned economy and even with all its warts, faults and mismanagement, the Soviet Union today has more scientists, engineers and technicians per head of the population than any other country. It can send expeditions into space and has the most highly educated working class of any major country, east or west.

On the basis of bureaucratic rule, the Soviet Union has not been able to deploy all its resources even to catch up with the forces of production and labour productivity of the most advanced capitalist countries. It cannot even guarantee supplies, let alone supplies of adequate quality, of the most basic food in the shops.

In the statement that I mentioned earlier, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, said:

"We must recognise that within the Soviet Union, the greatest shortage is not of food".—[*Official Report*, 4 March 1991; Vol. 187, c. 84.]

I dispute that, and use as my reference point Andrei Orlov, the deputy chairman of the States Commission for Economic Reform in the Soviet Union. He admits that, of 1,200 basic commodities which should be available in big cities, only 56 can be bought on a regular basis. Where obtainable, sugar, soap and detergent are rationed almost everywhere, and meat, sausages and butter are rationed in one city in five.

The Independent on Sunday reported in May last year that a British journalist accompanied two Moscow housewives on a shopping expedition with 60 roubles to spend. They visited 13 shops in three different shopping areas. They took three hours to do their shopping but, at the end of the day, they had managed to spend only 24.27 roubles. They could find no decent meat, rice, cheese, eggs or even fruit. Shops were unaccountably closed, queues were too long to wait in—for example, for flour—or the produce was too rotten to buy. They bought barely enough for one evening meal, let alone for a weekend. That is the real symptom of the crisis of Stalinism in the Soviet Union today.

Last week we celebrated—in this country and internationally—International Women's Day. That coincided with a poll published in the *Soviet Weekly* on 7 March, which questioned women in the Soviet Union on their attitudes to the state and what was happening. A third of the 2,700 women polled said that they had no faith in perestroika because they had no trust in its leaders. Over half the women believed that its policies were unrealisable. Nearly half cited deteriorating food supplies, consumer goods and children's clothes.

Perestroika has had no impact on the day-to-day reality of women's existence. Significantly, although only 1 per cent. of women who work in most of the Soviet Union have been on strike, one in five of those polled now say that they would take industrial action, given the chance. That opinion poll reflects the rift between the power structures and the ordinary people, and the dichotomy between the expectations raised by perestroika and the harsh realities of civil life today.

I do not know where in Moscow or in Leningrad the Minister of State did his shopping when he said that there was not a problem about food. When I was there last May, that was not the case. It was explained to me by a Soviet citizen who said that the Soviet person today is like man, the primitive hunter. He goes out in the morning not knowing whether he is going to come back with food for his wife, his children and the rest of his family. That is the reality today.

Unlike the Minister, I did not spend my time in the British embassy; I spent my time in Siberia. Perhaps some of the comrades in this establishment think that that is where I should be. I spent my time with miners who had been on strike, and who had formed strike committees and town committees. I saw some of the deprivation there. I spent time in Leningrad and in Moscow, not in the best hotels, but living in workers' homes. To a small extent, I experienced what they were experiencing, so that I could report back faithfully to the British working class.

Six years of perestroika have solved none of the problems of the Soviet people. The standards for some may have improved—for the black marketeers and for the sharks who are the natural constituency of the capitalist class—but not for the masses. That is the reality. Food and commodities are being diverted. Some of the co-operatives

and private enterprises, which are so laudable in the philosophy of the Conservatives, are extensive because of that.

I spoke to a woman who could not exist on her wages as a schoolteacher in Moscow. She does two or three jobs to reach a decent standard of living. Her response was, "Given the background of black market conditions, I would do better working in the ticket office at the Bolshoi ballet, because I should then be able to make a few bob slipping tickets to the bureaucracy and to the privileged in society. I should be better off despite all my qualifications.

I spoke to a factory worker who had won the big prize in a factory of some 10,000 workers. When I asked what she had won, she said that she had won a ticket. I asked what the ticket was for, and she said, "The ticket entitles me to go into a shop. If it has a coat, I will have the chance to buy it. It would have cost me three months' wages." She was the heroine of the factory for winning the ticket. That shows the shortages and the cost of living for ordinary families.

The idea of the market is easily acceptable to some people in the Soviet Union. They have never had it so bad and they believe that the market is the key to heaven in living conditions. I spoke at the founding conference of the Independent Workers Movement in Novokuznetsk in Siberia. Workers from all over the Soviet Union tried to achieve freedom and democracy for themselves, and they wanted to break out from the old structures.

I addressed the conference, and upset some of them when I asked them to which market they were attracted. I asked whether it was the stock market—the spivs' paradise, where people gamble daily on what a commodity will cost next week, next month or next year—or whether it was the market that we understand in this country, the market of the capitalist which exploits and destroys people. Such is the desperate state of the masses over there that even capitalism can appear to be an attraction.

The bureaucracy has become intoxicated with the apparent success of capitalism in the advanced countries in the past eight years. They little realise, because it has not been explained to them, that the success has been based on world expansion, and especially on the rise in oil prices. Capitalism offers no way out for any of those regimes. The consequences are already being revealed in Poland, which is among the furthest along the road to the market. It has seen massive price rises and growing unemployment since the beginning of the year. Yes, there are now goods in the shops, but only the privileged few can afford to buy them. The same situation will follow, to the extent that the market replaces the plan as governor of the economy, in East Germany, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

I am sure that western capitalists in general, and representatives of the Conservative party in particular, are rubbing their hands with glee at what they falsely regard as the failure of socialism. They are not prepared to pump massive amounts of investment into eastern Europe or the Soviet Union, because they are not confident. There are safer opportunities to reap profits. We have seen the monetary unification of West Germany and East Germany. Effectively, capitalism has been restored in parts of the east. Once the Berlin wall had been brought down, West German capitalism was driven rapidly on this road. The alternative was a mass exodus of the people of East Germany to the west.

West German capitalism declares itself ready to pay the price of unification. The west Germans are prepared to pour state and private funds into the east. But that does not remove the inevitable reality of rising unemployment, which is occurring even as we speak tonight. There will be attacks on the living standards of working people. Since monetary union in July last year, the number of unemployed people in east Germany is reported to have increased by 40,000 a week. It is estimated that the rate of unemployment will rise to between 60 per cent. and 70 per cent.

Should capitalism be restored in the Soviet Union, the contradictions of world capitalism will be increased rather than eased. The underlying antagonism between capitalism and the planned economy has been a key factor limiting inter-imperialist rivalry. By contrast, a new capitalist Soviet Union will not only force the United States, Japan and Germany to engage in more fierce competition, but become an imperialist rival in its own right. The fundamental reason for the inability to restore capitalism in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to promise the prosperity of west Germany, Sweden, Japan or the United States is that the productivity of labour in Stalinist countries is only half the level of that in the advanced capitalist countries.

That is now recognised even by some sections of the intelligentsia in the Soviet Union. In a keynote speech at a recent meeting of intellectuals, Boris Kazarlitsky, an elected member of the official Moscow Soviet, warned that Soviet capitalism would have more in common with Brazil or Colombia than the models we have seen in eastern Europe. That is a reality arising from the backwardness of productivity and from the decline and abuse of the system over the decades.

Of course, there is a price to be paid for going down the capitalist road. This was recently spelt out in a World bank report, which said that no dollars would be provided except for private ownership. What cynicism. Starving people cry out even for handouts, but private ownership is to be set above the needs of people. But that is capitalism all over. In the debate on 4 March, the Minister of State said that he did not want to interfere. But interference does take place—indeed, is taking place.

Recently, the International Monetary Fund sent three American gentleman with their briefcases to Poland to negotiate a loan to that country. A condition of the loan was that the Polish Finance Minister would be sacked, and a gentleman who was unpopular because of his economic measures appointed in his place. Those economic measures entailed high inflation, planned closures and redundancies, and led to the failure of the outgoing Prime Minister in the presidential elections that have just taken place.

The guy who was imposed by the International Monetary Fund not only runs the finance of the country, but also has the final say in who should fill various Cabinet posts. According to a former senior Solidarity adviser, the result is that Poland now has an apolitical Government, totally unrepresentative of the people and functioning in what amounts to a banana republic. That is what international capitalism is about—client states which themselves have no say.

It was said glibly that there would be no interference, but the size of the crisis in the Soviet Union is enormous. That is something that we must bear in mind when we are considering future relations between the Soviet Union and

[Mr. Terry Fields]

this country and indeed the world. The movements for autonomy in the various republics and the splits in society must be studied.

We have seen on our television screens demonstrations in Leningrad, Moscow and other parts of the Soviet Union. A recent demonstration coincided with the news that the Soviet economy is facing a dive into recession so deep that its own official forecasters are making comparisons with the famines which beset the country in the early 1930s.

Gosplan—the official planning institution of the Soviet Union—has produced a forecast which shows that Russia's gross national product will fall this year by at least 11·6 per cent. whatever policies are followed. The country can carry on with the Stalinist regime of Gorbachev or go over to capitalism, but the gross national product will fall by 11·6 per cent. this year alone.

Again according to Gosplan, industrial production will fall by 15 per cent. and agricultural production, much needed in the cities, will fall by 5 per cent. The forecasters say that the decline in the gross national product could be as much as 16 per cent. unless the Government introduce a number of hard measures, including price rises, very soon. There are non-existent products and a crisis in the economy. If people are to eat, prices will rocket. That is the only way to resolve the problems.

I have spoken about rising economic nationalism, and that has exacerbated food and other shortages. For instance, Leningrad is suffering a cut of 70 per cent. in meat supplies because of the problems created by the recession in other parts of the Soviet Union.

According to the draft version of the new treaty due to be signed this weekend, each republic will have a share in the gold, diamond and hard currency reserves of the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, the recipients of that largesse will also take on responsibility for the Soviet debt. That is something for us to consider. It now stands at around $60 billion, with $7 billion more in unpaid debts to foreign exporters accumulated by Soviet companies recently granted trading rights.

The Soviet Union's official reserves have traditionally been held tight by the centre under great secrecy, but the veil has been partially lifted. Earlier this year, 234 tonnes of gold were sold in Moscow and $5 billion-worth of diamonds have been promised to a Swiss firm, the De Beers corporation, during the next five years.

A week or so ago Mr. Uri Poletayev, the deputy chairman of the bank of foreign and economic affairs, revealed that the bank had repaid $12·5 billion-worth of short-term deposits to western banks which had stopped making commercial loans to the Soviet Union because of the high risks.

The crisis is desperate. It is against that background that the release of $1 billion food aid by the EEC and the resumption of negotiations with the IMF and the World bank, both frozen after the repression of the Baltic states, hold out only minimal relief for the masses in the Soviet Union.

The Minister offers the workers and toilers in the Soviet Union capitalist solutions, holding up the capitalist system as the epitome of all that is good in life. I wish that he would explain the crisis in the American economy, which has a budget and trading deficit and 30 million people living below the poverty line. The centre of international capitalism is a crises-ridden system. The recession is biting there, as it is biting here. Japan's economy is slowing down. Capitalist countries are doing nothing about hunger, deprivation and poverty in the third world.

If capitalism is so wonderful, I am sure that the Minister will be only too proud to tell people in the Soviet Union that, as Radio 4 reported this afternoon, business closures in Great Britain increased by 77 per cent. in 1990 and are forecast to increase by 25 per cent. this year. Interest rates may be falling dramatically, but can he explain to the Soviet people what the market and capitalism means in Britain? Figures from the CBI and the business community show that, every day, 100 businesses are closing, 3,000 workers are being thrown on to the stones through redundancy, and 125 homes are being repossessed.

The national health service is in total disarray, and I do not want to hear any nonsense from Conservative Members about more investment in real terms. Our families are dependent on hospital treatment but cannot get it because of bed closures and queues. That is a wonderful example for the Soviet masses.

Homelessness is evident every night of the week at the entrance to this place. During the recent cold spell, homeless people had to lie in the snow because they had no home, yet the Government make no provision for house building. Poverty is endemic, education has suffered and interest rates and inflation are high.

How should workers resolve those contradictions and difficulties? I spoke at a meeting of Soviet miners, who were the vanguard of the struggle in 1988 and were lauded by our then Prime Minister. It was a different story when Arthur Scargill and the national Union of Mineworkers fought against pit closures and for democracy in the coalfields. The Government support people who fight for democracy abroad, but when it is closer to home they say, "Hey, leave it out."

This month, millions of Soviet miners have started indefinite strikes for higher pay, better food and decent housing. Their strike two years ago for more food and basic essentials—such as soap—in a civilised society revealed the depth of popular anger at the failure of perestroika to deliver better living standards. The latest strike, which was co-ordinated by the conference that I was priviliged to attend, is for more reforms and pay increases.

I have great affinity with the mining community in this country. I went down a mine in Siberia and saw the dreadful conditions in which those miners work. Having risked their lives on behalf of the Soviet Union, they live in ramshackle homes with no food for their families. That leads them to conclude that things must change.

In the Soviet Union, 7 million working days were lost through strikes between January and September 1989. In the biggest movement since 1917, 100,000 miners struck in Siberia and the Ukraine in July last year. The rate of strikes last year was higher than the year before. Independent democratic unions are being established by miners and by other workers who have increasing political demands. The industrial struggle is moving on to a political plain. A Siberian metal worker told a British capitalist journalist:

"Theoretically, everything is the people's property. In fact, an uncontrolled apparatus decides everything. The only answer is to make us real masters of the factories and of the land."

Against that background, I held discussions with those people.

On 4 March, the Minister said something that I agreed with: that the old-style government has failed. Of course it has failed, but those people have been told that the system that they have been living under—bankrupt and bureaucratic, with fiddling, black marketeers, repression and a lack of democractic rights—is socialism. The theoretical works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky have nothing to do with that so-called "socialism". It is like feeding me plaster of paris in a white bottle and telling me that it is milk. When my inside is destroyed, a doctor advises milk to treat the ailment, so I get another bottle of plaster of paris. That is the experience of workers in the Soviet Union.

All these theroretical works are dirty words for workers in the Soviet Union. I was there on 1 May. I asked them whether they would be singing the Internationale. "Forget it," they said. I asked whether there would be demonstrations. "Forget that, too," they said. They do not want to know about a planned economy, Marxism or anything else. They have been told that socialism is responsible for homelessness, shortages and deprivation, but it is not. The finest planned economy in the world is mismanaged by the bureaucracy—the privileged elite and the nomenklatura. There was falsification by the Stalinists and capitalist propaganda.

There was a chink of light in all the misery and despondency. When I said that I was a socialist, they looked at me quizzically—just as those people on the Conservative Benches look at me as though I have come from another planet. I explained what we mean by democratic socialism. I talked about control of industry by the workers—of nationalised industries under the control and management of workers. That failed in this country because of our mixed economy, with capitalist bosses in charge, because the interests of the workers are diametrically opposed to those of management.

When I asked a Siberian foundry worker whether he wanted real democratic socialism, with a say in what is produced and where the profits go, he said that he did. I referred to the accountability of elected representatives, both political and trade union representatives, and to the right of trade union members to require their representatives to give an account of their stewardship. He said that he would like that, too. When I asked whether he would like those who are accountable to the workers not to be too far removed from general conditions on the shop floor and not to live in dachas, with the missus walking around dripping in mink while housewives in Moscow, Leningrad and elsewhere cannot provide decent food for their families, he said that he wanted equality in society and democratic management of the economy. We may call it socialism; he may call it something else, but the essence of socialism is the same, despite the fact that it has been dragged through the gutter.

The Soviet working classes and their newly formed democratic organisations are pioneers, starting again from scratch. However, the structures are there, and there is a degree of state planning. They are searching for a programme. Anatoly Lukyanov, the chairman of the Supreme Soviet, was reported on 11 March as saying about the Soviet Union that Soviet society was white hot and that one match could set it afire.

That is the prospect for millions of workers in the Soviet Union. It is in turmoil; it is a hotbed of discontent. The workers are looking for direction and were present at these meetings and discussions. Leon Trotsky's book "The Revolution Betrayed" is being distributed in the Soviet Union, and is being grabbed by workers who want to read the real history of the Soviet Union. They want to find out for themselves why Stalinist bureaucracy railroaded them down the road that is responsible for today's conditions.

This debate is part of our current and future discussions on Anglo-Soviet relations. The Marxist perspective is conditional on the time bomb of social contradictions and discontent, both nationally and internationally, but particularly today in the Soviet Union. In 1936, Trotsky said that the fate of eastern Europe and the USSR would in the last analysis be decided by the struggle of living social forces internationally and in the world arena—that it would not be decided by the commentators on capitalism or by the proponents of the capitalist system, people with pipe dreams, in quest of more profits and the exploitation of fresh markets to increase their wealth.

The system is bankrupt, exploitative and immoral. When planning their strategy, the Government should take no comfort from what is happening and from what will happen in the Soviet Union. If they think that they will make a fast buck from it, they can forget it. They will have to look for it elsewhere. As a socialist and a Marxist, I remain optimistic—and, as ever, realistic—about the size of the task that we and workers everywhere still have to do. We have consummate confidence in the future.

In time, there will be a socialist revolution in this country. We shall look after our friends when it comes. There will be a socialist revolution in Europe and in the USSR, and we shall create the new world order. We will put people before profit. We will protect young and old alike, allowing older people to live out their declining years with a little dignity. That is a socialist perspective. It is the only one that holds out any long-term solutions to the contradictions and crises facing workers in this country and in the Soviet Union, who must work, in mutually acceptable forums to resolve the problems created in this country and the west by acquisitive capitalism, and in the east by bankrupt Stalinism.

10.25 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) on his success in the ballot and on his choice of subject. I confess that I wish that he had called it "British-Soviet relations", but I hope that he will not be upset by that detail. He spoke with a wealth of personal experience in various parts of the Soviet Union, and he offered us a theoretical analysis.

My hon. Friend said that he assumed that not only the Government but the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman would differ from his analysis. I will not disappoint him: we do, indeed, differ. My hon. Friend implied that 1917 was distorted by Stalin. I suggest that inherent in the events of 1917 were the purge of the Kulaks, the purges of the 1930s and democratic centralism. Perhaps, too, it is inherent in human nature to succumb to what Kolokovsky called the totalitarian temptation, which is that those who

[Mr. Donald Anderson]

see a brighter future but fail to erect checks and balances fail to understand the faults in human nature and are thus easily disappointed—even though they cry with optimism as they are led to the scaffold, as were some of the revolutionaries in France and, in the 1930s, in the Soviet Union.

My hon. Friend set out the alternative scenario of Trotsky. Where and when in any past or present society can he find a model that fulfilled or fulfils the criteria for a society that he has outlined? If he cannot name one, does not that suggest that his analysis may be faulty and that part of the problem lies in human nature and in the totalitarian temptation to which I have alluded?

Mr. Terry Fields: I cannot give my hon. Friend an example, but that does not prevent me from striving towards a democratic society in which we control our own destinies. My hon. Friend's argument apes the one thrown out by the opponents of socialism about the Stalinist excesses of the eastern bloc and of the Soviet Union. Clause IV (4) of the Labour party's constitution speaks of democratic control of society by the masses, and whatever else may change in my party, that clause will remain on my membership card.

Mr. Anderson: I invite my hon. Friend to consider again the reasons why, perhaps, there has been no such society and there is no such society. I remind him of the temptations that in the Soviet Union distorted 1917 through to the purges, to the Kulaks and to the totalitarianism that perhaps was the inevitable result of the principles of Stalin, which brooked no obstacle and no attempt to ascertain, as Cromwell might have said, whether there was another way. So be it.

I return to the key part of the debate, which is the nature of British-Soviet relations in the light of recent developments in the Soviet Union. My starting point is the internal state of the Soviet Union. We are passing through a period of extreme uncertainty, even confusion, with the paralysis of policy-making in the Soviet Union. We have a war of sovereignties between the different power structures in the Kremlin under President Gorbachev and the Russian Federation under Mr. Yeltsin. There are other challenges to the authority of the Kremlin in the Baltic republics, in Georgia and in other parts of the old Tsarist and Stalinist empire. The war of sovereignty is perhaps personified in the confrontation between President Gorbachev and Mr. Yeltsin. Some try to portray it as the conflict between the conservatives and the democrats.

Who would choose, with the multiplicity of conflicts, to be in the shoes of President Gorbachev? Who would be confident about the time scale or the direction of the massive movements that are now under way within the Soviet Union?

If one feels impatient and frustrated at the lack of progress and the current indecision, perhaps it is possible to be heartened by looking back over the past 10 years. It was 10 years ago that we saw the beginning of the new cold war. It was a time when President Reagan was referring to the Soviet Union as the evil empire. The then Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), was creating a pale echo of that strident Reaganite rhetoric in a speech in Canada. That was before she saw the new apparition of President Gorbachev in 1985 and thereafter.

I had reasons to read an issue of *The House Magazine* in 1985 that featured the 40th anniversary of the United Nations. I compared it with what appeared to in the edition of December 1990, to which, I think, the Minister contributed. In 1985, we were in the last part of the new cold war. There was the assumption in a series of articles that that war would continue. We can take heart from the substantial changes that have taken place over the past five years or so. Both in domestic and foreign policy, the situation in the Soviet Union has altered dramatically. We should appreciate the changes, be prepared to understand the changes and the transitions through which we are passing and be prepared to adjust our own policies accordingly.

Internally the effects of glasnost and perestroika can be seen, for example, in the mass demonstrations that took place last Sunday throughout the Soviet Union. More than 500,000 people protested against the conditions to which my hon. Friend was referring—the shortages, the corruption, the lack of democracy, the paralysis of policy. That would not and could not have taken place even only five years ago. On sees strikes among the miners and a new era of political freedom. Yet those internal moves to democracy have been accompanied by an accelerating economic decline and a feeling of hopelessness and impotence among the policy makers and the people.

Externally, the new spirit in the Soviet Union has had a marked effect over a wide area. We see it most dramatically in Europe with the dismantling of the Berlin wall, the unification of Germany and the end of the old Soviet empire in eastern Europe. But it is also seen more broadly in the new co-operation by the Soviet Union in arms control agreements and in the easing of international relations in many parts of the third world, for example, in the developments in southern Africa, beginning with the independence of Namibia and the dramatic changes in South Africa itself. Those could not have happened had it not been for the greater co-operation of the Soviet authorities.

More recently, and perhaps most dramatically, we have seen the effects of the changes externally in the Soviet Union co-operation over the Gulf war. We recognise that even five years ago that could not have happened because of the alliance between the Soviet Union and Iraq, with Iraq a major purchaser of Soviet military hardware, with the Soviet Union regarding Iraq as its major foothold in the middle east and with the generals being largely in control. The new spirit, personified by President Gorbachev and Mr. Shevardnadze, was responsible in large part for the relative ease of international co-operation in the Gulf crisis.

Perhaps it is an answer to my hon. Friend's Marxist analysis that we are talking about changes which probably occurred as a result of the remarkable imprint on history of one man. That surely conflicts with the classic Marxist analysis that one has an economic substructure on which all else within the pyramid is built, as if we are the playthings of movements in the substructure. How can one fit into that analysis the remarkable changes in the Soviet Union as a result of the personal efforts of one man—President Gorbachev? It may be that he is played out as a reformer; I do not know, but no one can deny the vast

changes, internally and externally, which have come about because of his activities. I do not see how those changes could be accommodated within the pure Marxist analysis.

Mr. Terry Fields: Some valid points need to be made. Is my hon. Friend saying that Gorbachev is not a Marxist and that it is not a Marxist economy? My hon. Friend is underlining what I said. There has never been a proper Marxist economy in the Soviet Union because of Stalinism. What we see today is neither socialism nor anything else. Gorbachev is moving because he feels the hot breath of the workers on the back of his neck. We cannot call it democracy if reforms are implemented from the top. The reforms will come from the masses, and not from Gorbachev or Yeltsin.

Mr. Anderson: The point I am making is simply that in my judgment those changes could not have come about had it not been for the personal commitment of President Gorbachev. It is an example of the influence of an individual on history, not of the effect of the interplay of some anonymous swirl of forces in the economic substructure. We can continue that theoretical argument elsewhere, at a different time.

We are seeing the emergence of a new world order. The Gulf crisis showed that there is probably now only one super-power, at least politically and militarily—the United States, joined on the economic front by Japan and Germany.

We are also witnessing a period of rapid change within the Soviet Union and one is bound to ask how permanent it is. Is the present period of indecision merely a pause or smoking break, is it irreversible, and is there a real danger of a stepping back, as the darker forces of the KGB and the Russian army take over whatever reforming impulses President Gorbachev may yet have?

Who knows what shape the USSR will eventually assume? It is generally acknowledged that, as a consequence of the Soviet Union's policies of the past five years, the genie of reform is out of the bottle and there is no way that a more repressive regime could squeeze it back for any length of time. That is the context of change in the Soviet Union, within which we must formulate our bilateral policy.

My hon. Friend spoke of a bilateral relationship between England—I would prefer to say Britain—and the Soviet Union, but in no wise did he refer to the European Community. We must surely accept that is now the forum in which much of our policy is formulated.

The Community responded speedily to the killings by forces loyal to the Kremlin in Vilnius on 13 January and in Riga on 20 January, by suspending the aid package of food and technical assistance for the Soviet Union that it had prepared. If Britain alone had taken that action, it would have had very little effect; because it was taken with the full weight of the Community behind it, the effect was substantial.

One looks back over 10 years to the beginnings of the new cold war and of the concept of the evil empire and forward to the next 10 years of a highly uncertain and possibly unstable Soviet Union. The balance within the USSR may change. Some argue that, over the next decade, its present nature will alter dramatically, and that there will only be left the core of the Russian federation—Byelorussia, the Ukraine, and Khazakstan—with not only the other existing republics, including the Baltics, but the Asian republics forming a looser confederation that may have no relationship with the core.

What will be the relationship of that core Soviet Union with the new Europe? We cannot attempt to answer that question tonight, but, in terms of our bilateral relationships, it is in our interests to respond sensibly to the major internal changes that are now under way in the Soviet Union. It is not in our interests to promote instability. The picture of a series of loose cannons jolting and knocking around the deck will make anyone who is seriously concerned about the future of our continent shudder.

As a country, and as part of the European Community, we have every interest in seeking ever closer co-operation with the Soviet Union, but that must be a conditional co-operation—conditional on the acceptance of basic human rights within the Soviet Union. That was our theme two weeks ago—the European Community and its relationship with eastern Europe and the USSR. The consensus in the House was that we supported Gorbachev the reformer, but not Gorbachev the man no matter what he may do. Therefore, a strong human rights theme underpins the development of our policies towards the Soviet Union.

Clearly, a strong effort needs to be made in this country to understand the Soviet Union more. I recall—I think that it was in the 1960s—that the policy formulators created the Hayter fund in our universities. Alas, within our educational structure, the commitment to the Hayter fund seems to have waned substantially. Whether we should seek to breathe new life into the academic study of the Soviet Union and other exchanges is a matter for our policy makers to consider. Clearly there has been a decline in that relationship.

Wherever possible we should seek to encourage co-operation and dialogue. In the internal debate within the Soviet Union, especially in relation to the Baltics, we must try to understand, and to be respected by both sides. So far as we are able, we must try to play a constructive role, recognising, for example, the complexity of the problems relating to the Baltics and the substantial Soviet interests which remain in those republics because of the military and economic integration which has taken place, for good or ill, in the past 50 years.

There are major things that we and our European partners can do, which the United States, because of its history and geography, would never be able to do, as we seek constructively to define the common European home, to which President Gorbachev alluded. Clearly, that common European home was not possible when, as one hon. Member said, there was a wall through the front room—through Berlin. Now that the Berlin wall has gone, there are possibilities for much greater co-operation.

Within that common European home which will evolve—and evolve constructively—as we try to understand the Soviet Union, its problems and the internal changes, we believe that we can live together, work together and trade together in a constructive and positive way.

10.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): The hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) is to be congratulated on raising this subject tonight for one

[Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd]

reason in particular. At one moment in the speech by the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) from the Opposition Front Bench, it seemed possible that we would witness a debate between him and his hon. Friend the Member for Broadgreen on the nature and meaning of socialism. That would have been most illuminating to the House—especially to all my hon. Friends, who have never understood what socialism was about anyway. We were not afforded that opportunity, but we heard interesting contributions from both hon. Members.

It is only fair to say to the hon. Member for Broadgreen that his speech was not about Anglo-Soviet relations but was a litany of despair that the Soviet people should have gone so astray. He admitted, honestly and indeed proudly, that he was a Marxist analysis. Of course we are all proud of the fact that, in this country and this House, everyone is entitled to his opinions and has an opportunity to express them; I cannot help noting, however, that allowing the free expression of dissenting opinion has not been the invariable practice of the Governments who have espoused the Marxist views advanced by the hon. Gentleman tonight.

In my reply, I do not intend to espouse what is without doubt a capitalist analysis of the position; I shall content myself with a few observations about our relations with the Soviet Union in recent years, and about recent developments there.

The reforms of the past six years have produced changes of lasting significance. They are far from complete, and they are not all irreversible, but it would certainly not be possible to recreate the monolothic communist state of old principally because, for the Soviet people, the truth is now out. Despite recent attempts to curb Soviet television and impose renewed restrictions on the press, information is no longer shackled and controlled as it has been in the past.

The Soviet people have become aware of the problems and failings of the system that has ruled them for 70 years. They have been able to see the way in which life is lived on the outside, in a way that can never be gainsaid. The Communist party of the Soviet Union—which lay at the heart of the old system—still has a large nominal membership, and retains considerable influence on the central Soviet authorities, but it is deeply discredited and has lost its monopoly on power, and—as the Soviet people have grasped the idea of elections with more than one candidate—governing bodies within republics and cities have in many cases fallen out of communist control.

The Soviet people have now acquired the idea of a law-based society, and the foundations of that are beginning to be built, although many elements of it remain to be put in place. They have also acquired the idea of freedom of travel: unprecedented numbers have, for the first time, been to the west in the past two or three years. All those developments are perhaps characterised by the observation of the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) that the genie is out of the bottle.

Mr. Terry Fields: I concede that the question of travel is often overlooked. I can travel freely to certain parts of the Soviet Union; workers who are brought into Leningrad to work on specific projects, however, cannot move outside the city. Now that their work has finished —building a dam to ensure that the river does not overflow its banks—they cannot go home to their wives and families. So much for free travel in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Gentleman knows more than I do about some of the difficulties that remain, but surely he agrees that the position has been transformed from that of a few years ago, and that the prospect of travel has opened up new horizons and aspirations for the Soviet people.

Both the hon. Member for Broadgreen and the hon. Member for Swansea, East touched on my second point. Although the political advances of the past six years have been taking place, regrettably, progress in the development of the Soviet economy has not been as successful as everyone would have wished. Partial reform has, perhaps inevitably, led the economy into a deepening crisis, with industrial output falling, inflation rising and deficits increasing in food and other consumer goods. Some market mechanisms have been introduced—for example, in the co-operative sector—but a full-scale transition towards market economics has yet to be initiated, and the country is largely being run through what remains of the old centrally planned economy. It is in this area that we firmly and strikingly disagree with the analysis of the hon. Member for Broadgreen. It is not the introduction of capitalism that has caused the crisis in the Soviet economy but the failure to apply capitalism.

Mr. Terry Fields: The Minister misrepresents me.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: If I misrepresented the hon. Member, I did so unwittingly, and I apologise.

In addition to the political changes and the lack of economic progress, there has been another major broad development—the crisis in the relationship between the central and republican authorities. One of the many welcome aspects of President Gorbachev's reforms was to decentralise power and to make possible the election of new and more genuinely representative republican and regional Governments, but this process has in turn raised questions of a fundamental nature about the powers to be assigned to republican bodies, and the degree of sovereignty to be enjoyed by the 15 union republics. The negotiations on the draft union treaty, and the referendum which is to be held on Sunday 17 March, have been a focal point for these discussions.

What attitude should we in Britain, the British Government, take to the Soviet Union in this turbulent transitional phase of its history? We do not know, and outsiders cannot determine, what will happen in the Soviet Union in the months and years ahead. But we should spell out clearly where we stand, and the Government propose to do so in several ways. I will touch on a few of them.

First, we stand for keeping open the many channels of communication that have developed in the past few years. Now is not the time to encourage a Soviet return to isolation. If we disagree with the policies which the Soviet Government are pursuing, we should discuss our disagreements frankly. We have many important interests in common with the Soviet Government. We share a vital concern in seeing, for example, a more secure and stable middle east in the wake of the Gulf conflict. We are both vitally engaged in building a safer and more prosperous Europe—for example, through the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. This new Europe must be built on trust and confidence.

Second, as a broad general principle, we do not seek to prescribe the future of the Soviet Union. All the peoples of the Soviet Union should enjoy the right to self-determination, but it is not for us to lay down how they should exercise that right. A process of evolution and of very active political debate is under way. Our policies will evolve in parallel with that process, as the hon. Member for Swansea, East said. We will seek to maintain effective working relationships with all those in authority throughout the Soviet Union, and to conduct appropriate business with them. We do not wish to see the Soviet Union descend into chaos or strife. We are well aware that it will be no easy task for the Soviet people to resolve their present difficulties.

Hon. Members have on many occasions rightly expressed concern about the predicament of the three Baltic republics. Democratic and peaceful negotiation is precisely what is needed there. The United Kingdom, like most western states, has never given legal recognition to the USSR's annexation of the Baltic states. They have a special history and a special status. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister explained to President Gorbachev the dismay that the violent events in Vilnius and Riga in January had evoked in the west. While we are glad that the elected authorities in the Baltic states remain in office, little progress has yet been made towards a substantive solution. Negotiations will take time; they will require patience and tolerance.

I have touched upon the problems of the Soviet economy. A third area of concern is the question of economic reform, and our economic and commercial relationship with the Soviet Union. Here, too, we and our western partners have made very clear where we stand. It is apparent that the highly centralised, rigid and monopolistic command-administrative system has failed the Soviet people. That is widely acknowledged, even within the Soviet Union. We believe that the overhaul and modernisation of the Soviet economy and more efficient exploitation of that country's huge natural resources and agricultural potential will be of common benefit.

With our partners in the European Community and the Group of Seven, we commissioned two major studies of the Soviet economy last year. They recommended a process of structural change, of the creation of markets and of introducing incentives for enterprises. As both reports made clear, that is a process in which western advice and training and western commercial investment could play an important part—as they are already doing in eastern Europe. The EC technical assistance programme and our own bilateral know-how fund have both demonstrated the west's willingness to offer tangible support for reform. If the Soviet Union moved decisively towards a market economy, I believe that those would prove to be only a first step.

British-Soviet relations are not simply the preserve of Governments. There is a considerable and growing network of connections between people in all walks of life —the hon. Member for Broadgreen is one—in this country and the Soviet Union, a network should evolve largely irrespective of politics. The Soviet people have inherited a sad legacy, and are going through considerable hardship as they work through the daunting task of reshaping their country. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said in a speech last month, we want to knit them into Europe as that becomes possible —the common European home referred to by the hon. Member for Swansea, East—and to continue bringing down the barriers of the past. There will be difficulties along the way, as there have been this year, but we are sure that it is the right objective, and one which hon. Members will support.

National Lottery

11.2 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise once again the need for a national lottery in Great Britain.

Lotteries have existed for centuries. They can be traced from the ancient Romans to the feudal kings and renaissance merchants, to Governments in Europe and, eventually, throughout the world. The Romans participated in them as a form of entertainment, and for the most part lotteries continued to be used in that way well into the 16th century. By the early 1700s, European Governments began to recognise the revenue potential of lotteries and started to license their operation. Revenues were used to finance the construction of roads, bridges, schools and churches, and to provide assistance for needy individuals.

English colonists to America relied on lotteries for a variety of purposes, and lotteries flourished in colonial America with the support of most churches, which were among the primary beneficiaries. Private companies conducted lotteries to dispose of surplus goods, and groups ran them in support of schools, churches and public works. That laissez-faire attitude towards lotteries led to abuses and fraud. As criticism grew, colonial assemblies began to regulate lotteries, so that, by the mid-1700s, Government-sponsored lotteries had all but replaced private ones. The Government issued licences, specified the drawing dates and approved the directors who operated the games. In time, that Government regulation helped to dispel public criticism.

Lotteries were thriving in Europe. They were seized upon as sources of new revenue by the Governments of the Netherlands, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, Austria and many other countries. The advent of Government regulation did not mean that lotteries became less common; far from it. The public preferred lotteries to higher taxes, thus confirming Thomas Jefferson's view that lotteries are the perfect tax, paid only by the willing. Lotteries were used to raise funds for public activities and to provide relief for the needy.

By the mid-1800s, even Government-controlled lotteries were falling prey to abuse and fraud. Licensing procedures were simply inadequate to ensure that they were conducted honestly and competently. Profits were diverted to middlemen and to pay bribes to licensing authorities and officials. By 1900, there were virtually no official lotteries in the English-speaking world.

The advent of computer technology and enormously improved communications began to make safe, honest lotteries once more a practical proposition in the 1900s. In the early 1990s an increasing number of companies are switching their management systems to the most modern and safest form of lottery ticket and prize pool management which uses direct and instantaneous recording of each bet made through a sales agent's terminal that is connected by telephone line directly to the central computer. Such on-line systems also increase lottery sales, because they can be shut down literally minutes before the draw for a conventional lottery.

Lotteries are successful despite the fact that they are run to raise revenues. They succeed because people enjoy playing them. For centuries, people have been eager to pay small amounts for the chance to win a large cash or goods prize. So long as they have confidence in the integrity of the games, and particularly if they have sympathy with the objectives to which the proceeds are to be devoted, people play lotteries. They abandon them when they can see that the games are tainted by fraud or mismanagement. People like to take a chance, but it must be an honest chance—and today it is, and can be, such a chance.

Today there are lotteries in 116 countries. They have been used to finance the building of the Sydney opera house and to fund the Olympic games in Moscow and in Mexico. They were also used to build the great American universities of Yale and Harvard. In the past, Britain has also benefited from a national lottery. The British museum was built from the proceeds of such a lottery. However, Britain and Albania are now the only countries in Europe that do not have a national lottery.

I realise that some people are concerned about our having a lottery, and I want to deal with those concerns before presenting positive reasons both for establishing a national lottery and for establishing one quickly.

The 1987 Royal Commission on Gambling listed objections to a national lottery which are still relevant today. The royal commission considered those objections in some detail, but concluded that none of the arguments carried sufficient weight to alter its recommendation in favour of a national lottery.

The royal commission summarised the main objections to the lottery as follows: that it would damage football pools and small lotteries; that the state should not promote gambling and that it would add to the social evils of gambling; and that taxation should be used to raise funds, not the lottery.

The Pools Promoters Association stated in 1975, following the publication of the interdepartmental working party on lotteries report, that large lotteries and the pools industry were compatible. Further, in its evidence to the Royal Commission on Gambling in 1978, the association accepted the existence of a market for a new and popular form of lottery. That evidence was probably influenced by the fact that, at the time, the association seemed the best organisation to manage and distribute a national lottery. It pointed out to the royal commission that its assets in skill, experience in security, equipment and facilities could not be matched for a scheme that used door-to-door agents.

However, that was the position in 1978. Technology has moved on apace. Even with a lotto scheme, it is inconceivable to think of the modern lottery being run by agents collecting from door to door. Modern technology means that participants select their numbers, which are recorded by a computer terminal in each agency. That is much more efficient, and the security is better than any other method.

A survey conducted by Social and Community Planning on behalf of the 1978 royal commission also showed that a national lottery would not dramatically change people's participation in the pools. I believe that that is still the case today. Would small lotteries suffer? Experience shows that small lotteries do not suffer from the establishment of national lotteries. Research and surveys conducted in Britain and the United States show that small lotteries are not adversely affected. More recently, the introduction of the Irish lottery has been accompanied by increased sales of charity lottery tickets, possibly as a result of the publicity surrounding the national lottery and the awareness that it creates.

Should the state provoke gambling? There is a great difference between the state being involved in gambling in order to administer control and the state actively promoting it. It is necessary for the Government to be involved to reduce the possibility of illegal gaming. Wherever illegal gambling is allowed to flourish, it is accompanied by other crimes. It is important for the state to encourage controlled conditions to ensure fair play and moderation. Creating controls is not promoting gambling.

The clamour for a national lottery comes from many quarters. The Government have no need to promote the idea. However, if they felt that the arguments in favour were overwhelming, it would be right to introduce legislation. Would there be harmful social effects? It is worth looking at countries which have lotteries to see whether any harmful social effects occur as a result of them. The strong Church traditions throughout Europe have not blocked lotteries in any country, because Churches can see that lotteries do not breed gambling habits.

In France, the Loto National started in 1976. The Rothschild royal commission noted:

"We have neither heard nor seen anything to suggest that its remarkable success has been accompanied by any socially harmful effects."

Studies conducted in the past nine years in the United States of America and Canada, where lotteries are operated, show that low-income groups participate in disproportionately low numbers. Their participation rate is lower than their proportion of the population. The poor are less likely to buy lottery tickets than middle-income individuals. Lotteries are, by and large, a source of entertainment for middle-income people.

Whatever the objections to a lottery being established in Britain in the past, the position has changed and will change even more dramatically in 1992. It has changed because lottery tickets are already coming into Britain from Canada, West Germany and other countries. Some 3 million tickets were prevented from coming in last year, but many got through. I have received many examples from the public. I should be happy to let the Minister have a couple, if he so wished. One that I have here from Austria offers a prize of £31 million. I can tell the Minister that some of us in marginal seats are considering such tickets with increasing interest. All this is despite the fact that the conduct of foreign lotteries in Great Britain is prohibited under the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976.

The European Commission will shortly consider whether the gambling industry is wrongly interpreting the structure of the 1992 legislation. A report due soon from Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte will highlight the difference between the betting legislation of the 12 member states to allow the Commission to decide whether they represent a threat to the rest of the single market. The Commission may conclude—many experts believe that it will—that the ban on lottery tickets entering the United Kingdom constitutes a barrier to the free circulation of goods and services between the Twelve and is therefore an infringement of EC law.

Therefore, it seems inevitable that European lottery tickets will be available in the United Kingdom on a large scale. As opinion polls show that people will buy them, we will then be funding improved facilities in France and Germany, for example, despite the fact that France already has 20 times more covered tennis courts than we have, and Germany has 20 times more covered swimming pools than we have, as well as 120 opera houses to our six. It is vital that a British-based lottery is introduced urgently to retain benefits for our country. It would not be complicated to set up; legislation would not be complex. It could play an exciting role in financing so much that has to be done for the arts, for sport and for the environment.

Mr. John Lee (Pendle): I want to put on record the fact that the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions—of which I have the honour to be chairman—whose members comprise the leading private sector visitor attractions, including many of our leading national cathedrals and many of our leading national galleries and museums, is very supportive of the concept of a national lottery. The trigger for membership of ALVA is 1 million or more visitors a year, so we are talking about the largest visitor attractions. ALVA is supportive of the concept, especially if the majority of the surplus is used towards sustaining and improving the fabric of our historic properties which do so much to attract overseas visitors to this country and which also attract domestic visitors.

Mr. Hargreaves: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention and for his support. He is one of the six sponsors of the early-day motion.

In 1978, the Royal Commission on Gambling saw a single national lottery in support of the arts as a

"rare opportunity to improve the quality of British life."

The case for such a lottery is far stronger today when the quality of life is a major public issue.

A simple change in existing legislation to allow a single nationwide lottery, authorised by the Government, would require the passing of a Bill through Parliament. The establishment of a lottery would not involve the Government in running the lottery directly, nor would it create new running costs for central or local government. The responsibility for and general oversight of the lottery would be the duty of a national lottery board. The board could have some 10 members, selected for their independence of spirit and imagination, coupled with personal distinction and public standing. No new Government bureaucracies would be needed, and the state would not be directly involved in marketing or promotion.

The function of the national lottery board would be to invite applications for the operation of the national lottery board for good causes, to consider applications for the franchise and to determine its conditions, to approve the lottery system and to make arrangements for distributing the proceeds of the lottery, to arrange for an independent audit of the lottery and to make an annual report to Parliament.

The distribution of funds would be channelled into existing and future projects as capital funding and endowment, ensuring that no running costs needed to be met from public sources. The national lottery, while independent, would remain under careful Government scrutiny, but free of political influence.

It is important that there should be a single national lottery. A multiplicity of large lotteries would create serious problems of control and would become a public nuisance. It is clear that, in this modern age, a large, successful and, above all, secure lottery, available to the public, requires expertise and technical facilities that could be provided with maximum efficiency and economy only on a national scale, even more tautly organised than the pools. If participation paralleled the Spanish enthusiasm,

[Mr. Hargreaves]

prizes could amount to six weekly prizes of £1 million each. That would guarantee regular participation and the maximum support for the good causes.

Protection against fraud and guarantees that the fund reached the good cause would also be within the functions of the national lottery board. Auditing and an annual report to Parliament would further ensure security. Those considerations, and not protection from competition or from free market enterprise, would make the Government charter necessary.

General taxation cannot bear the cost of all desirable objects, as distinct from those that are essential to the nation, such as health and education. Funds from a lottery, which would complement and not replace existing Government funding or private sponsorship for sport, for the arts and for the environment, could give a much-needed boost to areas that are so critical to the quality of British life. That is not to say that other good causes would be ignored. For example, national disasters and relief efforts have good claims to be lottery beneficiaries.

Sport greatly adds to the quality of life in the community. It improves health and personal development. Sport generates direct and indirect economic benefits, spin-offs in sports medicine and science and a lifting of national moral and prestige. Olympic and Commonwealth games produce national heroes, but with decreasing sports facilities and playing fields, tomorrow's champions may not be given a chance. It is worth noting that the Spanish lottery has already raised £10 million for the 1992 Barcelona games.

A proliferation of the arts throughout all regions of the nation and their integration into daily life is one of the keys of civilisation. Britain cannot yet rival some of its European counterparts in terms of state funding for the arts and the protection of national treasures.

In a per capita comparison with Munich, London alone would have 21 orchestras and 10 opera houses. Currently, Britain has only six opera houses, compared with 102 active in Germany. The recent closure of Kent opera illustrates the crisis. Despite well attended theatres and galleries, the arts are prevented from filling the full potential of their essential role in society simply by lack of growth, development and funds.

Protection and enhancement of many aspects of the environment and their associated research contribute to the quality of everyone's life. In its global picture, environment means everything that surrounds and civilises our lives—the arts, sport, landscape, plants and nature itself.

The many projects to be envisaged include the reclamation of derelict and neglected land, the introduction of green areas in cities, and the preservation of cathedrals, all requiring vast funds which could not be expected to come from current state funds.

Concern for the environment is now a fundamental issue and a worthy beneficiary of lottery funds. The funding of sport, art and the environment reflect the most widely popular use of lottery revenue.

Some 92 right hon. and hon. Members of all parties have signed early-day motion 566 in favour of a lottery. Many others who cannot or do not sign early-day motions have written to express their support. I believe that there is similar support throughout the country.

Time is not on our side, but if we act quickly we could set up a national lottery which would raise £1 billion each year for arts, sport and the environment before our European partners flood the market.

I am not trying to promote, encourage or stimulate gambling. What I am trying to do in urging the setting up of a national lottery is to ensure that the proceeds of gambling benefit Hyndburn, Birmingham and Penzance, not Hamburg, Brussels and Paris.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): The hon. Gentleman mentioned on a couple of occasions during his excellent speech the threat posed by other EC countries selling tickets here after 1992. What evidence does he have to substantiate that worry? Surely, at the end of the day, the court will have to decide. I must confess that I cannot be as sure as he appears to be of the outcome.

Mr. Hargreaves: There is increasing evidence that the view that the Home Office seems to take that we can prevent tickets coming in will not prevail in the end. The feeling now seems to be that, if the case goes to the European Court, we will lose, and by then it will be too late.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Is it not the case that such tickets are already coming in? The Irish sweep tickets are freely available here, and it will not be long before the others follow.

Mr. Hargreaves: That is happening illegally. The same situation arose in Denmark. It now has a lottery of its own, but the West German tickets already had a hold there. I am afraid that that is what will happen to us. We will miss the chance, we will buy other people's tickets, and if we then lose the case in the European Court people will have got used to buying tickets from a foreign lottery and continue to buy them rather than ours.

I should like to place on record my thanks to the international conductor, Dennis Vaughan, who has worked and campaigned so hard for a national lottery. For his sake, and for the sake of millions of citizens in this country, I hope that the Minister will assure the House that, despite the depressing recitation of the out-dated arguments against a British national lottery that were put last week by one of his officials to a meeting of the Lotteries Council, the Home Office will give this matter urgent consideration. Next year will be too late.

11.24 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) on his splendid speech. He is well known in the House for his tenacity in pursuing issues in which he strongly believes, of which this is certainly one.

Listening to my hon. Friend, I was taken with the idea of suggesting that the headquarters of the national lottery should be in my constituency of Basildon. He might object to that, on the grounds that it would be better situated in Hyndburn.

A national lottery is a splendid idea. Premium bonds have lost their attraction. I feel somewhat bitter, because I purchased some when the noble Lord Stockton introduced them but have not won anything. I can see the

attraction to the general public of a national lottery. Much would be gained from a draw on television. I can imagine Joan Collins pulling out the winning ticket and Mr. and Mrs. Smith, sitting in front of the television at home, suddenly learning that they had won £1 million or £500,000.

The case advanced for a national lottery is that sport, the arts and the environment cannot be wholly funded from general taxation and that they deserve more money because they contribute significantly to the quality of our national life. The most important question is how much a British national lottery would contribute to those aims. The research produced by my hon. Friend and his colleagues shows that projected sales, taking the average per capita spend on lotteries of all EC countries, would be £3·1 billion. If 45 per cent. of the proceeds were returned in prize money and a further 20 per cent. allocated to expenses, 35 per cent. would be left to distribute to various causes. That gives a lottery income of £1·08 billion a year, which is a huge amount.

A comparison with lotteries in the United States shows about the same income—£1·1 billion a year. Even a fledgling national lottery in Northern Ireland has an income of £572 million a year. Although that is the lowest projection, it is an incredibly large amount of money for sport, the arts and the environment.

Can you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, imagine £1 billion being spent on those three areas? I could spend that money extremely well on them in Basildon. There could be a fully funded symphony orchestra in each regional centre, famous works of arts could be retained in this country, a theatre company the size of the Royal Shakespeare Company could be fully maintained and there could be encouragement and support for young talent across Great Britain——

Mr. Bowis: In Basildon.

Mr. Amess: As my hon. Friend says, particularly in my constituency of Basildon.

For sport, there could be a new national stadium, built to the highest Olympic standards, a fully funded research centre for sports medicine and scholarships for aspiring young athletes.

Finally, the conservation of land and waterways and the preservation of wildlife could be accomplished with one year's revenue from a British national lottery. We are a nation of gamblers. Occasionally, we even gamble on the return of a socialist Government—always, as we know, with disastrous consequences. My hon. Friend's sensible proposal would realise, at the very least, over £1 billion, which would be well spent in those three areas.

When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer presents his Budget next Tuesday, I hope that he will tell the House that he supports the introduction of a national lottery. I hope, too, that my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn will be given full credit for its introduction.

11.30 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) on doing so well in the lottery for a place to speak on the subject of lotteries. I congratulate him on his choice of subject, because there is a momentum for their introduction. The hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) referred to a "lollipop" Budget. We remember that last year the hon. Member for Hyndburn promoted an excellent private Member's Bill. He introduced it in April, but with little success, I am afraid.

This is not a new proposal. The hon. Gentlemen referred to the history of lotteries and reminded us that the first state lottery was held in 1566, and the proceeds were used to rebuild our ports. There was also a certain amount of military spending at that time. We continued to have lotteries for about 100 years. In 1698, Parliament passed an Act for Suppressing of Lotteries that banned all lotteries except state lotteries. A lot of fiddling was going on. Lotteries had got out of hand and there were no controls over them.

State lotteries then began to go wrong, so the Lotteries Act was passed in 1832, which banned them. The Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976 perpetuated the ban on state lotteries. It permitted fund raising by local authorities and registered charitable organisations. A limit was placed on the amount that could be raised and the amount of prize money.

For many years, irrespective of whether there has been a Labour or a Conservative Administration, the policy has been not to stimulate demand unduly. We said that we would satisfy but not stimulate demand. A national lottery would lead to television publicity and other advertising. The hon. Member for Hyndburn would probably admit that there would be a need to stimulate demand. That would mean, however, a change of principle in our legislation.

It strikes me that something funny is going on in the Conservative party, and I cannot make out what it is—*[Interruption.]* I see that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) agrees with me.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): No, I do not.

Mr. Randall: In the *Financial Times* of 24 February, the Prime Minister is reported as having asked the Treasury to investigate the possibility of introducing a national lottery. On 12 February, the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) asked the Prime Minister for the latest on the lottery. Extraordinarily enough, the right hon. Gentleman replied:

"My hon. Friend raises an intriguing question."—*[Official Report,* 12 February 1991; Vol. 185, c. 730.]

That was a funny sort of answer. It was almost as if he were trying to hide something.

On 13 March, another article suggested that the Chancellor would follow European practice on lotteries. Then *The Guardian* reported that the Chancellor might need a lollipop to give away because he was in such desperate straits over the Budget—it would be something to enliven what promises otherwise to be the deadest Budget of all time.

Mr. Lee: Could it be that the Government were conducting another fundamental review?

Mr. Randall: It could indeed. It is difficult to understand what the Government are up to. There has been a lot of flurry recently, and yet more indecision on the part of the Prime Minister. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman is ruling nothing in and nothing out. We simply do not know what the man is about.

Nevertheless, the hon. Member for Hyndburn seems to have got his timing impeccably right, for which I give him credit. In his excellent speech, he covered the subject well —but he presented his lollipop just a week before the

[Mr. Randall]

lollipop Budget. One week from now, we shall know whether the hon. Gentleman's ideas will be killed stone dead or given the kiss of life by means of new legislation. We shall have to wait and see.

What are the Government's motives? I am not as sanguine as the hon. Member for Hyndburn about the effects of 1992. The effects of the single market on lotteries have been mooted. The hon. Gentleman was right to point out that Britain is the only country in the Community not to have a lottery. Could the Germans, for instance, arrive here after 1992 and demand to be allowed to sell lottery tickets? The answer is that we do not know.

This is partly because the Commission has said in a White Paper that there will be no harmonisation of gambling legislation. That means that all the controls on gambling will reside with the Government. However, the hon. Member for Hyndburn has said that, although the Commission has taken a new line, after 1992 it will be tested in the courts and the case will be decided in favour of the claimants. Then, the Germans, who already have a lottery system, will be able to come over here and translate the tickets from German to English and because the computer system will already be in operation, we shall lose an awful lot of money.

I am not sure whether that is a fanciful scenario, but we need to know whether there is such a threat. The hon. Gentleman may be overstating the situation, but we need to know why the Prime Minister is making all these noises and creating all these uncertainties. Is it because he believes that 1992 will result in Germany or some other country coming in with its own system, or is it because there is useful money to be had? Is there a chance that we shall lose £1 billion a year? If that were to happen, British gamblers could be financing big projects in Germany.

The hon. Member for Hyndburn mentioned opera houses. As I was coming into the House, I was listening, on Radio 3, to a live transmission of an opera in Cardiff, from the New theatre. That theatre has been around for a long time, so it seems a tragedy that Wales, the land of song, still does not have its own opera house. The hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) was talking about Joan Collins making the draw, but if I am being fanciful, I should like Wales to have an opera house.

It would be ironic if this opportunity were to be lost, and the Germans, with their strong economy, were able to exploit the British market. Is that a threat or a risk? I am looking forward to the Minister's reply, because no doubt he is bubbling over with lots of ideas.

How would all this be organised? I am baffled, and I should like the Minister's advice. What sort of lottery shall we have? With all that well-prepared speech, the hon. Member for Hyndburn did not say much on that point. Will there be a state-run scheme or a private enterprise solution, with several competing lotteries? I refer the House to a debate in the other place, in which Lord Ferris said:

> "A state lottery is a lottery run by government. That would involve the state in the promotion of gambling, and if that were the noble Lord's proposal—which as he explained, it is not—I am bound to tell him that it would not meet with the Government's approval, as it would run counter to our policies on deregulation and privatisation."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 28 February 1990; Vol. 516, c. 799.]

That is a Home Office Minister saying that we cannot have a state-run lottery. It is extraordinary that such a scheme is being ruled out now.

The hon. Member for Hyndburn talked about £1 billion, but I think that the lottery would fall far short of that sum. Would the Secretary of State run the lottery, or would we have a lottery board? If there were a private free-for-all, I presume that it would be run by a private company or companies. What would be the guidelines for allocating funds? How would the Secretary of State determine his priorities? The hon. Member for Hyndburn referred to sport, the environment and the arts, but who would determine the priorities? It is clear that there are many complex questions to be answered.

If we were to have a lottery of the sort that has been proposed, I believe that there would be an overwhelming case for a state-run system. International experience suggests that the scheme would not be viable if there were a proliferation of lotteries. Even the local authority schemes—they are quite large—are beginning to die off. There is a problem of scale.

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: The hon. Gentleman's attention must have wandered during the relevant part of my speech. I explained that I was talking about one lottery. I am sure that that will be confirmed by *Hansard*. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will outline the Labour party's attitude to lotteries and say what a Labour Government would do.

Mr. Randall: I recall that the hon. Gentleman explained that he was talking about a state-run system. As I have said, that runs contrary to what Lord Ferrers said in another place. How does the hon. Gentleman meet that dilemma? It would seem that a state-run lottery has already been ruled out.

Mr. Hargreaves: A single lottery is not necessarily run by the state. It can be run, as in Ireland, by an organisation on behalf of the Government. It is a nationwide lottery, not a state lottery.

Mr. Randall: What does "run by the Government" mean? The hon. Gentleman is saying that, if the lottery were to be run by the Government, he would rule that out. It seems that he is arguing that there could be an agency, a lottery council or a board or body that would be responsible for running the scheme. Surely that is splitting hairs. The creation of an agency to run the lottery would be the sensible approach. The Tote is an example.

The notion of proliferation is not sensible, because the lottery that the hon. Member for Hyndburn has in mind would have to be big and to offer big prizes, or the public would not be drawn to it. That rules out a free-enterprise solution, with competition and smaller lotteries.

It would be important that the benefits of a lottery went to the people and not to private companies as a result of them taking a cut. A national lottery would almost certainly become a monopoly, and I do not like private monopolies: a state monopoly is more acceptable. We have created private monopolies through the privatisation programme, and I consider them to be unacceptable.

A national lottery must be free of vice and corruption. It is necessary to ensure that all the tickets are drawn. If there were proliferation, the necessary controls would be almost impossible to implement. To be fair, the hon. Gentleman touched on the matter, but the impact on other forms of gambling would need to be examined—for

instance, football pools. They are forbidden by law to advertise, yet the state lottery would almost certainly have to advertise. There would then be a question of unfair competition to be dealt with.

We would need to assess the implications for the Exchequer. The turnover from all forms of gambling is about £10 billion, of which the Exchequer gets a slice. We are talking about large sums of money, so we would need to work out what the taxation policy would be.

There is also the moral argument which I touched on in an intervention. We would be moving away from a policy of allowing gambling activities only at a level which meets unstimulated demand. That is a very important principle. If we were to move away from that, it would raise many questions.

Being a decisive party, the Labour party believes that a national lottery is a parliamentary matter, rather like Sunday trading. The Labour party would not use a three-line Whip to force anything through. Hon. Members would be allowed to decide on a free vote. The hon. Member for Hyndburn has given us his views about the attitude of the public, and we have a clear view on the matter.

When the Government tell us what their policy is, when they will present legislation and what form the legislation will take, we can start a debate. Of course, it is for the Government to bring the measure forward. We are the Opposition, and our job is to oppose, but at the moment we have nothing to oppose. We do not oppose what the Prime Minister has said. He has come up with so much gobbledegook that we need clarification. I look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say on the matter.

11.52 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) not merely on his thoughtful and intriguing speech—I will not at this stage say "persuasive"—but on his success in securing the debate. As the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) said, success in these matters is in itself something of a lottery. One is particularly fortunate to obtain an early slot.

The early-day motion, to which my hon. Friend referred, has shown the considerable interest in this subject in the House. It is a subject to which my hon. Friend has given a great deal of personal time and effort over many years.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess), who made an enthusiastic supporting speech, conjured up visions of my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn filling his constituency so full of opera houses, art galleries and stadiums, all opened by Joan Collins, that I did not think that there would be enough room left for him and his constituents. Nevertheless, I took it that my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon represented a body of opinion that thinks that a national lottery could be of enormous benefit to a series of good causes.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West made a characteristically cheerful speech, accusing the Government, and the Prime Minister in particular, of not making up their minds. I thought that that was rich, as he spent the rest of the time not being clear himself, and entirely baffling the House about Labour party policy. It was made clear only that Labour would allow a free vote —except that, if there was to be a national lottery, Labour would make jolly certain that it was nationalised. That was typical, and par for the course.

In recent months, the media have given considerable attention to the prospect of a national lottery. I am not certain to what extent that reflects wider public concern, but I noted the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn about public opinion polls, and the informed intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee), who is chairman of the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions—and it is a topic on which I receive a steady flow of correspondence. If the recent publicity encouraged any betting on whether there would be a national lottery, that might already have generated some revenue for the Exchequer.

I will not recount the history of lotteries in this country, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn has already given some of it, or describe the existing statutory arrangements in any detail. However, any debate on the subject must take account of the present position. The last British state lottery was held in 1826, and small charitable lotteries have been allowed since 1846. The current relevant legislation is the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976, which permits fund-raising lotteries for registered societies such as charities and sports clubs, or those of local authorities.

The maximum single prize permitted is £12,000, and the maximum turnover allowed is £180,000. Because of their scale, and because they benefit charitable or other good purposes, such lotteries are specifically exempted from gambling duty. About 50 per cent. of their turnover eventually finds its way back to the sponsoring charities. All other forms of gambling except on-course betting are taxed, and it is unlawful to promote or to conduct major lotteries based outside Great Britain.

That is the statutory framework within which any proposal for a national lottery must be seen. If we were to change the law—and I emphasise that it is a big if—to allow one or more large national lotteries, that would have to be done in a way consistent with the wider regime of gambling controls.

That throws up a number of difficult questions, to which there are not, as usual, any simple answers. I will highlight the main ones, but not necessarily in an order of priority. A constant theme throughout the debate was that a national lottery or lotteries could be justified only if the proceeds were used for charitable or similar purposes. The Government see no justification whatsoever for major lotteries that simply increase the already wide range of commercial gambling opportunities. I doubt whether any hon. Member disagrees with that assertion, which finds common ground outside the House as well and puts the debate in its proper context.

We have a more varied gambling industry than most other countries, and the Government have a duty to try to ensure that, to prevent fraud, gambling is properly regulated. But it is no part of Government policy to stop people gambling if they want to do so.

Equally, successive Governments, including the present Government, have taken the view that gambling should not be positively encouraged—a point made several times by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West. The application of that policy depends on the stakes involved. Lotteries already enjoy greater freedom to advertise because they are small and are run for charitable purposes. It may be that the heavy promotion required for a national

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

lottery could also be justified, because it would be in aid of charities. However, it would certainly involve additional and positive encouragement for people to gamble. Also, it would almost certainly mean that the charities received even less than the 50 per cent. of the stake money that local lotteries currently produce—perhaps only about one third.

Turning to practical matters, the first question to consider is whether there should be one national lottery only or whether there should be a free market for any charity that wished to run one. There would, of course, have to be adequate regulation in either event to prevent fraud; but there are arguments for and against both approaches.

Many of those who favour a national lottery—indeed, I think all who have spoken in the debate—seem to favour a single national lottery. There are, of course, attractions in that approach, which was the one recommended by the Rothschild royal commission in 1978. But if we go down that road, we are faced with a substantial problem of deciding who should receive the proceeds and how such decisions should be made.

Let us first consider who should benefit. Should it be the arts, sport, the environment, charities, health care, young people or any of the other many good causes that feel that they deserve a share? Many good causes have been mentioned as possible recipients of money from a national lottery, but let there be no doubt that, for every claim, there are many other competing and equally legitimate interests.

If there were a single lottery, effectively authorised by the Government, should those decisions be made by the Government or by some other body? Some proposals have been made for some sort of body of trustees who would shoulder that awesome responsibility, but would they be accountable to Parliament, and if so, would Ministers still get drawn into decisions about who benefited? Would they have fairly strict guidelines within which to operate, or would they have free rein to allocate money to whatever good causes they wanted?

Tonight I do not want to even try to begin to provide answers to these questions. They are difficult ones and cannot be brushed aside.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Why not?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Lady asks why not. There are some large questions that need to be answered, but they need to be answered by a substantial debate, of which this evening's debate is one example, before we come to a conclusion. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West is clearly waiting to be guided by an upsurge in public comment, before he will even begin to say how he and the Labour party might react to such a proposal, if the Government introduced one.

They are difficult questions and the Opposition Front Bench was unable to shed very much light on them. Indeed, only some of the questions had occurred to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West let alone the answers. We need to be clear who would benefit and how decisions would be made.

One way to overcome the difficulties might be to allow a free market, in which the public could decide which charity lotteries they wanted to support. In that way, no one would be excluded from the benefits of a major lottery. Charities could group together either from choice or, in the light of competition, from necessity. It is likely that, in the long run, the public would identify the most deserving, or at least the most popular, causes and the number of lotteries would be smaller than at the outset. But even then, others could enter the market if they wanted to and felt that they could attract public interest and support.

This leads very conveniently into another of the complex issues that must be considered. What would be the effect of a national lottery on existing charitable lotteries, and charitable giving generally? We already have a free market for small charitable lotteries. I have recently received letters from those running small lotteries expressing concern that they will lose out to a national lottery. The total amount that they obtain from such lotteries may not be large, but they provide an essential supply of funds. It would be ironic if existing charitable organisations were to be the main ones to suffer from national lotteries intended to support good causes. There may be some ways of getting round these difficulties.

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lloyd: I shall give way in a moment.

There is evidence that my hon. Friend knows of elsewhere that small lotteries could flourish with a major lottery, but as yet not all small lotteries are convinced of that. Certainly their worries need to be considered in more detail than I accept my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn had time for this evening—in more detail than a few reassuring phrases about what might have happened in the United States. This is one of the questions that needs close attention, especially on the part of those who are promoting the idea of a national lottery to help charities generally. If my hon. Friend still wishes to intervene, I shall give way.

Mr. Hargreaves: When he replies to the letters that he has received, I hope that my hon. Friend will supply all the evidence available. There is no evidence anywhere in the world to suggest that state lotteries have any detrimental effect. In fact, the reverse seems to happen: more people buy tickets because of the advertising. That is certainly true in Ireland.

Mr. Lloyd: I appreciate the confidence expressed by my hon. Friend, but he should communicate it to the many charities that have their doubts.

In addition to the proceeds of lotteries and many other fund-raising activities, charities and voluntary organisations receive support directly from the Government. In 1988-89, that amounted to about £2,000 million. The impact of a national lottery on the revenue yield from existing forms of gambling might put that level of support at risk. As I have said, we have a more varied gambling industry than most other countries. Many who advocate a national lottery suggest that it would generate new expenditure, not divert it from current gambling. That view is not shared by those likely to be affected. Football pools in particular, and also gaming machines, may be vulnerable. We cannot be sure what will happen at this stage, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West pointed out.

We must take into account the possible revenue implications. At present, the revenue yield from gambling is about £1,000 million. The football pools, which are likely to be particularly affected, are taxed at 40 per cent.,

and pay an additional 2·5 per cent. for safety improvements made at football grounds. Given the threat that a national lottery would pose for them, they are likely to press hard for equality of treatment; but would a national lottery be workable if it were taxed at anything like the same level? Some hon. Members may feel that it would not. Indeed, many who advocate a national lottery assume that there would be no tax at all. On that basis, it might well attract money from existing gambling, and reduce the revenue received by the Exchequer. Those are difficult judgments, and, thankfully, they are not for me to make; nevertheless, they must be addressed.

Closer to home is the likelihood of pressure from some sectors of the industry for a level playing field in other respects. Not surprisingly, they would, in any event, want to be able to compete vigorously with the national lottery. In particular, they would want to be able to advertise more freely, and they would want other controls to be lifted. That would result in a substantial stimulation of the demand for gambling. Although that too is not necessarily an insuperable problem, it would be irresponsible to proceed without considering the wider implications.

One issue has come up several times—and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West, with furrowed brow, wondered what the rules were, and how it would all work out in 1992. I am talking about foreign lotteries. There is a fear—to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn addressed himself—that, after 1992, major lotteries from other EC countries will be free to operate in this country.

As I said earlier, at present, major lotteries from abroad are unlawful. The European Commission's programme for the completion of the single market does not contain proposals for the harmonisation of gambling legislation. As far as we are aware, the Commission at present has no plans to present any such proposals.

We believe that a good defence of our present prohibition on major lotteries could, if necessary, be made if the prohibition were challenged under the treaty of Rome as it stands. Our policy is that controls on gambling are matters for national authorities, and we believe that many other EC Governments would be likely to take a similar view. Our understanding is that, in general, they do not permit lotteries from other countries to operate on their territory.

As always when we are considering the impact of European developments, it would be wrong to say that circumstances will never change.

Mr. Randall *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: I give way to the hon. Gentleman. That is another circumstance that never changes.

Mr. Randall: I should like some clarification, because I am baffled. The Minister said that after 1992 other EC countries would be able to come here and sell tickets, yet afterwards he said that the European Commission would advocate a policy whereby the laws of each member state would prevail. It is confusing. What is the position?

Mr. Lloyd: I did not think that I had said that. If I did, I was not making myself clear. I think I was saying that there was some concern on the part of some hon. Members that, after 1991, foreign lotteries might sell tickets lawfully here, and I said that I did not believe that that would be the case, because gambling laws would remain the responsibility of national Governments and not be part of the single market.

As I also said, however, in considering the impact of European developments, it would be wrong to say that circumstances will never change. But I do not believe that the single market argument carries nearly so much force as some of the proponents of a national lottery suggest, and as my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn said. It is of course one of the many factors which should be taken into account along with the others that I have mentioned tonight, as well as some that I have not mentioned yet.

We have had, to use an appropriate word, a "useful" debate. I have certainly enjoyed it. I have been interested in what has been said. It is, however, a complex subject. I can assure the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West and my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn that the Government are looking, and will look very carefully, at the views which have been expressed, both here and outside.

We do not believe that it would be right—here I come to a point at issue between my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West—for the Government to run their own national lottery. If it was decided to proceed, it would be on the basis of one or more privately run lotteries subject to the necessary regulatory machinery. The Government are considering the many complex arguments for and against allowing such lotteries, and tonight's debate is a helpful contribution to that consideration. I am very grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn for raising the issue so that we could talk about it this evening.

Hospitals

12.12 am

Mrs. Sylvia Heal (Mid-Staffordshire): I am pleased to be able to air this vital issue of national health service hospitals this evening, although I could certainly have wished that the business of the House had been so organised as to enable us to have this debate at a more reasonable hour.

The debate is timely, because the national health service now faces wrecking reforms which will fundamentally distort the delivery of health care. But even before these changes are brought about, no one who has been an NHS patient recently can deny that the service is in crisis. Cuts in patient services are being made by nine out of 10 health authorities to balance their books by the end of the month. Forced to produce a clear balance sheet before the new changes, health authorities have left newly built wards unopened and have closed surgical wards, shut maternity units and made bed reductions.

Yet just a month ago the Government were willing to give those hospitals a blank cheque to treat Gulf war casualties. That proves that it is not the resources which are lacking but the political will and the commitment to public services. Thankfully, our hospitals were not inundated with the sick and injured from the Gulf, but why is the money available during that crisis not now being used to rescue hospitals from their present funding crisis? Why are those resources not being used to bring down waiting lists?

Nearly 1 million people are waiting for operations; many have been waiting for over a year. In the West Midlands region in September 1990, there were 99,306 people on waiting lists, of which 20,000 had been waiting longer than a year. The sudden resignation of John Yates and his team last month proves that cosmetic attempts to manipulate waiting lists simply will not work. Slapping a two-year deadline on waiting lists will force health authorities to abandon some treatments and to treat less urgent cases more quickly.

What is needed is more money spent on doctors and nurses committed to getting the job done within the NHS. Mr. Yates told the Government that many NHS delays may be blamed on private work. Where there are many private beds, there are also longer waiting lists for operations. However, that was not the message that the Government wanted to hear. They would not sanction research into the connection between waiting lists, consultants' private work and the work that they do for the NHS. The Government are simply too committed to propping up the private sector.

The health service is literally crumbling around our ears. Seven per cent. of hospitals were built before 1890, and a staggering 80 per cent. before 1918. Old hospitals are difficult to keep clean, but privatisation and cuts in domestics' hours must share the blame for turning United Kingdom hospitals into buildings that now justify a Government health warning. The Audit Commission report published in *The Independent* yesterday spoke of the need for an additional £2 billion for maintenance.

Will the health service reforms sweep away the present crisis? Not a bit of it—they will make matters worse, by creating the same destructive forces of competition that have wreaked havoc in the United States. The Americans have left the provision of health care to the market, and it has led to the most expensive, least effective, most unfair system in existence.

The reforms are a charter for bureaucrats and accountants. The cost of administering the NHS will soar. Far from solving the main problem facing the NHS—its chronic underfunding—the reforms will divert scarce resources from patient care into a costly administrative edifice. The bureaucratic nightmare will undermine and ultimately destroy the vital principles on which the current health service is based—the provision of quality care to those most in need.

The British Medical Association carried out a survey, which was published in this month's edition of its "News Review". It shows that health authorities are spending large sums of money on new administrative staff to implement the NHS review proposals. The BMA has identified new administrative posts, as advertised in the *Health Service Journal*, and found that administrators' salaries are likely to increase by at least £80 million this year.

In Birmingham, the district authorities and their units recruited 72 new senior managers during the six months of the survey. I want the Government to give a guarantee that the additional funding for that will not come out of the money that is needed for patient care. The reforms impose a market model on the provision of health care. Authorities are now the purchasers and the providers—with contracts to be placed, always assuming that the health authority, the purchaser, has the money. If, as in the case of one health authority within the West Midlands region, there is considerably less money—as much as £1·1 million—that means either the closing of wards, invariably surgical, or delays in the provision of care.

The South East Staffordshire community health council has told me of an elderly patient who has been waiting for a hearing aid since August. It is not a costly operation, but it would make a considerable difference to the quality of his life. He cannot receive one until April, because of spending and staffing restrictions. I am told that that situation is commonplace. The Staffordshire Association for the Deaf has withdrawn the provision of an audiology service at the Victoria hospital in Lichfield. So far, the health authority has not been able to provide its own service.

Obtaining sufficient revenue to run the new district general hospital at Tamworth is also a problem. That hospital will serve patients in the South East Staffordshire health authority area. It appears that that problem can be solved only by closing four or five of the peripheral units. However, for patients living in rural areas such as my constituency, where there is little or no public transport, even getting to a hospital can be a major problem, especially for women and pensioners who may not have access to a car.

The Mid Staffordshire health authority is currently reviewing the provision of health care in Rugeley. My constituents and GPs in Rugeley are concerned about losing access to respite care and GP beds currently available at the local hospital.

The impact of the lack of resources has an effect on patients and staff in hospitals. It is not good for a working team to have patients in different wards in a hospital. That presents problems for the medical and nursing staff. For example, if an orthopaedic patient is on an ear, nose and throat ward, the medical staff must spend time checking on

patients in wards on different floors of the hospital. They may not be quite as likely to detect changes in the patient's condition as they would if they were treating all the patients on the same ward.

The nursing staff face similar problems. The staff on the ENT ward will cope with the orthopaedic patient, but not as well as staff on an orthopaedic ward would cope. The latter staff are experienced and trained in those particular skills. All that is detrimental to good practice within hospitals.

The Government talk about the increased throughput of patients, but they do not talk about the readmission rate due to the lack of appropriate home care services. Staffing levels in our hospitals are an important factor. Many patients now have a high dependency level, requiring a lot of nursing attention. A shortage of qualified staff on a ward places additional pressures on junior nursing staff. It is hardly surprising that stress and burn-out amoung nurses are increasing.

It is now often difficult for nurses to be released from the ward for professional development because of staff shortages. The market in health care is creating stress, as departments and wards are told to make income. It is no longer possible to ask a physiotherapist to show staff how to lift a patient properly. The physiotherapist must charge, because the physiotherapy department has to generate income. Therefore, the professions are trying to sell their skills, and the good will involved in sharing skills is being eroded.

It also appears that no criticism of staff shortages is allowed. In *The Guardian* on Monday, there was a report of a consultant haematologist in the West Midlands region who spoke of her concern about staffing levels, and who has since been made redundant.

The introduction of a pricing system in NHS hospitals was bound to create variations. The publication this week of a survey conducted by the West Midlands health service monitoring unit has revealed what can only be described as a high street price war. A hip replacement operation in Mid Staffordshire health authority will cost £1,196, but in Sandwell it would cost £7,485. A hernia operation will cost £1,125 in Mid Staffordshire, but £2,489 at a trust hospital in Rugby. To have an ingrowing toenail removed costs £283 in mid-Staffordshire but only £90 at Queen Elizabeth's hospital, Birmingham. It costs £283 at Rugby.

Inevitably, this has caused a great deal of anxiety among the fund-holding GPs. Matthew Taylor, the director of the west midlands health monitoring unit, has said:

"I would not like to be GP forced to decide between protecting the interests of the local general hospital and treating more patients more cheaply elsewhere."

It is right to ask why there are such incredible variations.

The Parliamentary-Under Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): Will the hon. Lady reflect on what she has just said? If I heard her correctly, she said that she would not like to choose between protecting the local hospital and treating more patients. It seems extraordinary to say that it is difficult to choose between the interests of a hospital as an institution and those of patients as people.

Mrs. Heal: I said that the difficulty was in choosing whether to protect the local general hospital or to treat more patients more cheaply elsewhere. The GP should not have to make that choice.

I repeat my question: why are there such incredible variations? Was any guidance issued by the Department of Health on a pricing policy? Can those relatively cheap authorities cope with the number of referrals that they are likely to receive? What would be the implications for the self-governing trusts if they did not attract sufficient referrals? Would they go out of business? An opted-out hospital will survive only if it is competitive. It will have to behave like any private hospital, providing financially profitable services rather than those which are medically necessary. There will be no local representation calling them to account. They will ignore the needs of the local community, in a bid to capture the market lead for expensive treatments available for patients far and wide.

Contracts will be won on price, not quality, of health care, because no one will be in a position to measure the latter. Patient choice will fly out of the window, because patients will have to go where the cheapest block contract can be negotiated, not where the best treatment is available.

The majority of people in this country need and use the national health service and its hospitals. We cannot claim to live in a civilised society if we are not prepared for those most in need.

12.27 am

Mr. Jim Callaghan (Heywood and Middleton): I welcome the opportunity to talk about the conditions in hospitals in the north Manchester area—an area with which you are familiar, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because, before you reached your present prestigious and exalted position, you lived in the Manchester area. I am sure that you will know the hospitals that I shall mention.

Before Christmas I had to go for an eye inspection to a hospital in the northern section of Manchester known as the Jewish hospital, which was built before the war by the donations of the Jewish community in the Cheetham Hill area of the city. After the test, the doctor said that he would like me to return in six months for a further check-up on my eyes. He wrote down that he wanted me to return to that hospital. I smiled and said, "Are you sure, doctor?" He asked why. I said, "Are you not aware that the workmen are outside now demolishing the hospital?" He said, "Oh, yes, I had forgotten." He then wrote that I should go to the Northern hospital in Manchester. I smiled again and asked him if he was sure. Again, he asked why. I said that I had it on excellent authority that that hospital was also due to close. I said, "If you are giving me an appointment in six months' time, will the hospital be open?" He smiled and said, "Yes, you have a point. The best thing that can I do is to arrange for your to go there if it is still open. If it is not, we will send you somewhere else."

There are two hospitals; one is being knocked down and the other is going to close. Earlier last year, that indefatigable worker for Blackley, my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham), invited me to attend a public meeting in the Moston Lane school where parents in the area were concerned about the proposed closure of the children's hospital at Booth Hall —a hospital that has had a marvellous reputation for more than 50 years, dealing with at least 100,000 children per year. The proposal is not only that that hospital but one in

[Mr. Jim Callaghan]

Salford is to close. The idea is that a glass emporium will be built on the site of St. Mary's hospital in Manchester next to the Manchester Royal infirmary.

The parents in the area are extremely angry and I assure the Minister that if the proposal is serious he will have real trouble on his hands with them. I know the hospital well because when I was a young man I was a teacher in the area. Whenever a child was injured in the school it always fell to me to be asked, "Jim, will you take this child to the clinic in Moston lane or to the children's hospital," which I preferred as I was aware of the marvellous work for children at the hospital. The idea is now to build a new glass and marble emporium in the middle of the city at a cost of £40 million. The catch is that £20 million has to be found by voluntary subscription from the general public. I cannot see that happening. There will be tremendous opposition to the scheme.

I am sure that we all send our best wishes to my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland), who is not very well and is in hospital. We all know that he fought hard to prevent the closure of yet another hospital in the north area of Manchester—Ancoats hospital. I know that hospital well because when I was a little boy I was the hospital's best patient. I was constantly in trouble, I was mischievous and I knew my way to the hospital blindfold. When I had an injury, I would go there and the doctor would look at me and say, "Not you again, Callaghan." I know the value of that hospital, but unfortunately it, too, is to close.

The isolation hospital at Monsall is set in wonderful grounds, but it is proposed that it also should close. Just over the border in south Manchester, the Withington hospital is also to close. Five hospitals are to be closed in the north, and two in the south, in Withington and in Salford, are to be closed.

Are the rumours true? I know that some of them are because the buildings are being knocked down. Will the Minister clarify the position so that people in Manchester will know that they will not have only three hospitals—one in the north, one in the centre and one in the south?

I also wish to draw the Minister's attention to the services provided at two of the hospitals which are to remain. One is the Manchester Royal infirmary. Just before Christmas, a constituent complained to me that he needed a cardiac bypass but had been told in August by the authorities at the hospital that he would have to wait until November before the operation could be completed. When he telephoned in November, he was told that he could not have it done in November. He could not go in December. He was then told to come back in January, but in January he was again told, "We are sorry, but you cannot come in January after all." He wrote to me that he still did not have a date for that very serious operation.

I wrote immediately to the general manager, Mr. Derek Hathaway and was surprised by his answer. He replied:

"Part of the cardiac surgery unit had to close in October because of financial restraints"—

that is another way of saying cuts—

"and because of staff sickness and maternity leave."

The hospital was to reopen in January with six beds and I am told that eight beds are now open. Mr. Hathaway said:

"It is hoped we will get back to full capacity in the very near future."

The *Manchester Evening News* correspondent, Ian Craig, related the incident under the headline:

"Don't have a heart attack in Manchester. It is inconvenient."

I would say that if a person is going to have a heart attack, he should be careful where he has it. I received figures showing that in north Manchester during the past year 9·2 per cent. of operations were cancelled. In Rochdale it was 9·9 per cent. and in Salford 11·1 per cent. So it is not just the hospital to which I have been referring that has been affected.

The second hospital in the north of Manchester that I am told is to remain open is the North Manchester general hospital, also known as the Crumpsall hospital. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackley—that marvellous Member of Parliament—and I have gone to that hospital every year to discuss its problems with Professor Moore

Last year, we were asked by a senior consultant if we could help to obtain the services of a second consultant who specialised in diabetes and endocrinology because there was an acute need for such a consultant in the north-west region. To prove his case he drew our attention to the report of a working party on a survey of people with diabetes.

That survey was carried out on behalf of the North Western regional health authority and the working party was chaired by Professor Stephen Tomlinson. Its report is far too long and detailed for me to quote, but basically it said that there are about 60,000 people with diabetes in the north-west region, 12,000 of whom require insulin injections and the remaining 48,000 of whom are managed by diet alone or diet and tablets. The incidence of both types of patients is, unfortunately, increasing.

All diabetics have significantly increased mortality rates compared with non-diabetics. Diabetes shortens life predominantly because of the marked increase in the incidence of coronary artery disease and because of renal failure. Diabetes is the commonest cause of blindness and foot ulcers leading to gangrene, resulting in diabetes being the commonest cause of elective lower limb amputation. Increasing evidence suggests that complications are preventable. That is why the consultant was telling us that he wanted another consultant to try to prevent such incidents.

Costing the average stay in hospital, the committee estimated that in the north-west region it would cost more than £40 million. Accordingly, the working party was asked by the regional medical officer if he would construct a strategic plan for diabetic services in the north-west region for the next 10 years. The aim was simply to identify what was available, where the gaps were in the services and what it would take in terms of capital and revenue resources to fill those gaps.

The survey was conducted not simply as an exercise in cost cutting but principally to improve services within the financial constraints which currently exist. It would have been easy simply to reiterate the recommendation made by the British Diabetic Association and the Royal College of Physicians for optimal standards for diabetes care in the health district to indicate what the ideal situation might be.

It became apparent that in every district consultants with a specialist interest in diabetes are extremely keen to provide a first-class service but lack of money—I repeat, lack of money—has often made it difficult for them to achieve the improvements that they sought. They had to build on existing resources which resulted in a quality of

service and distribution of resources which varied markedly from district to district. It is widely recognised not only by health care professionals but by management that there are major defects in services for diabetics and that there is the will to improve them. Major improvements were made in a number of districts while the survey was being undertaken. The purpose of the report was not to criticise or to judge but to identify need and establish priority as realistically as possible in the hope that health care professionals and management would find the report informative and helpful.

On physical resources, the report shows that, of 19 hospitals, 11 have no education room and eight have no system of annual reviews of patients to pick up complications early, which is necessary. Bolton and Withington meet none of the recommendations on staffing requirements. Burnley, Leigh, Tameside, Park and Wythenshawe meet one of the four recommendations. Lancaster meet two and Blackburn, Blackpool, Bury, north Manchester, Rochdale, Stockport and west Lancashire meet three.

Comparing physical resources with staffing shows that, in the main, the districts with the fewest staff have the least physical resources. In four districts—Lancashire, central Manchester, north Manchester and south Manchester—the clinic numbers are larger than expected. Interestingly, in Bolton, Bury, Rochdale and Ormskirk only one physician has been designated as having an interest in diabetes. In five districts—north Manchester, Preston, Stockport, Tameside and Trafford—only one consultant deals with a large clinic population. A district to district variation is also apparent in nurses per thousand clinic population. Blackburn, north Manchester, Stockport and Tameside fair worse than other districts. Three of those districts—north Manchester, in which I am interested, Stockport and Tameside are among the most deprived for consultant staffing, which has not been compensated by high staffing of specialist nursing.

The report recommends that particular attention be given to the needs of district hospitals in Bolton, Burnley, Tameside, Park, south Manchester, north Manchester, Rochdale and Blackburn. It says that every effort should be made to address the priority of an additional physician with an interest in diabetes in north Manchester. That was what the consultant who contacted the hon. Member for Blackley and me was requesting.

The report said that at the appropriate time an additional consultant with an interest in diabetes should be appointed in Bolton, Wythenshawe and Preston. It recommended that a health professional should be designated to co-ordinate the development of the diabetic service in the north western region.

Having read the superb working report, my hon. Friend the Member for Blackley and I wrote to the chairman of North Western regional health authority and asked for an additional consultant for the region, based in North Manchester general hospital at Crumpsall. Needless to say, the request was refused—no doubt in the interests of cutting corners and costs. Unfortunately, the consultant who contacted the hon. Member for Blackley and I has left the hospital, which is a double tragedy. The Minister must agree that if such conditions continue in the region's hospitals there will be nothing left of the NHS except its good name.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind the hon. Lady that, if she chooses to speak in this debate, she will not be able to speak on the subject to which she has put her name. She can speak only once tonight.

12.44 am

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mrs. Heal) for raising this issue, and for the extremely important issues that have been raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan). They are regarded as important not just in the constituencies of my hon. Friends but throughout the country. Why, therefore, are we discussing them at a quarter to one in the morning? If they are regarded as important, they are worth discussing during the day.

It is about time that the working hours of the House of Commons were changed. The Minister seems to think that it is absolutely right and proper to organise our business in this way, but it is about time that we dragged ourselves into the 20th century and prepared ourselves for the 21st by modernising our procedures, so that issues of national importance are discussed during the day instead of in the small hours of the morning.

Mr. Dorrell: I do not want to debate the hours that the House sits with the hon. Lady, but she said that she would prefer to debate these issues in prime parliamentary time. Between 3.30 and 7 o'clock yesterday, the Opposition tabled a motion for debate, but they chose to change the subject. I should be interested to hear why they did so, in view of what she has just said.

Ms. Harman: The Minister knows that my point is that the House ought not to have to debate such an issue at this hour. He has made a cheap debating point about the subject that we chose for our Supply day debate. Some of his colleagues see the sense, as we do, of changing the way that we organise our business, which at the moment is archaic, inefficient and more suited to what happened a couple of centuries ago. The Minister aligns himself with those who look back to previous centuries rather than with those who look forward and want a modern and efficient legislature.

This is an important debate. The Government are allowing the national health service to go downhill. The cash squeeze has resulted in long waiting lists. Operations are cancelled. Hospitals are crumbling. Ambulances are no longer getting to where they are wanted on time. Even cancer patient operations are being cancelled. The Government's commitment to the national health service can only be described as lip service. NHS treatment, many people feel, is wonderful, but they cannot be sure that they will be able to get it when they need it.

The Minister will no doubt say, as he has said on many previous occasions, "Crisis—what crisis? Problems—what problems? All that the bed closures mean is that there has been a change in the way that the NHS works. It's nothing to do with budget cuts; it's just a change in procedure." I remind the House of what he said in a press statement on 14 February:

[Ms. Harman]

"Falling numbers of beds in the acute sector of the National Health Service are a reliable indicator of the improving quality of health care."

I challenge the Minister to name any other organisation, inside or outside the national health service, that believes that bed cuts are a sign that patient care is improving.

The Secretary of State for Health was reported in *The Independent* on 9 November 1990 as saying that many bed closures were not for financial reasons but for rationalisation purposes. However, the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts believes that total bed closures in England this year for purely financial reasons will amount to over 3,500. Bed closures will be for that reason alone, not for rationalisation, or changes in medical practice.

Bed cuts have had an effect on the services provided. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire referred to cancelled operations. The Minister was forced to admit that over 300,000 NHS operations were cancelled last year. Thousands of standard letters are sent to patients telling them not to go into hospital because their operations have been cancelled. Some patients have had their operations cancelled not once but repeatedly. Each such letter that goes out causes pain and misery for the person who receives it, dashed hopes and messed up plans. It is just not good enough.

To save money, NHS managers are telling doctors to go home, not to do their full week's work, and to cancel operating lists. So operating theatres lie idle and waiting lists grow. That is not an efficient way to run the service.

Because they cannot reduce waiting lists by treating patients who need care, health authorities are looking at other ways of cutting them down. North East Thames regional health authority has come up with plans to limit the availability of some procedures on the NHS, one of which is varicose vein repair. I know how that will work: the service will be available only for clinical reasons. So postmen and milkmen will have their veins operated on, but housewives caring for small children—such women's veins throb in exactly the same way as those of the professionals whom I have mentioned—will be regarded as wanting the operation for reasons of vanity, and they will be denied it.

First it is said that bed closures are taking place for rationalisation purposes, and are a sign of good health in the NHS. The next stage is to reduce the number of people who can get on the waiting lists, as North East Thames regional health authority has done.

A letter from the acting unit general manager, Peter Burroughs, and from the chairman of the management board of Guy's hospital, outlines a package of cuts to meet the hospital's budget deadline. The final paragraph reads:

"Finally we must limit the number of patients being seen in out-patients"—

and this despite rising demand.

"We propose a 15 per cent. reduction in new attendances and a 30 per cent. cull of repeat attenders, and we would ask you to examine your clinic arrangements without delay."

That means that doctors must stop patients coming, and must stop treating them.

The Government can no longer claim—I hope that the Minister will not try to do so—that the NHS is treating more patients than ever before. Bed cuts, budget deficits and frozen posts are taking their toll. The figures are beginning to show that, despite growing need for treatment, the number of patients being treated by the NHS is falling.

There is evidence of falling activity rates in the NHS. Figures that I have for Camberwell, City, and Hackney and Riverside district health authorities show that the number of patients treated this year will be smaller than that treated last year. The same is true of the Oxford regional health authority—*[Interruption.]* If the Minister cares to challenge that, perhaps he should ask that health authority whether it is true.

The same applies to North West Thames and North East Thames regional health authorities. They too will treat fewer patients this year than last, and there is concern about North Western health authority and Trent health authority.

The NHS is also doing a lower proportion of non-emergency work. Right-wing Tories in the "No Turning Back" group have long argued that the NHS should be a crisis service, and that non-emergency work should be shunted off to the private sector. But budget cuts have meant that, without any parliamentary debate, that is increasingly what is happening. The NHS is turning into an emergency service, with non-emergency patients pushed into private hospitals or left by the wayside.

At Lewisham hospital, a consultant told me that one patient waited from 9 am until midnight for an operation for acute appendicitis while the hospital tried to find a bed and a free operating theatre. Recently, one of the hospital's four main operating theatres was closed for two months to save money. As the hospital cannot advertise for nursing staff, because of budget restrictions, theatres are short of trained staff. So there are more cancellations.

The hospital reports that one gynaecologist has a waiting list of a year for hysterectomies. People are not referred for that operation unless they are in pain or suffering from bleeding. The operation is not undertaken lightly—yet women have to wait for a year to have it. A urinogenitary surgeon said in February that he had 50 patients to be admitted for operations to Lewisham hospital, and that 22 had had to have their operations cancelled, when some had cancer of the bladder. That is not good enough.

The Independent reported, on 21 February, the case of a 36-year-old woman who was suspected of having suffered a pulmonary embolism, a blood clot in the lungs, which could prove fatal, but for whom no bed could be found in five London hospitals. The doctor tried London, Bart's, Homerton, Whipp's Cross and St. Andrews. All refused the emergency. That shows that even emergency cases are not being treated.

I hope that the Minister will not say of cancelled operations that sometimes the patients do not turn up. He should remember that many patients rely on the ambulance service to get them to hospital; if that service is being cut and journeys are being cancelled because "no vehicles are available"—the new and growing category—patients cannot get into hospital. I draw the Minister's attention to the recent London ambulance service figures, which show that, in January this year 10,476 non-emergency journeys were cancelled because no vehicles were available. What answer does he have to that? How can he preside over a system that is letting people down so badly and over an NHS that is inefficient because patients cannot come in for their operations?

It is not as if the accident and emergency service has benefited—far from it. The Orcon standard lays down the minimum time within which ambulances should get to an emergency. Judged by that, the London ambulance service, and many others, are failing to get to accidents and emergencies on time. Part of the Orcon standard is that an ambulance in a metropolitan area should get to an accident or emergency within seven minutes in 50 per cent. of its cases in a year. In London, the average is 12 per cent. of calls being answered within seven minutes.

As my hon. Friends have said, the fabric of our hospitals is crumbling. Why should those being treated in NHS hospitals have to put up with leaky roofs, draughty corridors, torn lino? Why is it that, year after year, because of the underfunded pay awards, money is taken from maintenance budgets, with the result that important maintenance is not done? Years of the spending squeeze has resulted in a huge maintenance backlog in the hospitals, and that is not good enough.

We know that the Government have underfunded the pay awards and have not taken account of inflation. I hope that the Minister will be honest about that. It has meant that the district health authorities have had to take money from their other revenue areas to pay for these pay awards, which the Government announce with a great pat on the back for themselves. They also make assumptions about the level of inflation that are far below the true level.

The Government are not prepared to invest sufficiently in a national health service because they want fundamental changes and the commercialisation of health care, and a market economy in the health service. Therefore, pressure is put on health authorities to make them balance the figures rather than to supply the care that is needed. That is what Guy's hospital, the North-East health authority and so many others are doing.

The Government are not happy to see the waiting lists grow, because they know that they are the major recruiting sergeants of private medicine. They have already made clear their commitment to private medicine, with tax relief for health insurance for the elderly. People are desperately worried. They do not agree with what the Government are doing—opting out of hospitals, and tax relief for private health care—or with the two-tier Americanised system that the Government want. For all the Government's propaganda, they have not fooled anybody. The public know, however, that the next Labour Government will abolish the internal market. That Government will bring opted-out hospitals back into the local district health authorities, which is what the people want. They—the Labour Government—will invest in our health service so that it truly becomes a service upon which the public can rely.

12.59 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I begin on what should be an uncontroversial note by agreeing with the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mrs. Heal) that debates about the national health service should proceed against the background of a shared commitment to making the NHS service into a health-care service of which we can all be proud, recognising that the vast majority of our fellow citizens—in emergencies, virtually all of them—rely on the NHS as the prime or sole source of health care. There is no division between the two sides of the House about that.

The attempts by the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) to erect the Aunt Sally of a hidden agenda and a determination to foster a move to private medicine are unsupported by the facts. It reflects on the paucity of the arguments that the Opposition are able to muster against the Government's record on health care that they can generate steam and enthusiasm only by arguing against a policy that the Government do not espouse.

The Government believe, like the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire, that the NHS is one of Britain's great achievements in the post-war years, and that it is something of which we all have reason to be proud. The Government are as deeply committed to it emotionally as the Opposition. The difference between our record and that of Labour Governments is that, for a variety of reasons, we have been better able than successive Labour Governments to meet the aspirations that we set of improving the quality of health care that is available through the NHS. I shall seek to demonstrate that that is true on a number of counts.

I shall deal first with two of the issues which were raised by the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan). As distinct from his hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Staffordshire and for Peckham, he talked about serious local issues and asked for specific answers.

There is a short-term and a long-term question associated with the two hospitals at Wythenshaw and Withington. There is a short-term proposal to centralise maternity care at Wythenshaw, to which the local community health council has objected. Under the normal rules of management within the NHS, the proposal—because it has been supported by the regional health authority—will come ultimately to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to be determined. I have said already to some of the hon. Friends of the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton that I shall be happy to meet a delegation to discuss the matter when the proposal comes to Ministers to be decided. Assuming that the CHC maintains its objection, it will fall to my right hon. Friend to make a decision.

Mr. Callaghan: I welcome what the Minister has said about the hospitals in the south of Manchester. I said, however, that five hospitals in the north of the city are to close. Will the Minister respond to my remarks about those closures?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman knows that there are procedures within the management structure of the health service to determine whether such decisions are made by the local health authority or by Ministers. We can run a service that expends £30,000 million a year and employs 1 million only on the basis that management authority is delegated to local decision makers. Ministers come to make decisions on hospital closures only if the local institutions of the NHS are unable to come to an agreement on what should happen in a locality. The decision to close hospitals in the north of Manchester will come to Ministers only if the CHC maintains an objection to the proposal of the DHA. I cannot respond in detail on each of the other five hospitals in the city.

On the longer-term position of Wythenshawe and Withington, a proposal has been published to centralise acute care on the Wythenshawe site in the very much longer term. If it ever came to fruition, that would have to

[Mr. Dorrell]

come to Ministers as a major investment proposal requiring approval in principle. No such application has been made, or is expected in the immediate future. Obviously there would be plenty of opportunity for representations if such a proposal were to be made by the district and endorsed by the region.

The hon. Gentleman also asked questions about the provision of diabetes care in the north-west. I shall write to him when I have had a chance to examine that in more detail.

The speeches of the hon. Members for Mid-Staffordshire and for Peckham were not as sharply focused on the specific circumstances of local health provision. The hon. Ladies were much more concerned to try to demonstrate that the health service has suffered from a crisis of underfunding of the Government's making. If I may say so, both made a good stab at arguing a virtually unarguable case. I believe that the facts on the funding of the national health service show that the Government's record is distinguished and easily stands comparison with that of their predecessor.

The revenue budget allocated to the national health service for 1991-92 has risen by over half in real terms, compared with the revenue budget which we inherited. It is up by 52 per cent., an average growth rate in real terms over the years that the Government have been in office of 3 per cent. per annum.

That figure of 3 per cent. is an interesting statistic, because it is exactly the figure by which the Labour Government cut the revenue expenditure of the health service in real terms in 1977-78—something that the Conservative Government have never done. In 1977-78, Labour cut the revenue budget of the health service by the average amount by which it has grown in real terms since we came to power.

The 3 per cent. figure is also interesting because, on 4 June 1987, the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition committed the Labour party in government to raising NHS expenditure by 3 per cent. above the inflation rate. That is precisely what the Government have done during the 12 years that they have been in office. It is hard for the Labour party to argue that we are underfunding the health service, when our average increase over 12 years has been precisely what the leader of the Labour party said during the last election campaign would be his commitment.

If we move from revenue funding to capital funding, the facts are even more telling. In the 12 years that we have been in office, the hospital service capital budget has risen by 63 per cent. in real terms. The capital budgets of regional health authorities next year will go up by over 116 per cent. in cash terms. There are currently 450 schemes around the country valued at over £1 million which are going ahead under the Government's capital investment programme in the national health service.

As I say, that reflects an increase in real-terms commitment to NHS capital of 62 per cent. over 12 years, compared with a real-terms cut of 16 per cent. in the capital budget of the national health service during the five years of the last Labour Government. It is hard for Labour Members to argue that we are underfunding the service when we have increased the capital budget by 62 per cent. in real terms after they had cut it in their period in office by 16 per cent. in real terms.

In arguing the case of underfunding of the health service, the hon. Ladies are confronted by other problems. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is on record as saying that Labour's only two spending commitments ahead of the next general election relate to child benefit and pensions—neither of which has anything to do with the health service. I sympathise with the hon. Member for Peckham, because she is left to build the argument that the Government are underfunding the health service, but is prevented from committing her party to any increased expenditure by the hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, whom she will find very much tougher still if he were ever to move into No. 11 Downing street.

Various Labour party spokesmen have used various figures in trying to measure the alleged extent to which the service is underfunded. The hon. Lady is at least modest when she seeks to substantiate that claim. On 26 November 1987, she said that the health service needed an extra £200 million—with which I suppose she thought that she could squeeze by without being picked up on that expenditure by the hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was somewhat more ambitious. After a claim on 14 January 1988 that the health service was underfunded by £1·3 billion, by 20 April 1990 he was saying that the figure was £3 billion. By 22 October 1990, it was said to be a sum exceeding £4 billion.

I am sure that Labour welcomes the fact that the health service expenditure programme concluded by the then Secretary of State for Health, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) means that next year we will increase spending by £3 billion. Only one of Labour's figures is more than the amount by which we are increasing the health service budget next year alone.

The hon. Member for Peckham also has around her neck a series of commitments about the way in which any increased health service budget will be used by an incoming Labour Government. The Opposition have committed themselves, for example, to abandoning competitive tendering—which would cost £110 million out of the vote, without one extra patient being treated.

Midland Montagu, the independent brokers, examined the way in which Labour has said that it will use additional resources, and estimated in an article published in *Doctor* in June 1990 that the hon. Member for Livingston would have to secure from the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East a total of £770 million to cover the extra administrative and other costs involved, before treating one extra patient.

Various Labour Members have sought to draw attention, quite rightly, to the pay of national health service employees. The service is the largest employer in our society, and it has an obligation to be a good employer. That is why nurses' salaries in the national health service have risen by 43·5 per cent. in real terms since 1979, compared to the 21 per cent. cut in the five years that the Labour party was in power. That is why the hospital doctor's salary has risen by 36 per cent. in real terms since 1979, compared with a 6·4 per cent. cut in real terms during the period that the Labour party was in power.

The Labour party has a record, in terms of its management of the national health service, that no party could be proud of. It has considerable difficulty in substantiating its claim that our record demonstrates anything other than full commitment to the future and to the development of the national health service.

However, there is one lesson that perhaps the Labour party has learnt—let us be grateful for small mercies. That is that the only way that one can run a free, universal, tax-funded health service—to which all the major parties in the House are committed—is by subjecting it to a cash limit. That is something to which the Labour party are as explicitly committed as the Government. If one wishes to fund health care out of tax revenues, it necessarily follows that one must cash-limit the vote, and by cash-limiting it one imposes upon the management the obligation to make disciplined choices about the way in which the resources voted into the health service are used.

That is where I take most vehement exception to the allegation of the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire that the Government's reforms of the national service are "wrecking reforms". They are no such thing. They reflect the Government's commitment to ensuring that there is a management system in place for the service that allows us, in a disciplined and ordered way, to make the choices that are the inevitable result of cash-limiting the vote and resources available to it.

Mrs. Heal: One of the criticisms of successive Conservative Health Ministers has been about the bureaucracy of the health service. How does the Minister answer the charge that I put to him about the increased administration that his so-called "reforms" of the health service are creating?

Mr. Dorrell: I was moving to that matter. Rather than asking the hon. Lady to rely on my analysis or that of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I can answer her best by asking her to rely upon the analysis of Mr. Chris Ham, who I am told is a regular contributor to the columns of *Marxism Today*—not a magazine that I read regularly. I am told that Mr. Ham contributes to the magazine on a rather more regular basis than either of my right hon. Friends to whom the hon. Members for Heywood and Middleton and for Mid-Staffordshire referred.

Mr. Ham said in *The Independent* on 27 June:

"Only those blind to the weaknesses of the NHS deny the need for change."

I would not argue that the hon. Member for Peckham and her party are so blind to the need for change that they do not recognise that something needs to be done to restructure the management of the national health service.

The Opposition made a rather half-hearted stab at describing how they would change the management of the national health service. It has always seemed to me an absurd proposition that an organisation that spends £30,000 million and employs 1 million people will somehow run itself and that there is no need for managers. Of course we need management systems in place which will exploit the new technologies and methods used outside the health service to run large organisations, to ensure that the choices made by the service are made in full possession of the facts, and in a disciplined and ordered way. In my view, that is the only basis upon which the taxpayer can be reassured that the revenues that go into the health service are successfully used to secure high-quality health care.

Health care management is about achieving the double trick of good quality health care for the patient and good value for money for the taxpayer—that is what the investment in management is designed to achieve.

Mr. Callaghan: I am interested in this theme of management efficiency. I asked the Minister earlier about the possible closure of five hospitals in north Manchester and two in the south; he is such a good manager that he could not even tell me whether those hospitals were going to close. Where is the good management there?

Mr. Dorrell: I told the hon. Gentleman that I believed that the only basis on which a large organisation could be managed effectively was the delegation of as much detailed influence as possible to the local manager. I have told the hon. Gentleman that I will write to him and give him the specific details for which he has asked.

If the hon. Gentleman really believes that it is possible to run an organisation the size of the national health service on the basis that every decision of any consequence is made by Ministers, let me remind him of the old saying about Philip II of Spain: it was said that, if people had to wait for the King of Spain's permission to die, everyone would be immortal. He over-centralised. Running a large organisation means appointing good-quality managers, and then authorising them to make decisions on the basis of the local information that is at their disposal.

Ms. Harman: Why, then, has the Secretary of State kept to himself the decision whether local hospitals should opt out? This rhetoric about giving people choice at local level simply is not matched by the system that allows central decisions by the Secretary of State about which hospitals can opt out, and does not allow ballots or a say for local people.

Mr. Dorrell: This is the first time that I have heard the trust initiative presented as a centralisation of management power. The hon. Lady is shifting her ground. She is no longer interested in arguing with us about funding; she now wants to suggest that trusts constitute a centralisation of management power. They are, of course, precisely the opposite. They reflect the Government's commitment to delegated management—to enhancing the power, influence, discretion and flexibility that are available to local management, and returning to a local community the opportunity to run its own hospital. It is hard to argue that 57 individual decisions constitute gross centralisation.

The hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton obliquely mentioned acute bed spaces in his questions about Manchester hospital provision. It is important, in any assessment of the Government's record on the national health service, to look less at the number of people employed in the service and the amount spent on the service, and more at the number of patients treated by the service and the quality of care that they have received.

The hon. Member for Peckham always prefers to avoid discussion of activity levels in the health service. I am not surprised. Since 1979, the number of acute in-patient treatments has risen by 25 per cent. The hon. Lady tried to use the anecdotal evidence that she has been able to secure by ringing around a few health authorities to allege that this year may show a minor downward trend. I do not know the answer to that, because this year is not yet over. As I said during her speech, we shall wait and see what this year's figures show.

[Mr. Dorrell]

What I am absolutely confident about is that this year's figures will still show a substantial increase in health service activities over the 12 years in which the present Government have been in power. So far, the published figures—the accurately audited figures—show a 25 per cent. increase in the acute-patient activity level, and a more than doubling of the day-case activity level. Surely that undermines the hon. Lady's suggestion that our commitment to the future of the service is open to question.

Furthermore, the increase in acute patient treatments —both in-patients and day cases—as I said in the press release from which the hon. Member for Peckham quoted, is not merely a question of increased patient throughput; it is also a question of higher-quality health care. We are able to treat those patients with fewer acute beds; we require them to stay in hospital for shorter periods than was previously necessary.

This is not something that started in 1979. The suggestion that the closure of acute beds was invented by this Government is very wide of the mark. The closure of acute beds occurred before 1979 and has gone on since then, and the major reason for it is that modern medicine is less traumatic, in the technical sense, for the patient: the patient recovers faster from an operation involving minimally invasive surgery than he did from the techniques of 15 or 20 years ago. The purpose of health care is not to require people to withdraw from the community and occupy an actute bed; its purpose is to get patients out of hospital and back into the community as quickly as possible. The modern health service allows us to treat more patients with fewer acute beds.

That is welcome on two counts: first, we are able to meet more demands made upon us by the patients; secondly, we can meet them in a way that is less traumatic to the patient and therefore constitutes higher-quality, better-value health care.

Ms. Harman: Does the Minister not then accept the figure of the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts that over 3,500 beds have been closed for purely financial reasons?

Mr. Dorrell: I certainly do not accept the proposition that one can distinguish between a bed closed for financial reasons and one closed for any other reason. As I said five minutes ago, the Labour party is as deeply committed—and rightly so—as we are to the proposition that the only basis on which the health service can be run is by cash-limiting the vote and then requiring managers to make choices.

Under the previous Government and under this Government, managers have quite rightly decided that, in using resources, it is more important for them to treat more patients than it is to keep open beds. That is a choice that managers make week by week, month by month, and not one in which it is possible to distinguish between a bed closure made for financial reasons and one made for some clinical reason.

If the hon. Lady does not understand that, I do not believe that she understands anything about managing a large organisation. Managers are there to make choices, and the choices they make are about the way in which resources are used.

I should like to move on briefly to waiting lists, another subject which came up during the speeches of both the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire and the hon. Member for Peckham, and which again reflects well on the record of this Government and badly on the record of our Labour predecessors. The fact about waiting lists—this is glossed over by spokesmen for the Labour party—is that the in-patient waiting list is now lower than it was in 1979, despite the fact that 25 per cent. more in-patients are being treated than in 1979.

Furthermore, there are some quite interesting statistics in the history of waiting lists. It is not only during the present period of Conservative government that we have been able to cut waiting lists. During the period of the Labour Government of 1974-79, waiting lists rose by 50 per cent. Since this Government came to power, as I reminded the House, they have been cut, as they were during the period of the previous Tory Government in 1970-74. So, since 1970, under both periods of Conservative rule, waiting lists have been cut; under the period of Labour rule, waiting lists rose by 50 per cent. It is hard for the Labour party to argue against that background that our waiting list record is somehow a measure of weak commitment to the health service.

Let me, however, give the hon. Member for Peckham the defence, lest she should have forgotten it, to the charge that her party's record on waiting lists is not as good as she might wish it to be. Waiting lists are not unimportant, especially when they rise by 50 per cent. in five years, but they are not the principal problem. It does not matter very much how many people are on the waiting list, but rather how quickly a patient gets into hospital. The statistics on that are even more telling. Half of all NHS in-patients are admitted immediately; they are not put on to a waiting list. Half the remaining half go into hospital within six weeks. The problem of long waiting lists undoubtedly exists, but it exists only within a quarter of the number of people requiring in-patient treatment. The waiting list initiative has been directed precisely at that quarter.

The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire referred to the record of John Yates——

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Why did he leave?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman had better ask Mr. Yates that question.

I applaud the fact that, during the period that Mr. Yates had a consultancy contract with the Department, he managed to cut waiting lists, in the worst cases, by 34 per cent. We have now recruited another consultancy to continue precisely the work that Mr. Yates was doing. We continue to be committed to the proposition that the long wait on the tail end of the waiting list is unacceptable.

Unlike the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire, who appeared to think that, when a consultant had accepted a person on his waiting list, it was acceptable for the wait for relatively minor routines to be spun out, we believe that a high priority must attach to reducing the worst of the waiting periods. We must remember, however, that the tail of the NHS waiting list is a relatively small part of the total number of people waiting for treatment.

I do not believe that either the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire or the hon. Member for Peckham made any progress in establishing that the Government are

anything but deeply committed to the success of the NHS, and furthermore have a record that easily stands comparison with that of our predecessors.

Museums and Galleries

1.31 am

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): This debate takes place in what we deem to be today, while the rest of the world considers it to be tomorrow. When we reach what will be accepted by them as being today, I think that our yesterday will have been impossible, even on a 24-hour clock. This is an arts debate, so it might be appropriate to sum up the predicament with our hours by recalling the words of Walter de la Mare's "Peacock Pie" poem, "Poor Jim Jay":

"Do-Diddle-Di-Do Poor Jim Jay
Got stuck fast in yesterday . . .
We pulled, we pulled from 7 til 12
Jim too frightened to help himself
But all in vain the clock struck 1
And there was Jim a little bit gone . . .
At half past 5 you scarce could see
A glimse of his flapping handkerchee . . .
Come tomorrow the neighbours say
He'll be past crying for, Poor Jim Jay."

I sympathise with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and with the staff of the House who have to stay up this night——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): And tomorrow.

Mr. Bowis: Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am also grateful to my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts and to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) for being here. They have at least one thing in common—both have been recent and most welcome visitors to the Battersea arts centre, in which I must declare a non-pecuniary, if not impecunious interest as a director, unpaid. I also declare my past, even somewhat pecuniary, interest in a company which had an interest in the project for a museum of building.

I am sorry that no Liberal Democrat Member is with us tonight—in fact, none has appeared for any of the five debates so far. I had hoped that one might have come to this debate, because when I was looking at the artwork for the natural history museum logo I noticed a symbol that looked remarkably like the symbol of the Liberal Democrats—the phoenix—and I had hoped that the Liberals would explain that.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): In complimenting people in the Chamber, the hon. Gentleman left out the Opposition Whip, who has a particular interest in the arts. Moreover, when the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) has gone to bed, I shall be here all night as the duty Whip. The hon. Gentleman left me out.

Mr. Bowis: I would not dream of ignoring the two artistic usual channels. I should not omit my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden): Dulwich is synonymous with the arts because of its collections and the eloquence of its hon. Member on their behalf.

Our view of museums is conditioned from childhood. From our early days of sticking our pictures up on walls, we come to appreciate that, if something is good, it is hung up for people to go and see. We gradually learn about the past, and our curiosity causes us to want to discover what the past is all about. We therefore begin to visit museums. However, when I was a child, my local museums were predominantly dull and the national museums were overwhelming, if not forbiding.

[Mr. Bowis]

I have seen a dramatic change in the outlook, presentation and interest in museums. If we visit what the former Minister for the Arts, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Sir R. Luce) described as the mosaic of museums, it is clear how museums have improved, how much more welcoming they are, how much more there is to do in them and how much more understandable are the exhibits. The museums and galleries industry must take great credit for that.

Museums date back many centuries. The first museum opened to the public was the Royal Armouries in the time of Charles II. The British and Scottish museums were opened in the 18th century and there was a great expansion in the number of museums in the last 20 years of the 19th century. There were about 200 local museums by the 1890s. There was a great post-war expansion through the 1970s, totalling 950 museums, and there are more than 2,500 museums today.

There has been a dramatic increase recently in the number of museums. In particular, many independent museums have started up and there has been much innovative work. For example, there is an exhibition of trainers at the science museum sponsored by a well-known sportswear company. It is clear that museum curators and administrators have altered their approach, and that is welcome. It enlivens museums.

When we consider museums, we are not simply considering the most obvious establishments. Galleries and museums in many other areas are connected with the arts. I pay great credit to the south bank, the national theatre and the Barbican for the way in which they and others have contributed gallery space in London.

The Museums Association was 100 years old in 1989; it celebrated with Museums Year, which brought a new awareness to the public of what is available in our museums. There are many types of museum. Some house personal collections such as the Burrell collection and the Greenwich fan museum. Many museums record local history and artistic achievement. Others, like the theatre museum and the museum of the moving image, reflect the performing arts. There are also the national collections, which I would describe as Stanley Gibbons collections, in which the aim is to have one of everything.

The aim of our museums should be to bring together the facts, and often the artefacts, of the past so that we can educate and stimulate the current generation and provide a heritage for future generations. The Government have a good story to tell, and it is because I am confident in the quality of their achievement to date that in this debate I shall press them to go yet further. We have nothing to be ashamed of in our record on funding of the arts. On funding of our national museums and galleries, we have a superb record.

In 1985, we were funding museums to the tune of £81 million. By 1990, that was up to £165 million, with a further £10 million going to the Museums and Galleries Commission. I mention that because when, I served on the Standing Committee on the Education Reform Bill, I and other colleagues spent some time ensuring that the Horniman and Geffrye museums became national museums independent of local authorities. Some of the increase from £3 million to £10 million and to £12 million in a couple of years is to ensure that those museums can flourish. It was a great joy to see them launched with independent status. We wish them well. By 1993, the figure will be up to £193 million, including the £12 million to which I referred.

Our record on funding is good on buildings and pretty adequate on the running costs. I shall come back to the purchase grants, which have been more frozen than progressive. Some 80 per cent. of the running costs of our national museums and galleries are staff-related. Staff are tied to the civil service. The commission has recommended in the past that that should be looked at. I hope that my right hon. Friend is considering whether the automatic tie to civil service grades is in the best interests of the museums, particularly at a time when the staff seem to question that link.

We should seek ways of increasing purchase grants. We have almost said that because purchasing costs have risen so much and so quickly, it is impossible to keep up. We must ensure that we can continue adding to our collections. Of course, there are many ways of doing that. But central Government funding, as well as sponsorship, donations and so on, has a part to play.

I commend the work of our national museums in expanding outside their home cities. Often, the home city is London. There are 45 branches of the national bodies in other locations, 11 of which have been formed in the past 10 years. I cite the two satellites—if that is the right word—of the science museum at York and Bradford. I welcome the improvement fund for exhibition spaces, which has enabled much good work to be done. We have seen the first chunk of that. I hope that we shall hear soon that more money is to come from that fund in the next round of contributions.

Of course, there has also been a great increase in sponsorship. It has been a success story. One could list the Clore and Sainsbury galleries, as well as the Tsui gallery—if that is how it is pronounced—the Chinese gallery at the Victoria and Albert museum. I bow to any experts on Chinese pronunciation. There are other sponsorships of buildings and galleries which are less well known by name. Exhibitions are also sponsored. When I was on my Parliament and Industry Trust with Esso, it was sponsoring some exhibitions of how paintings came to be made—both Italian paintings and Impressionist paintings. Both exhibitions were held at the national gallery. It is great news that such companies contribute to our arts heritage in that way.

We must always remind ourselves of the role of Government in funding and of the need for it. We do not have our resident anti-funder in this debate. However, this is a moment to remind ourselves of one or two areas in which funding is right and should be adhered to. I think especially of the role of funding in enabling our racial minorities to see their ethnic background, history and culture described and laid out in exhibition form. It is good for them to be able to see and understand their culture, and it is good for the nation as a whole to understand the cultures of people living in our midst. We are a multi-ethnic society, so it is helpful for the cohesion of our society if we see and understand the backgrounds of our component parts.

Another reason for the Government role in funding is the need to understand the aesthetics of our environment. If we can educate our young people in the aesthetics of the environment, we shall have a society that begins to put the right pressures on our architects and planners. We might

then be able to move away from the too frequent power of the believers in utilitarianism and social collectivism, and return to the priority of a more aesthetic environment. That requires education and the ability to have aesthetic matters set out in visible form in our galleries and museums. We should keep referring to the fact that the arts need the involvement of the Government as nurturer, encourager and promoter of high standards and popular involvement, but not as the piper-payer who calls the tune, and not in such a way that the arts become a wholly owned subsidiary of Government.

We should encourage the arts to lobby. That may seem an odd thing to say, but I believe that this place is woefully lacking in understanding of the arts, which is partly the fault of the arts. The more that we can persuade people involved in the arts to ensure that they keep close to Members of Parliament, the more Members of Parliament will understand the needs of the arts and place them appropriately in their list of priorities for public funding.

This week, of all weeks, we can remind the Treasury of the income that comes from the arts, from overseas earnings and from areas that the Treasury does not recall as being part of the benefits from the arts. Tax comes from the taxi fares and from the restaurants that cater for people who come to this country and attend arts events. They spend not only in the theatre, the gallery or the museum, but outside. Much consequential revenue comes into the Inland Revenue, which is part of the benefit of the arts to the Exchequer. The Chancellor recognises arts as an ally and a friend. If he wants to repay that confidence, he should examine the subject of taxes on the arts. If taxes were removed from the arts, there might be slightly less need to go to the Treasury for yet more funding. One can fund the arts by removing burdens as well as by positive funding.

One of the many controversies is the question of admission charges to our national galleries and museums. I do not take a strong line either way on that. The Government are right to say that there is and will be no compulsion. There are dangers in charges if they risk deterring people, especially young people, from going regularly to galleries and museums.

On the other hand, the Louvre, the Hermitage and the Brado all benefit from charges. Statistics for the museum of the moving image show that charges do not deter, whereas at the natural history museum they may. Where there has been an impact, it is often a short-term dip from which the museum recovers, as happened at the national maritime museum. The figures are inconclusive. All I say is that we should consider the matter carefully. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister will confirm that, where charges are made, they should not be taken into account in the Government's allocation of funding. That can be shown if one continues with three-year funding, because that is a sufficient period for it to be obvious if there is a change as a result of particularly successful fund raising.

Having said that, I hope that we will persuade our museums and galleries to look for ways of making people open their purses once they are in, whether or not they have been charged an entrance fee. I also hope that we can persuade our museums and galleries to open when the public wish to visit them, particularly families with children, which is on bank holidays and at weekends, just when the museum may be under pressure from unions not to open. They must be told that they have to open, because that is part of their duty to the public.

I hope that we can go on pressing our museums and galleries to make themselves available to people with disabilities. There have already been great achievements in that area, but we still need to ensure that doors are wide enough and that there are ramps and lifts and so on. Then we need to make sure that wherever possible exhibits are made available to people such as the partially sighted by allowing them to touch them and by providing Braille notices. People with disabilities should have exactly the same opportunities as the rest of us within their own personal limits to benefit from our great collections.

I hope that we can persuade our galleries and museums to look into their cellars and to bring out items which do not often see the light of a display case and, where appropriate and possible, to send exhibits on tour and out on loan. In that context, I welcome the national indemnity scheme. It now covers some 15,000 items a year, saving museums some £5 million a year in insurance premiums. That is good, and I hope that it can be extended, because part of their duty should be to take their treasures, the lesser-known ones as well, out and about. I hope that we will encourage shops and other commercial possibilities inside museums. Trading income has quadrupled in the past four years or so.

The Royal Air Force museum at Hendon is a national museum, which, as my right hon. Friend will know, the Ministry of Defence controls. I hope that he will ask the Ministry of Defence to bring that museum into line with the rest of the museum world in three ways. First, the museum should have the right to spend its earned income. Secondly, it should have a purchase grant rather than having—as it does at the moment unlike almost every other museum—to put forward items that it wants to purchase before it gets a grant. Thirdly, it is high time the Ministry of Defence handed over the museum and vested it in trustees. All those recommendations have been made by the Museums and Galleries Commission, but nothing seems to have happened yet. It is not my right hon. Friend's responsibility, but I hope that he will put pressure on the Ministry of Defence to bring that about.

Earlier tonight, we debated lotteries. I shall not repeat what has already been said. I simply ask my right hon. Friend to join my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) in supporting a lottery and take the case, no doubt privately, to the Treasury and suggest that that would be a good way of attracting additional voluntary contributions for the arts from the members of the public in lieu of taxation. That would be a signal benefit.

The vision of Derbyshire county council comes to mind when I think of disposal. I hope that it is ashamed of its appalling policy of selling its assets and collections purely to make a political point. I do not believe that the hon. Members for Stoke-on-Trent, Central or for Ashfield will support that. No sane person who believes in the worth of our great collections would support what that council is doing, and I suggest that the law needs tightening. Our fairly tight laws on selling national collections should surely apply locally.

I hope that we shall encourage our museums to get together, where appropriate, to prevent duplication. The science museum, the imperial war museum and the Royal Air Force museum all collect aircraft, whereas sensible arrangements are made between the Victoria and Albert

[Mr. Bowis]

museum and the Tate gallery: the V and A limits its sculpture collection to pre-1920 and the Tate covers the period thereafter. That is a sensible way of ensuring that collections do not compete unnecessarily.

One of the targets of my right hon. Friend the Minister is to get buildings in good order for the millenium. Ove Arup is conducting a survey into the fabric of our national museum buildings. I do not know whether my right hon. Friend can say when we might expect some results from that.

If we can get buildings in good order, I hope we shall consider endowment funding so that we can give a generous capital sum, equivalent and more to the present rate of annual funding, to some of our institutions, which would allow them to plan ahead. It would give them the Wandsworth factor—a spending assessment allocated for a period of years to come on which it, with good management, could make efficiency savings and spend the extra money on other things.

The Museum Training Institute of the Museums Association operates an excellent training scheme, and I hope that it will report on its achievements. I also hope that it will consider increasing training for regional museum staff from national museum resources.

I have urged my right hon. Friend for more and have given him much credit for what he has done, but I make three final pleas. The first is that we consider specific grant funding for the arts, down to local government. I know that that is not a matter for my right hon. Friend, but it is a message for him to pass on. Secondly, the BBC, ITV and the satellite companies—one thinks of the Sunday arts programmes on the old BSB Marcopolo channel—are good at portraying the arts, but they have not done museums and galleries proud, and they could do more to popularise those splendid national institutions.

Architecture does not yet have a national museum. The Royal Institute of British Architects has a gallery, but there is no national museum of architecture. I must declare an interest, in that my daughter is a student of architecture. Perhaps her work will one day qualify for inclusion in such a museum. Battersea power station in my constituency might be an appropriate building to house that museum. I hope that my right hon. Friend will pursue with vigour the idea of a museum of architecture.

The Museums and Galleries Commission said in its report:

> "The national museums are a magnificent inheritance, held in trust for the future; they are a national and international asset of unrivalled quality and also a significant economic asset."

That is right. It is also right that Members of Parliament are the trustees of those assets on behalf of our children and our children's children. We have a duty to ensure that they flourish. We also have a duty to ensure that our national museums fulfil their duty, set down by the Museums and Galleries Commission, to promote public understanding and enjoyment. If we combine those two purposes, the galleries and museums will be doing their job, and we shall be doing ours.

2.1 am

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): I congratulate the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on his good fortune in securing this debate and on his good sense in selecting this subject for debate. Once again, he showed that he has a real knowledge and understanding of and an enthusiasm for the arts. I agree and sympathise with much that he said. I was particularly glad that he mentioned the needs of architecture, a subject to which I shall return. I suspect that the Minister is also grateful for this excellent opportunity to present to the House his policy on museums, something that until now he has been unable to do.

The Minister's inheritance is very interesting. It is a mixed inheritance, but much of it is extremely good. We have a superb range of museums that rightly enjoy an enormous international reputation, due to the quality of their curators. They are a match for anyone in the world, and they are admired and respected throughout the world for the scholarship, range and quality of the collections. Our reputation in international circles is growing, due to the quality of our exhibitions.

During the last few years, some of our national museums have been restored to their former greatness. Alfred Waterhouse's natural history museum has been restored to its original form and colour. When I was a child, I regarded it as a black, frightening and rather depressing building. It is now a joy to see the original pastel colours of the brick, which enable us to appreciate a great piece of 19th-century architecture.

Compared with 10 years ago, the number of people visiting our national museums has increased. The Tate in the North and the national museum of photography, film and television in Bradford are most welcome developments.

Given that the Minister has inherited a collection of national museums of such range and quality, that should offer him the basis for exciting expansion. Unfortunately, over the past few years the Government have tended to see it as an excuse for neglect. Our national museums are in an appalling state of repair. I differed from the hon. Member for Battersea when he seemed to say that the Government's record on buidlings was good. It is a disgrace.

The hon. Gentleman should know from talking to any of the directors of the national museums—the Tate, the Victoria and Albert and others—that the money needed runs into millions of pounds. The Tate identifies its need as £27 million or more. The V and A estimates that it needs £100 million just to put the building right. The Government have been in office now for 12 years, and the fact that thay have allowed this state of affairs to develop is not to their credit.

The hon. Member for Battersea recognised the Government's poor record on acquisition funds, many of which have been frozen for seven years. It is self-destructive to deny museums the ability to keep their collections up to date and to turn them into living organisms rather than just historic collections.

The hon. Gentleman seemed to misunderstand the problem of staffing and core funding of museums. He said that 80 per cent. of costs were staff-related. Because of the squeeze on museums' funding, museums such as the Victoria and Albert are finding that almost 100 per cent. of their grant in aid from the Office of Arts and Libraries goes on staffing costs. That is why staff numbers have been cut. There are unfilled vacancies in the British museum and the natural history museum. Posts in the museum of London have been terminated——

Mr. Bowis: I was thinking of the £189 million that has been allocated for buildings for the next three years. As for staffing, I echoed the recommendation of the Museums and Galleries Commission to the effect that staff pay was unfairly tied to civil service pay rates. The commission made a plea that the system should be loosened up, although it understood the difficulties that that might cause. I accept, however, that a high proportion of running costs are staff-related.

Mr. Fisher: The fabric of museums, acquisition funds and staff costs all present the Government and the country with a problem. Unfilled posts affect the services that museums can provide—in scholarship, in skills and in the management of their collections. It is because these elements of our great museums are under such pressure due to inadequate core funding that morale in many of them—I instance the natural history museum—is at such a low ebb.

The Minister's challenge is to put all this right. He will not have many weeks or months in which to do so, but he can at least make a start by putting right the financial neglect that is the legacy of his predecessors in office. The real problem has been—I hope that the Minister will discuss this—the fact that the Government have not had a museums policy. Rather, they have a hands-off financial policy that restricts public expenditure wherever possible, and passes on responsibility to others.

The Government claim that it is up to the trustees whether they charge for admission. The hon. Member for Battersea fell into that trap, when he said that there was no compulsion to charge, as though museums were looking for opportunities to charge. I challenge him to find a single director of a national museum who says that charging improves the quality of his museums, and that, no matter how well the Government fund it, he wants to charge for admission because it enriches its cultural, educational and scholastic skills. Both the hon. Gentleman and the Minister know that that is not so. Trustees of museums such as the science museum and the natural history museum have had to charge because they have had no other option. Inadequate Government funding is an implicit compulsion, and it is disingenuous to suggest anything else.

It is not good enough for the Government to pass on responsibility to the trustees and say that they have nothing to do with what goes on. They should accept responsibility for the core funding of our national museums, and not leave it all to sponsors. There are some good sponsors. For example, British Petroleum has done magnificent work in helping with the re-hang of the Tate. Nor is it good enough to leave it to earning income through shops. That does not address the scale of the capital and revenue needs of the national museums.

The Government's problem is that they have not formed a coherent view, because they do not appear to have a cultural view and valuation of museums or an educational view and valuation of museums. If they do have one, it is at odds with that of the Department of Education and Science. The hon. Member for Battersea will remember, because he served on the Committee that examined the Bill, that the Education Reform Act 1988 put a squeeze on school visits, and that has damaged museums.

The science museum does excellent work. Its education department has a superb and imaginative programme and 7,000 schools visit every year, but organised museum visits by schools are in decline because of the Government's education policies. I fear that the local management of schools will make that more rather than less acute. If the Government do not understand how crucial are museums for the educational future of our children and our country, they are misunderstanding the role of museums.

It is curious that the Government—who, to their credit, are saying through the GCSE syllabus and the national curriculum that children should have hands-on experience in science, history and the social sciences and go to prime resources to see the objects about which they are learning—are also perversely initiating policies that reduce the number of school visits and are so reducing the finances of national museums that they cannot expand their education departments to take the opportunities that those education policies are opening up.

What is most perverse is not that the Government do not have a cultural or educational perspective of museums but that they do not have an economic policy for them. One would have thought that this Government—the great proponents of the free market—would at least understand the economic impact of museums. The Policy Studies Institute and others have done plenty of work in this sector. Cities such as Bradford demonstrated in a condensed and clear form what an enormous contribution—not just through tourism but generally—the museums of this country make to economic life and employment.

One would have thought that that would commend itself to the Government and the Minister, and allow him to make a positive case for expansion in investment in museums, but that does not seem to be the case. The Government do not understand their own free market economic case. That may not be anything like as important as the cultural case, but it is still a potent argument, and one that the Minister's predecessors have not deployed sufficiently or effectively, because investment in museums has not increased as it should.

I ask the Minister to examine the opportunities that have opened up for the Government and for whomever is in government in the 1990s. He could make a start. I am sure that he has visited Glasgow, a city which has invested substantially in museums, including the Burrell, Kelvingrove and the People's Palace. The city has a coherent cultural, educational and economic view. It has deemed it worth while to put a large proportion of ratepayers' money into its museums and has changed the image and reputation of the city as a result, or substantially so. If the Government had had the same positive and imaginative approach towards the national museums that Glasgow has had to its city museums, the cultural reputation of the United Kingdom would be very different, and much higher.

Perhaps the Minister should travel a little, and not only to Glasgow. He should visit Paris, for example. I am sure that he would enjoy the visit enormously. The French Government have grasped the opportunities that were available in the 1980s for national museums. They have opened up the old Gare d'Orsay into the Musée d'Orsay. They have opened a huge new science museum at La Villette, which involved vast investment. They have created the Pompidou centre, which is visited by 7·5 million a year. To take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Battersea about architecture, they have opened in the Asenal a huge centre that is effectively a forum and museum for study and for focusing debate on architecture.

[Mr. Fisher]

They have contributed considerably to greater interest and enthusiasm in public architecture, and in its quality too. The private sector is included, as well as the public sector.

The Minister would enjoy visiting the museums and centres to which I have referred. I believe that he would return inspired. If he takes a trip to Paris, he should extend his journey by travelling to Frankfurt. There he would see the most spectacular example of a city where the commitment to expanding its cultural sector and its museums is reflected in almost every street. Frankfurt has an extremely good architectural museum. It has commissioned new architects such as Richard Meier to create new museums such as the kunstandwerk museum and the museum of ethnology, which will open in 1992. There is Hans Hollem's museum of modern art and Unger's ikonmuseum. The Rothschild mansion has been converted into the Judisches museum. There is the museum of antique sculpture and Josef Kleihner's museum of pre and early history. If the Minister visited Frankfurt, he would see a city that has a pride in its past and a confidence in its future. It has invested in museums and is reaping the benefit in the number of visitors that it is attracting. The museum sector is making an important contribution to the identity and cohesion of the city.

We have a much stronger starting base in our national museums. If only we had a Government with the confidence to invest, we could grasp the opportunities that are available to us. When we compare what has happened in Paris over the past 10 years and what is happening in Frankfurt with the national museums in London, we see that our record is a bleak one. The only two substantial museums that have opened in the past few years in London have been the design museum and the museum of the moving image. Neither has received a penny from public funding.

The design museum is preparing plans and an argument —this is, if it is to develop and fulfil its enormously exciting potential—for public investment. I hope that the Minister will be sympathetic. Sir Terence Conlan and the other trustees who have set up the museum have created something in which we as a society should invest. They have given us the opportunity, and we should grasp it. Similarly, if we are ever to revive our film industry, the museum of the moving image must be recognised as worthy of public support.

There is something for the Minister to go at as well. He has a superb base to start with, but he also has a great deal of work to do to recover the lost ground which has been allowed to slide away in the last 12 years in buildings, in the frozen nature of acquisitions and in the crisis in staffing.

The Minister has probably only a few weeks left in office. Perhaps he could start on that agenda now and enjoy himself by going to Paris and Frankfurt. He could come back inspired to make a better stab at it in future.

2.19 am

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Tim Renton): We have had a short, entertaining and useful debate. I am flattered that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) wishes me to spend, as he put it, my last few weeks as Arts Minister touring Frankfurt and Paris. Perhaps there is malign intent. Perhaps he feels that if I did that he would have a greater chance of taking my job than would otherwise be likely.

I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) for arranging for us to have the debate, even at this unfriendly hour, and I thank him for his elegant and well-informed words on museums and galleries. He quoted Walter de la Mare in regard to the sense almost of timelessness that one has when debating at 2 o'clock in the morning. That sense of timelessness is perhaps appropriate to the subject of museums. As he was quoting Walter de la Mare, I was thinking of the lines of Andrew Marvell in introduction to his short poem, "To His Coy Mistress":

> "Had we but world enough, and time,
> This coyness, Lady, were no crime.
> We would sit down, and think which way
> To walk, and pass our long love's day.

That is a good way to consider how to fill a debate at 2 o'clock in the morning. At that moment we were disturbed by the arrival of the hon. Member for Asfield (Mr. Haynes)—I am sorry that he has left the Chamber, but in no sense could the word "coy" ever be applied to the hon. Gentlemen, so my thoughts of Andrew Marvell disappeared quickly.

Mr. Fisher: The Minister should reconsider his incitement to the House to go along the lines of Andrew Marvell. He will know that the rest of the poem is about fornication, or seduction leading to fornication. I am not sure that the House should indulge in that poem, if that is what he meant.

Mr. Renton: On the other hand, in his closing words, the hon. Gentleman, was trying to remind me of the refrain in that poem:

> "But at my back I always hear
> Time's winged chariot hurrying near."

That is precisely why he was telling me to go off to Frankfurt rather quickly.

In the course of yesterday, which already seems a long time ago, I had the opportunity to visit two museums. During both visits I was reminded of some of the points that my hon. Friend the Minister for Battersea has made, but also of our efficacy in dealing with some of the problems about which he spoke. Between my visits to the two museums, I had a short time at the Dulwich art gallery which is well known to my hon. Friend the Minister for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), who was kind enough to be with us during this debate.

The first museum which I visited yesterday was the Horniman. I was there for the opening of the exhibition devoted to Yoruba, a celebration of African art. That exhibition is a remarkable departure for the Horniman. It is unlike the museum's normal ethnographic exhibitions and its well-known exhibition of musical instruments. It shows great enterprise. It will appeal to many people, and especially to the Afro-Caribbeans who live in the area; they will have the opportunity to see an important display of past and contemporary African, and particularly Nigerian, art.

More specifically, I was shown by the director of the museum the lift that is being installed for the disabled so that it will be easier for them to visit the aquarium when it re-opens later this year. The museum has spent quite a lot of money on renovating it. Some of the money was from an improvement grant, jointly funded by ourselves and the Wolfson charities.

The other museum that I visited in the course of the last 24 hours was the Soane museum in Lincoln's Inn, which is receiving substantial repairs to its roof, funded by the MEPC property company and my office—each contributing £1 million over five years. That work will, among other things, enable the antiquities collected by Sir John Soane to be restored to his study, and for part of the museum's huge collection of architectural prints by Soane and Adam to be viewed by tourists and other visitors in a manner not previously possible.

At both those small but important museums, we are undertaking—with the help of sponsorship, private patrons, or charities such as the Wolfson foundation—the kind of improvements mentioned by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central, enabling collections to be better displayed, and allowing the disabled an opportunity to enjoy them more easily.

I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces in his place, and I am sure that the Whip on the bench will convey to him the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea about the RAF museum at Hendon.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central, not surprisingly, made a certain amount of play about lack of museum funding, to which I shall refer shortly. More importantly, he accused the Government of a lack of policy and having no sense of vision. My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea referred to a recent change of outlook. There might have been some measure of truth four or five years ago in the observation of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central. In the mid-1980s, the museum world suffered a crisis of confidence, which coincided with lengthy consideration by my distinguished predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr Luce), of whether to introduce museum admission charges.

My right hon. Friend reached the conclusion that the decision should be left to the museums' individual management, trustees, or boards of director. It is official Labour party policy not to continue with charging. Setting aside the question of undermining the philosophy behind that policy, what does the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central suggest should be done, for example, in the case of the museum of the moving image, which was specifically introduced as a museum that charged admission, and which intends to meet its expenses as a result? Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that its costs should be met entirely from public funds? If so, that would be a foolish reversal of the policy adopted by that extremely successful museum. The hon. Gentleman seems anxious to get to his feet to tell the House that Labour intends to place yet another burden on the taxpayer, so I will allow him time to do so.

Mr. Fisher: The Minister has not been long in post, but he ought to have read his background briefing. Our criticism of charging for admission relates to public museums, for which the state has a responsibility. No one disputes the right of independent museums throughout the country, such as the museum of the moving image, which are not part of that network, to make admission charges. We argue only against charging at nationally funded museums for which the public have a responsibility, and in respect of which the Government have a duty to widen access, not diminish it. It is the decline in access that is the consequence of the imposition of admission charges that we so deplore.

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman is playing with words. The museum of the moving image is part of the south bank centre.

Mr. Fisher: It is independently funded and does not receive public money.

Mr. Renton: The south bank centre is not totally privately funded. It gets a large part of its funds from the Government, from the Office of Arts and Libraries, from my Department, and there is that important space available which, if it were not used for a charging museum, could be used for something else.

However, I do not think that that is a proper line for us to pursue at the moment. As with so many issues, I do not think that the Labour party has worked out its policy clearly on this.

The directors of both the science museum and the natural history museum—the two most evident museums which decided, with their trustees, to introduce charges—pointed out to me, in discussions that I have had with them since becoming Minister for the Arts, the improvements in service and display that have derived from charging in their establishments. They do not think that charging is a backward step. They reckon that, for example, it has prompted them to provide much better services within the museum for their customers.

I do not think that the directors of those two museums would wish to recoil and depart from the charging principle. Charging gives them financial flexibilities, which derive from self-engendered funding because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea asked, the moneys that they bring in from charging are not deducted from their three-year funding but are in addition and they have flexibility as to how they are used.

As regards the broader point, the decisions that flowed from charging brought about the new atmosphere—the change in outlook to which my hon. Friend referred. Now, we have a far greater sense of confidence in many of our national museums—a sense of direction, or knowledge in where they are trying to go to—than was the case five years ago. We see that in the exhibitions and the displays that those museums are putting on.

Much publicity has been given to the new ecology gallery at the natural history museum. It has been described in exciting terms:

> "One end of this 50 yard long chasm is a life-size replica of a patch of rain forest, made of plastic. At the other, mirrors and a square-shaped wall of 20 video screens are combined to give the illusion of a huge animated hemisphere. The on-screen images trace the hydrological cycle of rainfall, evaporation and cloud formation."

What is the purpose of that? It is to show off in the natural history museum the basic history of ecology in a manner that is exciting and scientifically correct, but will stimulate interest among families and children.

It is that evolution towards exciting, often "hands-on", displays at the natural history museum, the science museum, the imperial war museum—with their recently opened "experiences" which go by the names of Blitz and Trench—and increasingly at the national maritime museum, and the determination to show off their collections in a manner that the public will find attractive

[Mr. Renton]

and interesting, but that will not detract from experts' interest, that is giving a new sense of confidence and determination to so many of our national museums.

They are not all there yet. Here I agree with the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central. Some of our major museums are still in some doubts as to the direction in which they should go, and have difficulty in making the decisions as to how they can both win over the family with interesting exhibitions, yet keep the interest of the experts who have used access to their museums for so long.

By and large, however, the pattern is clear now and there is a far greater sense of determination in our national museums—a sense of where they want to go—which is reflected in the attendance figures. Last year, the estimate for attendance at national museums and galleries—for which I am responsible—was more than 20 million, 5·7 per cent. up on the year before. I believe that that trend will continue, and that more and more people will visit the museums and galleries as they solve the problems with which they were faced in the 1980s.

An important trend, referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea, is represented by the decision of my predecessor—my right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham—to improve training, through the Museums Training Institute, for all who work in museums. In January 1989, my right hon. Friend announced the establishment of the institute, which would be responsible for the strategic development of training by establishing standards, validating courses, and providing training in selected areas. I consider that an important priority, which is emphasised by our commitment to provide significant support for the institute's activities—£400,000 in the current financial year.

Although the institute has not been going for long, it has already made significant achievements. It has been accorded official status as the lead body for the museums and heritage industry; it has established a steering committee that will develop a standards framework; and it is establishing 12 functional groups that will deal with the provision of training in a number of important areas such as collections and management, exhibition design, fund-raising and sponsorship, technical work, research, conservation, education and retail sales.

The aim is to ensure that anyone who enters the museum service—whether at the young age of 16, or later in life—not only has the opportunity to be trained upwards, so that he can progress from being, say, an attendant to becoming a museum director or curator, but has a certificate to give him the chance of a professional qualification that will give him better job security, or make it easier for him to transfer from one museum to another. That aspect has been neglected in the past, but I think that our aim is important and that even Opposition Members will wish it success.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea said some kind words about the increase in our funding of museums and galleries, which—inevitably—were contradicted immediately by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central. I should not have expected anything else, but I remind hon. Members that, in the financial year that we are entering, our grant in aid for the national museums and galleries will increase by 8·5 per cent., from £99 million to £107 million.

Building and maintenance are a problem. That stems from the fact that so many of our great museums and galleries were built at the end of the Victorian age. The Victoria and Albert museum, for instance, was not very well built. Its construction involved experimentation with new materials. Because it was regarded as a museum for manufactures, it was considered appropriate to try out, for example, new types of concrete which were not always successful. Now, however, we are well aware of the problems of building and maintenance, which is why we are allocating £59 million for that purpose in the year ahead. That represents an increase of 115 per cent., after inflation, since 1979-80, when we came into office. Over the next three years, the allocation will be more than £189 million.

It was to review and assess the total building and renovation needs of our museums and galleries that, soon after taking up my post, I appointed Arup Research and Development. It is a problem because of the age of the buildings involved, and it is for that reason that the advice to be given to me Arup, who will report by the end of the summer, will be very useful indeed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) also asked me whether I proposed to continue to tie the wages and salary conditions of museum staff to civil service grades. This is an area in which I keep an open mind; I have not yet reached final decisions on the future pay regime for national museums and galleries staff. I have no immediate intention of making changes. There is now a wide range of pay and personnel flexibilities, as my hon. Friend will know, available within the civil service arrangements. It is nevertheless an area where it is worth keeping an open mind, always remembering the possibility that there should be changes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea also asked me about disposals from collections. He will know, because he is very much an expert in this area, that disposal of items from national museum and gallery collections is a matter for the trustees of the institutions concerned; they must always consider whether it is within the constraints of their governing legislation. We would all feel that benefactors of museums and galleries should be confident that their wishes will be treated with respect by the institution concerned. If there is any increasing threat that gifts and collections are likely to be disposed of, I can imagine nothing that would make it more certain that a particular museum did not receive further gifts; donations to it would totally dry up.

It is against that background that I, like my hon. Friend, am very worried to note that Derbyshire county council has recently sent 17 works from its museum service to be auctioned. This will cause a great deal of distress to many people in Derbyshire. I have no statutory power to prevent that, but it would be wholly contradictory to the Museums Association code of practice if the proceeds from the disposal of those items were used for any purpose other than the purchase of additional items.

I would add for the future that, if this were to continue to happen, and if the Derbyshire museums were registered—as my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea will know, we are proceeding with registering all museums through the Museums and Galleries Commission—but then disposed of items in this manner, they would be de-registered and thus not be eligible for any of the moneys or grants available through the Museums and Galleries

Commission, either from my office or from the Wolfson charities. That would be a considerable penalty and inhibition for them.

Mr. Bowis: I wonder, in that case, whether that should be made clear to all such institutions which may wish to benefit from registration in the future?

Mr. Renton: That is an interesting point. If it is not already clear to them as they apply for registration with the Museums and Galleries Commission, I will make certain that it does become plain to them.

I very much agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea when he quoted the words of the Museums and Galleries Commission on our duty to ensure that the museums flourished. I note that, in the recent booklet put out by the Area Museums Council, the Museums and Galleries Commission is quoted as saying:

"In the present boom in museum popularity"—

I remind the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central of those words—

"two things are vital, the setting of standards and achieving the most with the least."

I do not know that I would have used the words "the most with the least", but I think that museums are now very much more aware of giving the public enjoyment combined with value for money, and that both are perfectly correct aims for them to try to achieve.

In my view, three particular duties fall on the museums —to maintain the standards of education, to show off their collections to the best possible advantage, and to provide opportunities for new enjoyment for family and recreational interest. While I am Minister for the Arts, I shall certainly seek to ensure that the museums for which I am responsible pursue these policies.

Black Soldiers

2.44 am

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): For many months, the nation's imagination has been focused on its armed services. Ever since the outbreak of hostilities in the Gulf, on every news bulletin there has been news film of our troops. As those troops return home from the Gulf, it seems an appropriate time to examine the position of black people in the armed services.

If it is indeed sweet and fitting to die for one's country, there can be no doubt that it is fitting for all our soldiers to be treated equally, both in recruitment and in their career prospects once they are in the armed services. I question whether that is actually the case. The history of black people serving in Britain's armed services goes back a long time. We do not hear much about it in the official history of world war two, but as many as 8,000 West Indians served in the Royal Air Force. Each year, I attend the West Indian ex-service men's Remembrance day service, where we remember the West Indians who died in the service of this country. Of course, the Indian army also played an important role in defeating the Germans and the Japanese.

The current evidence suggests that, far from being treated equally, black people in the armed services are under-represented. There are recurrent and tragic cases of brutal racial assault on black soldiers, which with monotonous regularity force them to leave the armed services. There is also evidence that black people have been kept out of certain regiments.

On the point about under-representation, although black involvement in the armed services has a long history —black air crew, black soldiers, black munitions workers and black forestry workers, who served in this country during the war—sadly, it has always been one of colour bar and segregation. When the war broke out in 1939, black students from Oxford, Cambridge and Newcastle who went to join the officer training corps found themselves banned. In the end, despite much agitation and pressure from the Colonial Office, only a handful of black men gained admission.

As late as 1943, the Royal Navy recruiting regulations stated:

"Black and coloured boys and any person in whom there is evidence of such parentage are absolutely ineligible for entry unless with special sanction of the Admiralty."

That theme ran through the recruitment attitude, both official and unofficial, of the armed services throughout the war.

For years during the 1960s there was a very strict quota limiting the number of black recruits. At the beginning of the 1960s it was 2 per cent., and towards the end it was 4 per cent. Throughout the 1960s, there were some regiments that would not accept any black recruits. That was revealed in a War Office memorandum that was published in newspapers during that decade. The regiments that would officially accept no black recruits include the Household Cavalry, the foot guards, the Highland regiments, the Lowland regiments, the Royal Military police, the intelligence corps and the physical training corps. There was an official quota, and black people were officially excluded from certain regiments.

[Ms. Diane Abbott]

All that was legally swept away by the Race Relations Act 1968, but I suggest that that history of official segregation and exclusion still casts its shadow over the policies and practices of the armed services today.

When applicants were monitored in 1987, MOD figures showed that black people comprised only 1·6 per cent. of the applicants when black people of the particular age range applying to join the armed services constituted 5·7 per cent. of the population. There is a much lower application rate among young black men and women. Worse, there is a much lower success rate.

There is a perception, which no one has been able to prove one way or the other, that once black people get into the armed services, their chances of promotion are not good. In that regard, I want to quote Scotty Muir, an ex-bugler. He left the armed services because he was disillusioned. He said:

"I feel strongly about people not getting promoted because of their colour. You can go to Northern Ireland and get killed. You can do just about everything else, but you can't get promoted."

Recent research that the MOD commissioned from Peat, Marwick, McLintock revealed that young black people are unwilling to apply to join the armed services because they believe that they would encounter racism. That leads me to my other point, about the recurrent incidents of brutal racist violence meted out to young black people who join the armed services.

The case of Stephen Anderson was in the courts last year. He joined the Devon and Dorset Regiment in 1983, and he was the only black soldier in his platoon. For that he suffered continued abuse. One night he was pulled from his bed at 1.30 am, beaten up and called a nigger. The beatings went on for two years and he finally suffered a nervous breakdown. He had to go on a hunger strike before any action was taken against his tormentors.

To give the House an idea of the closing ranks around that kind of brutality, I want to refer to a television programme entitled "Trooping the Colour" which was broadcast in 1989. A white ex-machine gunner was interviewed on the programme. Preferring to remain anonymous, he described how he had, by chance, seen a particularly brutal assault on a black soldier who received a cracked jaw and ribs and was covered in blood. He was rushed to hospital.

The machine gunner decided to report the soldiers who had carried out the attack to the appropriate authorities, partly to protect himself and his friends—to prevent them from being wrongly accused—and partly because he genuinely believed that that was the right thing to do. For doing that he had, in today's modern Army, to put up with months—which turned into years—of bullying. He was hissed and threatened and in the end he had to leave the Army.

I have spoken to members of the West Indian Ex-Servicemen's Association who have left the British Army in recent years. They say that such brutality is not uncommon, and inevitably young men leave the Army without any redress and with their dreams of serving their country in uniform shattered.

In evidence to the Select Committee on Defence when it examined the matter in 1987, the then Secretary of State for Defence struck a note of quite extraordinary pomposity and complacency:

"Once people are in the Services, as far as we are concerned they are British service men and we are no longer interested in their racial background."

That is a travesty of the truth. The service men who assault people like Stephen Anderson are very interested in racial background. The service men who abuse black young service men, make their lives a misery and drive them out of the armed services are very interested in racial background. Defence Ministers would do young black soldiers a great service if they left behind that kind of hypocrisy and fraudulent colour blindness and instead took seriously the brutality that is being meted out to young black soldiers in the armed services.

Now I come to the exclusion of black soldiers from certain regiments. Newspaper reports show that in 1986 the heir to the throne, Prince Charles, queried the absence of any black guardsmen. The attitude of the Guards on the matter is probably best expressed in a quote that I found in *The Daily Telegraph* from an anonymous guardsman. He said of the possibility of black guardsmen:

"It doesn't look right; you don't know where the bearskin ends and the face begins."

Young black men were officially kept out of the Household Cavalry, the foot guards and the Highland and Lowland brigades until 1968. It is hard not to suspect that that tradition, although technically and legally a thing of the past, remains in the memory of the people currently responsible for recruiting guardsmen.

Many of the people who are listening or will read this debate will remember Guardsman Richard Stokes, who was one of the first black men, if not the first, to enter the Guards. Who can forget the pictures of him in the newspapers in his uniform, full of pride with his white adoptive parents on one side and his black mother who gave him up for adoption when he was very small on the other? It ought to have been the culmination of his hopes and the beginning of a career that would do credit to him, his family and the British armed forces.

But what happened to Richard Stokes, who entered the armed services at 17 full of innocence and high hopes, only wanting to join what he regarded as a top regiment, was a tragedy. Less than three years after the pictures of him joining the Guards were all over the newspapers he left the Guards in disillusion. He had had to endure the unendurable—Nazi jibes, knife threats, racist taunts. He would enter the canteen and his colleagues would bang their plates all at the same time and make monkey noises. Colleagues of his have described the sustained humiliation and threats of violence that he had to endure throughout what must have seemed three long years in the Guards.

Another young black man who tried to join the Guards was one Khalil Janjua. He again had the same experience. He suffered harassment. He found excrement in his bed. In the end, he could not take the abuse, stress and threats. He ended his Army career waiting on tables. Mike Hermanis was driven out of the Welsh Gaurds by the same combination of abuse and violence. What was official policy until 1968 is still unofficial policy now. Despite everything that Prince Charles and others may hint and say, it is the view of the Guards that that there is no place in the regiment for a black soldier.

I must say at this point, having framed this speech very much in the context of the profile that our armed services have had in the past months, that what happens in the British armed services compares unfavourably with the United States system. Who can imagine the British system

producing a Colin Powell, who is the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the American armed services? Yet when the Defence Select Committee put to the then Defence Secretary, the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), that it might just be possible that the British armed services would benefit from studying how the American armed services handled these matters, he was defensive and said time and again that he was

"resolutely opposed to any such system."

British Defence Ministers seem absolutely certain that they have nothing to learn from the United States military system. But I would say that in those armed services at least it was shown that that man could rise to the top on merit. Who would deny that Colin Powell, in his direction of allied forces and in his presentation of the case to the media, rose to the top absolutely on merit? On the one hand, there is a system in which a black man can rise to the absolute top on absolute merit and, on the other, there is a system in which, regularly and systematically, appalling tales of racism and brutality leak out. Are Ministers really so certain that they have nothing to learn from the American armed services in this matter?

I have quoted the cases of ex-service men and I have referred to well-publicised incidents, some of which ended up as court cases. I am sure that the Minister will make the point that we do not know how many black service men are forced out of the military. We do not know how high they rise or the number of black service men in each regiment. We do not know for certain that they are being kept out of the Guards. We do not know, because the Ministry of Defence has resolutely refused to institute monitoring that would reveal such results.

In 1987, the Select Committee on Defence—not a radical organisation—pressed the idea that, at the very least, the Ministry of Defence should monitor recruitment by regiment so that we could know whether it was true or an assumption that certain regiments were trying to prevent young black men from joining. The Ministry of Defence has resolutely set its face against monitoring recruitment by regiment, or by cap badge as it is called, and against detailed monitoring that would reveal the exact career opportunities for our young black men in the armed services.

Instead, we are asked to put our confidence in the protestations of Ministers that the British Army is colour blind. It was not colour blind to the young men whom I have mentioned who were forced out of the services, having had to endure in every case the years of taunts, of brutality and of threats.

Monitoring is the only way in which to prove that certain regiments do not discriminate, and the only way in which black young men, once they join the armed services, can experience fairness and equality, and have the same career chances as young white men. I am sorry to say—the Minister may find this unacceptable—that I am not prepared to put my faith in the well-meaning intentions of Ministers. I and the public want information on which to base our views.

When Ministers say, as the Minister may say tonight, that there are difficulties in monitoring, that it is not really acceptable and has no place in the Army, I must point out —the Select Committee report brought this out—that the Army practised monitoring throughout the 1960s to keep black people out. It kept racial records meticulously throughout the 1960s to ensure that the number of black people coming into the service did not exceed the quotas. If the armed services practised monitoring in the 1960s to keep black people out, why is it so difficult for them to practise monitoring now to ensure that black people are given a fair chance?

The armed services remain alone among large, public sector employers such as the national health service and the civil service in not having a comprehensive ethnic monitoring system. I do not suggest that keeping figures and number crunching is all, but given the steady stream of distressing cases of brutal assaults on black soldiers and the hearsay evidence that black persons do not have the career chances in our services that white service men have, the way in which Ministers have set their face against proper monitoring by regiment and against comprehensive monitoring suggests complacency about the problem.

In 1944, talking about Britain's armed services, the Colonial Office said:

"We must keep up the fiction of there being no colour bar."

Again in 1944, the War Office said:

"British troops do not take kindly to being commanded by coloured officers. Further, the presence of coloured officers in a unit in peacetime is apt to be a source of embarrassment."

I put it to the Minister that the position now in practice is not much different from what it was 50 years ago. The notion that there is no colour bar in the armed services is a fiction, and the resistance in the armed services to troops being commanded by coloured officers is perhaps just as strong as it was 50 years ago.

May we have monitoring by Government in line with the 1987 report of the Select Committee on Defence, so that we can establish once and for all that certain regiments are not excluding black applicants? Can we monitor promotion systematically to demonstrate that black soldiers in the British Army have the same chance of promotion as white soldiers? We must learn from the American experience. The careers of Colin Powell and dozens of other black American soldiers suggest that the American armed services, perhaps alone among such institutions, have constructed a system in which black and white can compete in genuine equality.

Above all, I ask Ministers to stop pretending that racist violence does not happen in the Army. It is not horse play; it is not teasing. It results in people being hospitalised, and it has driven people in a steady flow out of the armed services.

We learned today that the Government intend to set up a royal commission on our criminal system. Racism experienced by black soldiers in the armed services is so great and reflects so poorly on our society that this is an issue which itself deserves a royal commission. The Ministry of Defence has been told many times what it should do, but it resists blatantly, and meanwhile the Stephen Andersons and dozens of other unknown victims are continuing to suffer.

If black soldiers are good enough to die for Britain, they are good enough to be treated fairly. The test of a society and the test of equality in a society is how its different groups are reflected in the society's institutions. The armed services are one of Britain's institutions; they are one of the pillars of British society. The reports of brutality and racism in the armed services, the blatant absence of black soldiers from some of our most distinguished and celebrated regiments, and the fixed unwillingness of the Ministry of Defence to look at practices in other countries are a blot on Britain's reputation for fairness and equality.

[Ms. Diane Abbott]

Among the thousands of soldiers who return from the Gulf will be many black soldiers who never thought when they were in the desert risking their lives that perhaps they should not be doing so because Britain was not their country because they were black. They are as British as anyone and I demand for them in the House this evening not special treatment, not positive discrimination, but equality; an equality which I believe, from what I have learnt and heard, and from my own researches, does not exist at this time for our black service men.

There is a sad and tragic history of segregation and racism in the British armed services. In the last years of the 20th century it is time finally to close that chapter.

3.8 am

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Despite the lateness of the hour, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) on raising this subject and giving us another opportunity to consider it.

The subject has been debated a number of times, which highlights its importance. It has been put well not only by my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington but, previously, by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) and, from the Front Bench, by my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) and my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), who has tried to highlight it in the past two years.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington said that, in the past few months, quite naturally, her attention has been riveted on events in the Gulf. We are proud of the efficiency, discipline and prowess of our service men and women who served in the Gulf and of those who have been on active service for about 20 years in Northern Ireland but are sometimes forgotten in the drama of the Arabian peninsula.

When those young men and women risked their lives, no one asked their race, religion, creed or colour. War and the risk of death do not discriminate on grounds of creed or colour. As my hon. Friend said, tremendous interest and concern was expressed about the correctness of the Gulf tactics and strategy of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. There was much less concern, in the drama of the moment, about the fact that he was black; that did not enter into the equation during that period of emergency and drama.

As in war, so it should be in peace, but, unfortunately, that has not always been true in the British Army. Tragically, the facts show that the problem, which I hope is recognised by the Government, remains. The Minister has spoken of recognising the problem, but it is obvious to any objective observer that, despite the efforts that have been made—Labour Members have some criticisms of the speed with which those efforts have been pursued—the ethnic composition of our armed forces does not reflect the ethnic composition of the population.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington reminded us of the long and proud history of black service men and women in the armed forces, and of the less than proud history of discrimination —official or otherwise—in the British armed forces. Tragically, although not officially, that discrimination still exists. As my hon. Friend said, figures drawn from the labour force survey, which are well known, show that only 1·6 per cent. of applicants to all the armed services were from ethnic minorities. That represents less than one third of the proportionate make-up of the 15 to 24 age group from which one would normally expect applications to the armed forces.

The Government are aware of the figures and the problem. That awareness led to the commissioning of the Peat, Marwick, McLintock consultative document entitled "Ethnic Minority Recruitment to the Armed Services". I welcome that initiative, as did Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen at the time.

The report was published in response to a number of disturbing suspicions, but it raised other disturbing points. The most important and the most disturbing was the revelation that those from ethnic minorities were more, not less, likely to expect racial discrimination within the armed forces if they had already had some contact with the services. Expectation of discrimination by the ethnic minorities is therefore based not on fear of the unknown but on precisely the opposite. Expectation of discrimination on the part of ethnic minorities is heightened by familiarity rather than by ignorance of the practices of the armed forces.

Some idea of that experience is conveyed—admittedly in anecdotal fashion—in a recent book by Antony Beevor entitled "Inside the British Army." The author is not, to my knowledge, black, but it is worth repeating what he has to say. He served as an officer in the British Army for a considerable number of years. He has no particular axe to grind, and what he has to say about the issue may interest my hon. Friend:

"Racial harassment is an equally vexed issue. The Army, which is trying hard to bring in more recruits from ethnic minorities, is deeply embarrassed and angered by the tabloid treatment of the subject: the spectacle of the *Sun* setting itself up as a champion of racial tolerance sticks in many throats."

There the author is referring to the sensationalised reports that always appear whenever cases of bullying or racial discrimination in the Army occur. He then said:

"Yet senior officers do not like to admit how little can be done. Military life is likely to appeal to teenagers with skinhead prejudices, and one or two vitriolic characters are enough to stir up trouble against a black recruit. Once again, self-appointed guardians of the barrack-block flame think that to chase out blacks is to defend the honour of the regiment. They get away with it because the soldier's code against grassing is almost as strong as the underworld's, and because NCOs and officers often prefer not to acknowledge what is happening."

We do not have to agree with all those sentiments, particularly with what would no doubt be regarded as slanderous by many recruits about the skinhead tendencies. Nevertheless, when someone in the author's position goes out of his way to highlight the problem in a book about the British Army, it should be treated seriously.

Interestingly enough, the author goes on to give an example of something that parallels in a small way the fact referred to by my hon. Friend: that during times of emergency few people care to ask about a person's colour or creed:

"In the Parachute Regiment or the Royal Marines, racial harassment is relatively rare, once again because entrants are judged much more by the way they bear up under the arduous selection procedures. Overt racism is also likely to occur less when there are already a number of coloured soldiers serving in the unit, mainly because other newcomers are not prey to a frightening isolation. If the Army is to send members of

ethnic minorities into the Guards, then it must not send in one token figure at a time, doomed to draw all the fire. (Although no figures are available, some officers are certain that the number of black soldiers has declined in the last decade. One Green Jackets officer estimated that nearly 10 per cent. of their soldiers were black in the 1970s). Apart from the Green Jackets and the Parachute Regiment, the only infantry regiments with a noticeable number are south-eastern and Midland regiments, nearly all in the Queen's Division."

That is anecdotal evidence, and one does not have to agree with every word in Beevor's book to accept that there is a continuing problem, especially in certain regiments. The Guards are the most continually referred to by objective analysts and by those who have first-hand experience of them.

The problem was most dramatically highlighted in November of last year, when a decision by the Army to deny a black soldier, Private Anderson, any compensation or redress after he had suffered racial abuse was quashed in the High Court. That was an important case, in that it established that the armed forces have no less a duty in cases of racial discrimination than has any other institution in civilian life. Indeed, they may have an even greater responsibility. The Anderson case signalled to members of ethnic minorities outside and inside the armed services that racial discrimination has no place in modern society or in the institutions established and maintained to protect and defend that society and its freedoms.

Some have argued that any institution that reflects society is bound to contain some people who suffer from the prejudices that—tragically—still exist in that society. That must not lessen the need for vigilance and prompt action against those who display such prejudices; because if those prejudices are allowed to grow and feed on themselves, they encourage a vicious circle which can only make the problem worse.

Every act of racial discrimination in the armed forces only encourages the perception of those forces—however wrong it may be—as institutions in which prejudice flourishes. Every strengthening of that perception decreases the likelihood of ethnic minority applications to enlist in the armed forces. In its turn, each decrease in enlistment serves only to isolate members of the ethnic communities already serving, and creates the conditions for further discrimination.

So the vicious circle continues, and we end up with the figures for 1988: only 1·7 per cent. of more than 50,000 applications for the Army came from the ethnic minorities. Only 1·5 per cent. of more than 17,000 applications for the Royal Air Force came from them; and only 1·4 per cent. of more than 21,000 applications to join the Royal Navy came from the same source.

Furthermore, the Minister must know that it is not only a matter of applications. Among the tiny proportion who applied at all, the rate of success in applications from the ethnic minorities was significantly lower—just over 19 per cent., as against more than 28 per cent. for white applications. This matter, which has already been brought to the Minister's attention, deserves further study. We hope that he will discuss it in this debate.

The Government have been unusually silent on a number of issues of late. The Minister has been asked several questions over the past 18 months. To be fair, the crisis, and latterly the hostilities, in the Golf may well have taken priority over those questions. That is perfectly understandable. However, as the Peat, Marwick, McLintock report made plain, the services must not only do something about the problem: they must be seen to be doing something about fostering applications from and enlistment by the ethnic minorities.

That report is often referred to, so perhaps it is worth seeing that comment in its context and looking at some of the recommendations in the report. About its contention that the armed forces must be seen to be doing something, the report said:

"With regard specifically to the ethnic minority community, it is the poor image of the Services on racial issues which is the single most important reason for low application rates. However, our research does suggest that there is scope to alter perceptions of the Services, particularly in relation to other employers. To achieve this change in perceptions the Services must be seen to be doing something. The external strategy must be complemented by a willingness to show the public what is being done in the internal strategy; recommended changes to internal procedures cannot be carried out behind closed doors—they must be seen to be believed."

It is important and urgent that that perception among ethnic minorities of the armed forces of the Crown is changed and changed rapidly, because if it is allowed to grow, it will inevitably become an insurmountable problem.

I have a parallel case, in which the circumstances are, I admit, different. It shows that, on one ethnic minority in one part of this kingdom, the pressure not to join the armed forces is even greater, often because it is backed by bullets. It is a tragedy that, whereas 20 per cent. of those in the Ulster Defence Regiment in the early 1970s were Roman Catholics, now only 3 per cent. are. That case is not a close parallel with the issue that we are debating, but I use it to show the vicious circle that is created if we allow to continue the perception that the armed forces tolerate or even foster within their ranks elements that perpetrate either racial harassment or racial discrimination and do not deal with it speedily and effectively.

The Peat, Marwick, McLintock report suggested a number of possible courses of action. First, for one group among the ethnic minorities—those for whom a career in the armed forces is not even a considered option—it suggested that the Government should consider changing perceptions of the services. It said:

"Such an objection will be achieved by means of a long term image building strategy targeted at young people".

That does not mean a superficial glossy approach. It means that there must be positive thinking within the services, not only about the virtues of the recruitment, enlistment and promotion of members of the ethnic minorities but about how that might be presented in a convincing fashion. It will convince the ethnic minorities only if it is genuine.

The report makes a series of other recommendations. I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us—the Gulf war notwithstanding—how far the Government have got not only in considering them but implementing them. For instance, so as to address perceptions of racism in the services, it is suggested that the purpose of such a campaign would be to show a more positive side of the experiences of ethnic minority service personnel.

There are always risks in such a strategy. A few years ago, it became necessary to have a more positive image of women in the services. That campaign walked the tightrope between the widely held view outside that every woman who entered the services was a butch lesbian and presenting the image of women inside the armed forces in such a way that the forces could not be accused of sexism.

[Dr. John Reid]

We understand that such issues have to be treated with considerable sensitivity, but they must be taken head on and dealt with.

We believe that the report was right when it stated that the services have considered what to do in the long term in allaying the fears of ethnic minority parents. It was recommended that advertisements in the ethnic minority press should be aimed specifically at parents. It was said that that would be an appropriate way to start the procedure. An extremely important recommendation involved the training of trainers and of recruiters. I hope that the Minister will respond to all these matters so that we may learn what advances, if any, have been made.

We want to know whether additional training will be given to recruitment officers on the recruitment of members of the ethnic minorities. Will recruitment advertising be reorganised so that it presents a more attractive and more positive image to members of the ethnic minorities? Above all, what concrete steps are the Government taking to deal with racism within the armed forces? These questions need to be answered because the moral issues that are involved are sufficient grounds for taking speedy and effective action to deal with the problem that has already been identified.

Even if the grounds of principle were not sufficient—I believe that they are—practical considerations such as undermanning and future recruitment are in themselves sufficient to compel any responsible Government to take action. We pride ourselves on being a multicultural and diverse society whose very diversity enriches society as a whole. We should expect no less from the armed forces, which we ask to protect our society.

3.31 am

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): It has been an interesting debate. I am glad that the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) has presented me with the opportunity of making clear the Government's position on members of the ethnic minorities within the armed forces.

The hon. Lady referred to the United States armed forces and their position on members of ethnic minorities. As I am sure she knows, they have a policy of positive discrimination for minority groups, including women. I think that she accepts that positive discrimination conflicts with the principle of equal opportunities. It could be said that positive discrimination is illegal under our race relations legislation. That does not stop the encouragement of under-represented groups, however, and we are doing everything that we can in the Ministry of Defence to encourage members of the ethnic minorities to come forward.

The hon. Lady talked about the bullying of certain individuals. I am sure that she knows that there were problems of bullying in the armed forces in the past. They were problems which had to be dealt with firmly down the chain of command. The cases that come to mind did not involve the bullying of members of ethnic minorities—blacks—within the armed forces. White soldiers—one presumes the less adequate ones—were hounded by their comrades. We have been dealing with the problem and stamping it out. There is a tendency in regimental life for certain individuals to be picked upon. It is not exclusively a matter of whites picking on blacks, and, as I have said, we have been taking measures to ensure that bullying does not happen.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) made the point, which has recently been brought home to us strongly, that war does not discriminate and that when it comes to death and injury, there is no colour bar. It was certainly brought home to me when I visited Woolwich hospital recently and saw some of the injured. There was one young black man from the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. He was from one of the Warrior vehicles which was attacked. As the House knows, a number of people died in that attack and others were injured.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, North quoted from a book. I accept that he had reservations about the description of the skinhead element within the armed forces. When we saw members of the armed forces on television recently in the Gulf coverage, there was no evidence of a skinhead element. People were full of admiration for all ranks, who showed themselves to be extremely professional, reserved and controlled. The description of "skinhead" would have conflicted totally with the impression that the British people got of our very professional armed forces. I think that the public generally looked on them with pride.

I welcome the opportunity to set out the Government's policies on ethnic minorities in the armed forces. We firmly support the principle of equal opportunities for ethnic minorities and have taken steps in many areas to put that principle into practice.

As the House may be aware, the armed services are subject to the Race Relations Act 1976. They are fully integrated, non-discriminatory organisations, and no form of racial discrimination is tolerated in either recruitment or subsequent employment in the armed services. Any member of the armed services who feels that he or she has been wronged in any way has the right to submit a complaint under the redress of grievance procedures provided for in the services discipline Acts. I assure the House that all such complaints are taken very seriously and are thoroughly investigated. If complaints are proven, appropriate action will be taken against those involved.

In April 1987, we introduced a system of monitoring the ethnic origins of all formal applicants and entrants to the armed forces. The results of the first year of ethnic monitoring indicated that there was significant under-representation of ethnic minorities among the applicants to the services. The statistics were mentioned by the hon. Lady and by the hon. Member for Motherwell, North. Overall, the ethnic minorities amounted to only 1·6 per cent. of applicants, whereas estimates from the labour force survey indicated that they formed some 5·6 per cent. of the total Great Britain population in the 15 to 24 age group, from which most applicants to join the services are drawn. The proportion of entrants to the armed services from the ethnic minorities was 1·1 per cent., showing that the success rate of ethnic minority applicants was lower than that for white applicants.

The armed forces share the same problem as the police, to whom the hon. Lady referred. The Metropolitan police find that the number coming forward in the metropolitan area is about 3 per cent., against a total estimated minority population in the London area of 14 per cent., so there seems to be a difficulty in the police as well as in the armed forces.

We were very concerned that the ethnic minorities were under-represented among applicants and entrants to the armed services. In order to help us to improve the position, we commissioned a study by independent consultants into ethnic minority recruitment to the services. The study was mentioned by the hon. Lady and by the hon. Gentleman. I informed the House of the outcome of the study in January 1990, and I made clear at the time that we had accepted all but two of the consultants' 23 recommendations.

Although the consultants found that the attitudes of young people from the ethnic minorities towards employment were not markedly different from those of their white counterparts, they were less likely to consider a career in the armed services. There were a number of reasons but, regrettably, the fear of encountering racial discrimination was cited in many cases.

Clearly, action was needed to improve the image of the armed forces as a career among young people from the ethnic minorities, and many of the consultants' recommendations were directed to that aim. A central feature of their proposals was to give positive encouragement to applications from members of the ethnic minorities. To project a more welcoming image in our recruiting literature and advertisements, we have improved the wording of our equal opportunities statements and have increased the representation of ethnic minority service personnel in our recruiting and advertising literature.

The training courses for recruiting staff now include a session devoted entirely to ethnic minority recruiting. The objectives of those sessions are to promote a more positive attitude towards ethnic minority recruiting, to increase the recruiters' knowledge and awareness of the ethnic minorities by discussing the various cultures, customs and religions, and to act as a forum for discussing problems relating to ethnic minority recruiting that the recruiters may have encountered.

A number of initiatives have been taken to develop contacts with ethnic minority communities. Presentations have been given to ethnic minority community and religious leaders. The Army, in conjunction with the north-east London college, is developing a course which aims to orientate candidates to the Army and improve their chances of passing the necessary tests and interviews. The Army is also taking part in a joint initiative with the Department of Trade and Industry to identify potential candidates and train them up to Army entrance standards.

The consultants found our selection procedures thorough and objective, and fully in conformity with the code of practice of the Commission for Racial Equality —but they recommended that we carry out a more detailed form of ethnic monitoring to help identify any special problems encountered during the selection process. This we are now doing.

We allocated some £600,000 specifically to ethnic minority recruitment in the current financial year. Those funds have been used by the Navy and the Army to purchase mobile career information offices which will be used in areas of high ethnic minority population. They have also been used to advertise in the ethnic minority press, and to produce recruiting leaflets in ethnic minority languages in order to explain the benefits of a service career to the parents of potential recruits. We shall again be allocating funds to ethnic minority recruitment in the next financial year.

The consultants emphasised that a dramatic increase in the number of recruits from the ethnic minorities could not be expected in the short term. We appreciate that it will take a sustained effort on our part, over many years, to achieve a significant increase in ethnic minority applications, but the initiatives that I have described have already done a great deal to start that process moving.

We only monitor the ethnic origins of applicants to the armed forces. That is an anonymous, self-classification system. We do not keep records of the ethnic origins of serving personnel by rank or otherwise. Promotion is by merit regardless of race.

The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington said that there should be more monitoring of those already in the services. I am sure that she agrees that that would have to be done on a voluntary basis, and one might find that service men and women were not prepared to describe their colour or other characteristics.

Ms. Abbott: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but in respect of monitoring by regiment, the Select Committee felt strongly that the only way to prove that the Guards were not discriminating was to monitor by cap badge.

Mr. Hamilton: The result is that certain regiments would then be picked upon, and so forth. The difficulty there was mentioned by the hon. Member for Motherwell, North. We want significant numbers of representatives of ethnic minorities going into the brigade of Guards together. It must be very difficult for individuals who end up in a regiment of the brigade. It would be better if we could organise it so that, rather than a lone person, groups went through together so that they could give support to each other.

One of the recommendations of the consultants' report that we did not accept was that ethnic minorities should be guided towards regiments where there were other ethnic minorities already. On the whole, we felt that that was difficult to achieve because we do not know where the numbers are. I suspect that there is, de facto, a tendency for the home county regiments—the Queen's Division, and so on—to have a higher percentage of blacks than other regiments might have, and I suspect that that gives a certain amount of reassurance to those who then join those regiments.

I share the view of the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington about how unsatisfactory the position of the brigade of Guards is. On the other hand, there are great difficulties for people who are in the van of any movement to increase ethnic minority representation in the Household Division.

Dr. Reid: Perhaps I may ask the Minister for clarification, as I think that I agree with what I think he said first—that there are dangers, or at least discomforts and extra stresses, involved in sending isolated people from ethnic minorities to pioneer in particular regiments. I then understood the Minister to say that he also discounted sending them to regiments where there were already a number of members of the ethnic minorities. So where does that leave us? Is the sending of groups of members of ethnic minorities into regiments where there is not a large presence being actively considered?

Mr. Hamilton: Returning to the consultants' recommendations, we did not accept that ethnic minorities should be directed towards regiments which already had a

[Mr. Hamilton]

number of blacks within the ranks as we did not know which regiments had. Having said that, what happens de facto is that members of the Queen's Division, for instance, recruit from areas around London where the black population is higher than in other parts of the country, so I suspect that blacks end up going to regiments where there are already a number of them and that is the way it maps out. That is the way it happens naturally, but we are not in a position to know precisely what the numbers are in each regiment.

That brings me back to the matter that I was discussing with the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington. I am not sure that even if one carried out a voluntary census, throughout the ranks of the armed forces, one would get a satisfactory result. If it were done on a voluntary basis, it would depend on people filling in forms, and saying whether they regarded themselves as black, white or whatever.

Ms. Abbott: The Minister is very tall—is he, by any chance, an ex-Guards officer?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, I certainly am. As I said to the hon. Lady earlier, I am not at all satisfied with the position in the brigade of Guards now. On the other hand, there are great difficulties associated with changing that situation. As I said earlier, in an ideal world—I am not certain in my own mind how one would organise this—we ought to be thinking in terms of a number of blacks going through the training process together, into a brigade of Guards regiment, because it must be hard for individuals. I shall deal with Guardsman Stokes later, if I may.

We have taken the view that in-service monitoring would be damaging and racially divisive among the close-knit communities of the armed forces. The service community is unique in a number of ways, and the practices of other employers are not necessarily relevant; furthermore, there is no evidence of support for ethnic monitoring among ethnic minority service personnel themselves. Those interviewed by the consultants during their study into ethnic minority recruitment were opposed to in-service monitoring, and as a consequence the consultants did not recommend it.

The hon. Lady mentioned the case of Stephen Anderson. Following Lord Justice Taylor's judgment last November, a rehearing of the case is now in hand. A board of inquiry has investigated all the facts relevant to the case, and is expected to report soon. The Army Board will then reconsider the case, taking full account of both the judgment and the board of inquiry report. All factors will be taken into account, and full consideration will be given to the issue of compensation. We are currently considering what changes may be necessary to service procedures for handling redress-of-grievance cases, in the light of Lord Justice Taylor's judgment. No decision has yet been made.

The hon. Lady also mentioned the case of Guardsman Stokes. I find this slightly confusing. The hon. Lady said that Guardsman Stokes was a credit to his family, and indeed he was. He was also a good and enthusiastic soldier and a keen athlete, and he was very well liked in his regiment. The Army would have been delighted if he had decided to sign on for further service, but many soldiers decide to leave after completing a three-year engagement, and that is what Stokes did. Although he was encouraged to reconsider his decision and stay for a further three years, the decision to leave was his alone.

It is important to note that Stokes made no complaint about racial abuse at any time during his service, nor—notwithstanding stories in the press—did he subsequently lodge a formal complaint with the Army authorities. Any such complaint would, of course, be investigated. If there was any question of racial abuse against Stokes, which is what the hon. Lady is now claiming, he has let down all his black colleagues in the armed forces by not registering a complaint. If he wants such complaints to be investigated, he should present them. If he does nothing, nothing can possibly be done to help him, or others who may be suffering from racial abuse. He was popular in his regiment and, as I have said, I am a bit confused about the case—if there was racial abuse, why have we not heard about it before?

It was also suggested that Guardsman Stokes was not allowed to go on a physical training course. He thought that that was evidence of discrimination against him. However, he became eligible to go on the course during the last year of what he had decided would be a three-year term of service. Given the expense involved, the Army is on the whole somewhat reluctant to train people who do not intend to stay in the Army afterwards. By that time, Guardsman Stokes had made it clear that he was in for only three years. If he had said that he would like to stay for six years, the Army would have been more than happy to send him on the course.

It would be naive to suggest that racial prejudice does not exist in the armed forces—just as it does, unfortunately, in other areas of our society. I can assure the House, however, that the services view acts of racial discrimination as intolerable and have worked hard to eliminate such behaviour wherever it occurs. It is important to recognise that the efficiency and effectiveness of the armed forces are founded on teamwork. The trust of each member of the team in his comrades' abilities, loyalty and friendship is vital. Racism, whether institutional or individual, can have no place in the service environment and I join the hon. Lady in condemning it utterly.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to all the personnel from the ethnic minorities who, with other members of the armed services during the operation to liberate Kuwait, displayed the high standards and professionalism that we have come to expect from the British armed forces.

I hope that I have demonstrated tonight that we are working hard to increase the numbers of recruits from the ethnic minorities to the services. I know that they will be offered full and satisfying careers in a profession where individuals are judged by their performance and not by the colour of their skin.

Share Ownership

3.54 am

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): It is an appropriate time to discuss the path of denationalisation, particularly when manufacturing exports have increased by almost half since 1979. Furthermore, United Kingdom economic growth has been more rapid than it has in either France or West Germany since 1979—and in the previous two decades we had had the slowest growth of the major European Community states. In addition, business investment has risen by two-thirds over the 1980s—by half since 1979 and by three-quarters since 1981. By the end of last year there were nearly 375,000 more businesses in operation than there were a decade ago. So I welcome this morning the opportunity to debate these key matters against such a good and successful economic background, and I welcome my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Front Bench.

As a result of all this, the real take-home pay for a married man on average earnings has increased by a third since 1979. Much of this success lies in taking unnecessary parts of the state out of Government control where it was stifled by red tape and putting it into efficient private hands where proper expansion could apply. The number of shareholders has more than trebled since 1979. A survey in February 1990 showed that 11 million people—one in four of the adult population—owned shares.

Denationalisation subjects companies to the discipline of the market place and forces them to put customers first. A private sector company cannot survive if it does not satisfy its clients. The profit performance of former nationalised industries suggests that denationalisation has helped to improve customer service. Furthermore, employees have a stake in the success of their business, as a glance at the National Freight Corporation alone will show. Denationalised companies allow their full potential to be realised and new customers to be won.

Whenever possible, denationalisation has been accompanied by a policy of increasing competition so as to guarantee customers a wide choice of goods and services at low prices. For example, the United Kingdom has led Europe in liberalising the airways following the denationalisation of British Airways. One can recall a time when, under Labour, that fine airline was ranked lower than Ethiopian Airways.

Another example is the fact that the United Kingdom has led Europe in liberalising the telecommunications market, bringing obvious and large benefits to consumers. The denationalisation of British Telecom was accompanied by the licensing of a direct competitor, Mercury, whose success forced British Telecom to cut the prices of long-distance calls.

A further example is the denationalisation of long-distance coaches. Now such coach travel is enjoying a marked revival. Competition has helped to drive prices down, improve the range and quality of services available and make long-distance travel possible for many people such as pensioners.

Yet denationalisation has not been carried out irresponsibly. Tough regulatory authorities have been established to protect consumers where areas of natural monopoly remain. Oftel, the telecommunications watchdog, has been highly successful in this context. Under terms agreed with British Telecom, prices can now only rise by 4·5 points less than the rate of inflation, and British Telecom has agreed to introduce itemised billing and pay £5 per day for failure to repair faults within two working days. Any such suggestion would have been more appropriate to April fool's day under a Labour Government. What a contrast that is with the bad old socialist days. Similar consumer rights have been enshrined in law for the electricity and water industries.

I will cite some specific examples of improvements. Less than three years ago there was a less than 50 per cent. chance of having a business telephone line installed within six working days; today, the figure is 77 per cent. Some 82 per cent. of residential telephone lines are now installed within eight working days. However, faster installation is only one of the many ways that customer service has improved through denationalisation. Any constituent walking on the street would find it hard to discover a public pay phone that was not working. A survey by the *Yorkshire Evening Post* in the greater York area examined that only a short time ago. It found an incredibly high proportion of public telephones in good working order. Indeed, nationally the figure is 96 per cent. in perfect working order—yet in December 1987 the figure was as low as 72 per cent.

In the same year, 4·3 per cent. of long-distance calls were not getting through; now it is only 0·7 per cent., and the figure is still improving. Where there was once a one in four chance of finding directory inquiries engaged, there is now only a one in 12 chance. British Telecom engineers are now clearing nine out of 10 faults within a working day. Of course, there is a great deal more to be done, but I wanted to give those specific examples of customer improvement that have resulted directly from denationalisation.

Such a denationalisation programme—so beneficial to manager, employee and customer—has brought benefits to the state purse. The coffers have been increased, so that the Government have been able to cut taxes, increase spending on priority areas and reduce the national debt. Richard Pryke, a specialist in the economics of nationalised industries, undertook a careful comparison in 1982. My hon. Friend the Financial Secretary may be aware of that study, which was entitled, "The comparative performance of public and private enterprise," which was published in the July 1982 edition of *Fiscal Studies*. His conclusions are worth examination by the House.

Pryke chose three areas for the like-with-like comparisons. First, in civil aviation he compared the performance of British Airways with that of British Caledonian. Of course, his performance comparison pre-dates the turn around in the fortunes of British Airways. Secondly, in short sea ship and hovercraft services he compared the record of Sealink UK with that of European Ferries, as well as comparing the record of BR Hovercraft with that of Hover Lloyd. Thirdly, for the sale of gas and electrical appliances and contracting, he compared the record of the two nationalised concerns—the British Gas Corporation and the electricity boards—with that of private competitors. In each case he concluded that the record of the nationalised concern was worse than that of its private-sector competitor, whether judged by profitability or by productivity indicators. Public enterprise achieved that poor result despite having certain advantages. For example, British Airways operates out of Heathrow, while British Caledonian operates out of Gatwick.

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

Two related aspects of management are criticised. First, the nationalised industries appeared to have been slow in reacting to market developments; secondly, they seem to have been willing to continue running sections of their businesses at a loss, and have been reluctant to rationalise their operations. Pryke does not believe that the unprofitability was caused by nationalised industries having non-commercial objectives, such as running social services.

Those views by a respected international economist place denationalised companies in their rightful context.

What is the range of companies that have been denationalised? The list is a long one, and I shall not tire the House with it at this early hour of the morning. However, I shall name some key companies. We can remember Amersham International, Associated British Ports, British Leyland—in which the Government held 99·7 per cent. of the shares—British Aerospace, British Airways, the British Airports Authority—now known as BAA plc—British Gas, British Shipbuilders, British Telecom, Britoil, Cable and Wireless, Enterprise Oil, Jaguar, National Bus, the National Freight Corporation, which has 10 per cent. of the United Kingdom's road haulage market, Roll-Royce, Royal Ordnance, TSB and the electricty and water authorities.

Clearly some areas have not been denationalised and perhaps this is one of the most pungent political points that I wish to make today. As I represent York, I am bound to say that the most obvious area in which denationalisation has not occurred fully is British Rail. Some parts have been brought into the private sector. Although many people think that British Transport hotels have been completely denationalised, no fewer than 11 hotels remain in state ownership, although I cannot understand why that should be. Sealink was denationalised in 1984, operating 37 ferries and 10 harbours. British Rail Engineering Ltd. is a highly successful, well-geared engineering company. Indeed, it need not necessarily remain a railway engineering company. It now offers over 20 per cent. more in salary terms to its workers in comparison with equivalent jobs in British Rail. It also offers shares in the company.

Why are the Government holding back from selling the rest of British Rail? Why have they not sold British Coal or the Post Office? Why are they holding back as much as 49·8 per cent. of British Telecom? After the successful launch last week of National Power and PowerGen, why are the Government retaining 40 per cent? Following the success of the flotation of subsidiaries such as BREL, it is high time that bodies like BR were split further. For example, the core of British Rail could be split like the Civil Aviation Authority. There could be a signalling and track authority and trains could pay to cross the system in terms of frequency, time and use. I am sure that denationalisation would be in the interests of employees and the freight and passenger customers.

On the other hand, the Opposition are committed to nationalisation. Their industry policy has not moved away from Clause Four. One of the key messages of the debate is that employees in free enterprise, denationalised companies can expect their shares to be snatched away or invalidated and their wages to fall if Labour is ever returned to power. Customers can expect to return to higher prices, less flexibility and less service. People with pensions can expect a fall in the value of their holdings and hence in the dividend or pension. Lovers of state intervention and red tape will have a field day. Labour would fuel inflation with such a strategy and could finance its proposals only by a levy on industry, or by raising taxes disproportionately, or both. That would be a return to the disastrous economics of the 1960s with socialist policies of subsidies, quangos and tax allowances. After 12 years in opposition, one might have expected the Labour party to produce some fresh ideas, but sadly that is not the case.

At the next election the public will remember Labour's pledge to renationalise. Labour's rather inadequate representatives try to sabotage flotations within days and hours of each denationalisation going public. What did the socialists do for the water industry when they were last in power? Did they commit proper resources to that industry? They certinly did not. Under socialist control, investment was cut by half.

It is not surprising that the only Labour Member to attend this debate has only just entered the Chamber. Nevertheless, I welcome him.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am here for the next debate.

Mr. Gregory: The socialists may try to dress up their intentions by using a marketing phrase like "social ownership," but the truth is that not one denationalised company will be safe if Labour take power.

Apart from the ballot box, one of the greatest bulwarks in our determination to ensure that Britain goes forward in a spirit of enterprise is a widening of the shareholder base and making share allocations part of the salary package. Such is the interest and enthusiasm of employees that some 84,000 people, plus 21,000 pensioners, from the 12 regional electricity companies, the National Grid Company and the Electricity Association applied for and received shares recently. Between them, they were allocated almost 160 million shares. That is true capitalism at work.

Perhaps the most telling statistic that I could give the House is that a driver or fitter who invested £1,000 in 1982 at the time of the employee buy-out of the National Freight Corporation could be sitting on £70,000 value today. Nothing could be clearer than that message for every trade unionist in the land. A vote for socialism would actually erode common sense and the value of their savings. Those who are worried about taking the plunge into the private sector need look no further.

Britons have invested many times more in their homes than in equities in the post-war era. It is time to redress the balance and encourage greater share participation. It is clearly important to change national attitudes. For example, we need more comprehensive reporting by pension funds and investment schemes. I well appreciate the quip made in some Sunday finance columns that getting information out of the pension funds is almost as difficult as trying to investigate the finances of the Vatican. I shall not encroach upon that, but pension funds are generally a reluctant audience.

The tax treatment of direct share ownership should be changed. It would be apt to give an annual tax-free allowance to those investing directly in a United Kingdom company. The Confederation of British Industry task force suggested that it could be £100 a month—a modest but sensible proposal for my right hon. Friend the

Chancellor of the Exchequer. Furthermore, we need to change the personal equity plan regulations to allow more than one plan manager in any one tax year and to increase the annual limit to £10,000. We need to introduce a lump sum PEP scheme to encourage investment of inherited funds and pension lump sums.

We must both reduce the time period before employees can become shareholders in their own right and provide a greater incentive to retain shares once their options have been exercised or transferred to the employee. With respect to profit-sharing schemes, the shares acquired under the Inland Revenue profit-sharing schemes should be transferable into a PEP without having to be sold and repurchased. That would avoid taxes and charges. The period for which the shares are held by the share trust before they are transferred could be reduced from five to three years.

Accounts and other circulars to shareholders should clearly be distributed to all participating employees. It would be helpful if when shares became transferable a statement was sent to all employees of the capital growth and the dividends received on shares since allocation. Furthermore, institutional investment committees should not restrict the numbers of shares purchased for the benefit of employees under profit-sharing schemes. If share purchases are to be made easier for individuals, we need to look at the saving and follow the recommendation of TAURUS, the International Stock Exchange system for electronic recording of ownership and transfer of shares, so that they can be passed on to the private investor.

A share maintenance service is needed for the private investor at no additional cost. At present there is a lack of liquidity in the stocks of smaller companies, which could and should be investigated by the ISE. There should perhaps be separate orders with a driven market for smaller company stocks. We may well see the development of retail stockbrokers closely involved with companies which wish to seek the help of private customers.

As I reach the end of these thoughts, I pay a special tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), who hoped to participate in the debate but has not been able to do so.

The Government have encouraged employee share ownership in successive Finance Acts and tax reliefs, and with important concessions in the Companies Act 1989. Politically, the value of employee share ownership to the worker, to the company, to the economy and to society is now well established. There is more employee identification with a firm's need for profitability and its return on capital. There is more motivation for the work force to assist the development and efficiency of the company. There is less tendency to engage in labour disputes and more realism about pay negotiations. There is a lower staff turnover through loyalty and a greater sense of involvement of the company in the community in which it operates, as I saw frequently with Rowntree Mackintosh before it became part of Nestlé in York, and as I have seen since then when it has been under Swiss ownership.

It is admitted that many of the benefits will be realised only if the companies concerned adopt participatory management techniques. If not, the sense of involvement that the work force have through shareholding may remain rather latent. That should apply whatever percentage of the company is held by employees.

Clearly, the Treasury is not entirely sympathetic to qualifying ESOPs because of the tax privileges that have occurred in the United States. It could be argued that some have become corporate financing tools. However, I am sure that there are devices that my hon. Friend and his Treasury team could use to ensure a more appropriate way of developing wider share ownership, partly through tax breaks, and to reduce inflation.

If we see in the next pay round of British Rail, for example, not only an increase in wages, but an opportunity for employees to participate in shares, just as was done in British Rail Engineering Ltd., there will be a reduction in the demand on the British Railways Board, a lowering of the increase in ticket prices for passengers, an increase in freight costs that is below inflation and an opportunity for the company gradually to ease its way towards the market.

I have referred to several possible schemes and I have given examples of many companies which have moved into the private sector since 1979. I have been clear and open to the House about the dangers that would occur in the unlikely event of our ever having a socialist Government again. I welcome the opportunity for my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to respond to some of those positive thoughts.

4.17 am

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Francis Maude): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) on securing a place in this important debate, if not on securing this place.

It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to debate one of the most important sets of issues on the economic agenda of politics. The importance of this series of issues is unquestioned except, it seems, on the Opposition Benches. One would have expected that on the issues of denationalisation and wider share ownership, on which my hon. Friend has spoken so eloquently and in such an informed way, there would be some interest from the Labour Benches. What do we see? We see the Labour Benches with but a sole occupant, the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who was quick to point out that he was present not to have anything to do with this debate, but to secure his position in the subsequent debate. I have the pleasure of also participating in that debate.

It is surprising and disappointing that my hon. Friend and I should be conducting this debate between ourselves because I suspect that we shall find that we agree on most points. It would have been interesting to hear the Labour party's view, or perhaps today's view, on denationalisation and the ownership of shares. Does it think that that is good, worthwhile, helpful activity, as we do? It is disappointing that, when these grave and important issues come before the House, all that we hear from the Labour party is a long and deafening silence. My hon. Friend and I will have to make up the deficit between us and see what we can do to throw light on the issues.

My hon. Friend has spoken in a learned fashion on the subject of privatisation. He has gone through many of the merits of the process and has illustrated his case with a wealth of examples. Privatisation has been one of the many stunning successes of the Government's economic and social policies over the nearly 12 years that they have been in office. The policy was highly controversial at its outset; gradually, as the process has continued, it has become less so. The Labour party has gradually moved

[Mr. Francis Maude]

away from its root-and-branch opposition to the very idea of denationalisation to something which is at best ambivalent, a sort of muted hostility.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Bradford, South is temporarily leaving his place, because it would be interesting to hear from the sole representative of the Labour party present what the current view of the Labour party is on that great issue.

Since 1979, as my hon. Friend has said, a great many companies have been privatised—transferred from state ownership into what I would call genuine public ownership where the public own the shares in the business. More than 900,000 jobs have been transferred to the private sector. The state-owned sector of industry has fallen by more than 60 per cent. since 1979. Generally, the result has been that the industries have been subjected to much greater competition than hitherto, but even where a monopoly has been privatised, there has been tough and transparent regulation to protect the consumers while allowing private sector standards of efficiency to be injected into the business.

The total proceeds so far are some £28·5 billion before the present sale of the electricity generating companies. The performance of companies that have been transferred back into genuine public ownership has been, as my hon. Friend pointed out, startling. The pre-tax profits of British Aerospace have increased more than fivefold since 1981 when it was privatised. The profits of the National Freight Consortium are up almost 22 times since privatisation and the recent successful flotation on the stock exchange.

As my hon. Friend vividly illustrated, there are benefits to consumers. British Telecom's prices are down 22·5 per cent. in real terms since 1984. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, in his historic statement to the House some two weeks ago in which he announced the end of BT's duopoly, showed how the benefits of competition, of denationalisation, come through so sharply and distinctly to the consumers of the services. He announced further price reductions as a direct result of the benign policy that we have pursued. There are 17 per cent. more pay phones than in 1984—pay phones that work, compared with the position before privatisation when one's chances of finding a pay phone that worked were slight. The domestic prices of British Gas are down 10 per cent. in real terms since privatisation.

Privatisation has made companies that play an important role in the British economy more successful and has contributed substantially to economic growth and the dynamism of the British economy. That process will continue.

My hon. Friend the Member for York referred to some of the candidates for privatisation—the significant businesses still under state ownership on which the spotlight should properly fall. He mentioned British Coal and he will be aware of our pledge to privatise the coal industry.

My hon. Friend referred to British Rail, which he knows extremely well and the interests of which are close to his heart. When he makes the case for privatisation, the Government must listen with much respect because of his close constituency and other interests in the industry. We cannot contemplate privatisaton in this Parliament and no firm decisions have been taken, but it is very much on the agenda.

My hon. Friend also referred to the Post Office, parts of which have been denationalised. Girobank was sold and is operating successfully in the private sector. Further consideration is being given to privatising other parts of the Post Office.

I shall devote a little attention to the share ownership aspects of my hon. Friend's speech. Privatisation and share ownership go closely together but are not dependent on each other. There is no doubt that the flotation of shares in some of the larger previously state-owned companies has given share ownership a huge boost. Share ownership would have increased in any event, but probably not to the extent that it has. In the United States, without the stimulus of privatisation, 25 per cent. of adults own shares. Share ownership in Britain is almost as high. There is not the same depth of share ownership, but I hope that that will develop.

During this Government's period of office there has been an unprecedented rise in the number of shareholders. Share ownership used to be seen as the preserve of the wealthy or the professional classes. Now it is the choice of all classes. Direct ownership of shares in British companies has spread throughout the nation.

In 1979, only 7 per cent. of the adult population owned shares. That figure had been more or less constant for many years. A few companies had been distributing shares to their employees and a few eloquent voices called for wider share ownership. However, the prospects for progress at that stage seemed to be few. Since then, share ownership has spread more widely every year. The growth has been steady, particularly since 1984, and the results have been spectacular.

By January 1990, 24 per cent. of the adult population owned shares. Nearly one in every four adults was by then a share owner. We have long envied such a level of share ownership in other countries such as Japan and the United States. Many people thought that such a level of share ownership was impossible to achieve in the United Kingdom. A great deal of progress has been made as a result of much attention having been paid to this important issue.

My hon. Friend referred to the CBI's task force and its useful and interesting report. Converts to the cause are being made all the time. At last July's meeting of the National Economic Development Council it was a pleasant surprise to find that even the Trades Union Congress was reasonably positive. Its general secretary declared himself to be a "not unsceptical convert" to the cause. I suppose that that is a start. As time goes on and as he begins to understand better what share ownership means, he may become a wholly unsceptical convert. That is a helpful and beneficent development.

Some people—including some hon. Members—may still be doubters. It is worth, therefore, saying a few words about why share ownership is an important objective. A property-owning democracy was advocated as long ago as 1929 by Sir Anthony Eden. Since then we have worked ceaselessly to encourage home ownership. We have been very successful. Capital ownership is the next stage after home ownership. Owning some capital provides a family with the same independence, self-reliance and security as

home ownership. That is why we encourage families and individuals to save. We have set out to revive and restore the habit of thrift.

Savings have a double value. They provide security for savers and they also provide funds for investment, which benefits the whole economy. Shares—ordinary equity—form the clearest link between savings and investment. It is the point at which the cultures of thrift and enterprise join. They produce a feeling in shareholders of direct involvement in the affairs of the company in which they have chosen to invest. That is particularly beneficial for employee shareholders. Anyone who owns shares in the company for which he or she works has every incentive to do his or her best for that company and to encourage co-workers also to do their best, since they will all benefit from its success.

The same is true of all shareholders. Ultimately, the future prosperity of everyone in the country depends upon the performance of British companies. Share ownership makes that sometimes harsh fact more obvious. It brings the investor directly into contact with the risks and rewards of capitalism and it is a key element in the culture of enterprise.

My hon. Friend referred to a number of steps that the Government have taken to promote share ownership. It can be fairly said that those steps have been successful. There would in any event have been some development towards the cause of wider share ownership, which we all espouse, but Government stimulus has been helpful to the process.

Some tax benefits have been attached to employee share ownership schemes, for instance. The process has been effected on a strictly voluntary basis; we do not believe in coercing firms into adopting bureaucratic models of employee involvement that may well turn out to be ill-suited to their needs. We believe in fostering employee involvement in the ways judged best for each company and its work force. Share ownership is one of the most valuable methods of promoting involvement. The aim is to produce an identity of interest between the worker and the shareholder. The simplest way of doing that is when they are one and the same person. That provides the strongest possible incentive to work for the prosperity of the company.

To this end, we have established a number of different models of approved employee share schemes, providing different kinds of tax relief to accompany them. Perhaps the two most important of the all-employee share schemes are the profit-sharing scheme and the savings-related share option scheme. I am pleased to say that the latest year for which figures are available, 1989-90, was a record year for all employee schemes: 1·3 million employees were granted shares or options over shares, with a total initial value of £1,370 million. For the holders of options, the value of the shares when they come to exercise their options may be significantly higher, although that depends, as it should, on their companies' performances.

By the end of 1989-90 a total of 890 profit-sharing schemes had been approved, as had 891 savings-related share option schemes. In all, about 2·25 million employees have benefited from these schemes, receiving shares or options worth an initial value of £6·5 billion. New companies continue to introduce such schemes. One hundred and seventy-eight new schemes were approved in 1989-90 and I hope that more companies will open such schemes in future.

We also welcome firms setting up their own employees' share arrangements, which may fall outside tax-relieved approved share schemes under the Finance Act. No company will be forced into the framework of that Act.

I am glad of the opportunity to comment on this important subject. It is delightful to see Opposition Members coming into the Chamber as the debate moves on. I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith)—it is a great pleasure to see him gracing the Opposition Benches at this time in the morning—is here for this debate or the following one. If he is keeping his powder dry for the next debate, I look forward to discussing that important matter with him.

I must, however, register again my disappointment that the Opposition have not felt this an important enough subject to come to the House and say where they stand on these weighty matters——

Mr. Gregory: Does my hon. Friend share my conclusion that the absence of Labour Members from the debate stems from their embarrassment about their policy? They have not renounced Clause Four and they have tried to dress up renationalisation in marketing jargon as social ownership. My hon. Friend's lucid description of employees participating in such schemes corresponds with a reversal of pay bargaining and the bad old days of the 1960s.

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend asks a pertinent question. As we have sitting on the Front Bench a senior member of the Opposition's finance team, we may have some elucidation. We may be able to find out whether the Opposition's Front-Bench team stick as closely to Clause Four of the Labour party's constitution, or whether that is to be brushed aside. If it is to be the latter, the hon. Member for Bradford, South may have something to say about that. The world is waiting, with bated breath, to hear the way that the Labour party is moving. Does it remain committed to nationalisation, to re-nationalisation and the appropriation of the shares for which our citizens have paid money, and in which they have taken an interest? What is the Labour party's position on these matters? We ask the question, but all that we hear is silence.

EC (Cost)

4.41 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The rules of the House preclude me from taking part in more than one debate, so the comments of the Minister and of the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) were sadly misplaced. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman attacked British Rail rather than defending it, as he should have done given that he represents an important railway station and rail centre.

My subject for debate is the cost of the EEC to the United Kingdom. Some in the Conservative party believe that the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) has been standing up for the United Kingdom against the encroachments of the Common Market. That simply is not the case. As soon as she came into office in 1979 she abandoned the United Kingdom derogation from the Common Market rules by removing exchange rate controls.

The channel tunnel, which the right hon. Lady agreed with Mr. Mitterrand, is not a transport improvement. It is designed to link us ever more closely to the Common Market. It was clear during the discussions of plans for it, in Strasbourg, that that was its basic purpose. Furthermore, it was as a result of the right hon. Lady's collaboration with the former Chancellor of the Exchequer that we were taken into the exchange rate mechanism with an overvalued pound and without any safeguards. Far from resisting the encroachments of the Common Market, she dug us deeper into it.

As the Minister is in a petulant mood, let me tell him that my criticism of the cost of membership of the Common Market cannot be ascribed to a little Englander view, in case he takes that line or make jokes about not liking foreigners, and that sort of thing. I find that a peculiar attitude, because the Tories are quite happy to bomb millions of Russians. They are foreigners, and I have opposed that so-called defence strategy.

Like the vast majority of Labour Members, I thought that sanctions against Iraq should have been tried for longer. We did not like the idea of engaging in warfare with innocent Iraqi citizens, as well as the troops. We were concerned about the preservation of human life and the resolution of the conflict without warfare. That is because we are concerned on an international basis. I was supporting the United Nations well before the Government's recent enthusiasm for that organisation. As I have said on many occasions, the Government's embarkation on Trident was a breach of the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty. I do not want to hear lectures from the Government about support for internationalism and bodies such as the United Nations. I know that the United Nations is an extremely important body, and it will have my continued support.

Criticism of the Common Market is based on a much wider view than the narrow little Englander outlook. It is based on the claim that the Common Market is not Europe, to take up the Eurospeak of today. Europe is a continent of 41 countries, yet the term "Europe" is bandied about as though it has been appropriated by a tiny group of inward-looking countries that will create a so-called free market. In fact, they will create a protected market with a substantial barrier around it. That barrier has already cost us dear.

The Common Market has been, is and is likely to continue to be a millstone round the United Kingdom's neck. There are those who claim that there is no alternative. They come out with sonorous platitudes such as, "We are in and we cannot change things." The Prime Minister said only a couple of days ago that we must be in the heart of the Common Market.

The Common Market is sometimes linked with growing prosperity. The highest standards of living in the continent of Europe are in Switzerland and Sweden, and neither country is in the EEC. So membership of the EEC is not necessary to achieve a high standard of living. It is claimed that the Common Market is necessary if we are to develop our prosperity because we must have a large domestic market of 350 million people to establish the base of a prosperous and developing manufacturing industry. When I ask how it is that Japan is the most prosperous and successful manufacturing country in relation to its population in the world when it does not have such a large domestic base, it seems that there is difficulty in producing an answer.

Can we change what has been done? Of course. Circumstances have a habit of changing radically from time to time. Who would have said two years ago that East Germany and West Germany would so soon become united? Who would have said that the Soviet Union, that seemingly implacable power, would be facing enormous difficulties and its potential break-up? Only a couple of years ago Conservative Members were arguing that we should spend yet greater sums on armaments because of the imminent invasion of the other part of Europe by the Soviet Union. Who would have said that in two years that would all be swept aside and that the notion that the Soviet Union was about to embark on an attack was absurd?

It is the view of some that the Common Market is quite efficient. It is argued that it employs only about 25,000 bureaucrats to cover 12 nations and that that is a modest number, but the number of people employed in Common Market administration duties does not fall into that pattern. In March 1989, I asked the then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food:

"what is the number of civil servants in his Ministry whose main work is related wholly or mainly to the European Economic Community?"

The Minister, who is now a Back Bencher, the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson), replied:

"We estimate that between one quarter and one third of the Department's manpower"—

I think that that should be "staff" at a time of greater egalitarianism between the sexes—

"including common service and support staff, are concerned directly or indirectly with duties arising out of EEC membership. At 31 January 1989 this amounted approximately to between 2,500 and 3,400 staff . . . The 950 staff of the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce are entirely engaged on work related to the European Community."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1989; Vol. 149, *c. 250*.]

It would not be unfair to say that there are 4,000 in the Ministry of Agriculture and the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce engaged in such work. The Ministry contains the largest number of people working for the EEC on EEC matters.

The number employed by other Departments, with the exception of Departments like Education and Science—not as yet covered by the Common Market although it has ambitions in that direction—is considerable. If we tot them all up, it is a very large figure. However, it is not possible to tot them all up because under the Conservative

Government some Departments are so concerned with transparency and public accountability that they refuse to answer such questions. I give the illustration to show that the employment of EEC employees is wider than the narrow definition normally used.

I will not give figures for every year on the actual money that is handed over to the Common Market, but I have the figures that were provided on 31 July 1990 of the United Kingdom's net contribution to the EEC budget. Although I asked a question, the facilities of the Government proved inadequate to the task and the then Paymaster General said that it was not possible to provide the answer before the summer recess. Therefore, he later sent me a letter and placed a copy in the Library.

In 1979 the net figure, after all grants and hand-outs from the Common Market, was £947 million. When we see notices saying, "Europe helps Bradford again," "Europe helps Scunthorpe again," or Europe helps wherever again, it means that some of our money is coming back. A laborious and expensive process has been undertaken whereby we hand over billions of pounds and then go as supplicants to get some of it back. Local authorities, strapped of cash by the Conservative Government, are naturally grateful for anything that they can obtain to try to improve their services, which have been lamentably cut by the Government.

By the way, it is worth pointing out that if the Conservative Government restored the rate support grant to the level that it was in 1978-79 under Labour—and they are very fond of making comparisons with Labour—we could have an average poll tax of £152 instead of £353. That shows the way in which the Government are pressing local authorities and why local authorities are naturally looking to the Common Market for all the money that they can get back.

Our net contribution to the European Community budget in 1979 was £947 million; in 1981 it was £397 million, in 1983 it was £647 million, in 1985 it was £1,808 million, in 1987 it was £1,721 million and in 1989 it was £2,315 million. The total sent between 1979 and 1989 was £11,737 million. The Minister's letter concluded with the information that the latest estimate is that the United Kingdom's net contribution for 1990 was £2,175 million, making a total to the end of last year of £13,912 million —and that despite the Government's claim that they secured considerable rebates. They do not seem to have benefited the country very much.

There is an additional cost in jobs. The Government's enterprise culture has failed to penetrate the Community's markets in the way that it is supposed to do. As a result, the United Kingdom has a somewhat lamentable trade in manufactured goods. The Conservative view is that trade between this country and the Common Market is increasing and that, somehow, the bigger the deficit, the more successful the economy.

Figures provided by the Library show that the United Kingdom's trade in cars with the EC for 1990 produced a deficit of £3,898 million; in commercial vehicles, the deficit was £228 million; in parts and accessories, the enterprise culture managed to achieve a shortfall of £1,137 million —a total deficit for our automotive industry of over £5,000 million.

The British textile industry is of particular concern to me, because it employs 14,000 people in Bradford—one third of whose inner-city constituents I represent. That industry shows an EC trade deficit of £1,066 million. If the Minister were minded to argue that if the industry produced the right goods, having the right designs, and at the right price, they would sell, I should have to tell him that life is not quite like that.

Britain's textile industry is modern and well equipped and I imagine that even the Minister accepts that its work force has been highly co-operative in accepting changes in shift and other work patterns, retraining and rescheduling. The Minister can name it, and it has been done. The industry's standards of design, equipment and production are as high as anywhere in the world.

When Labour was in office, a number of Britain's chipboard manufacturers faced closure. Unlike the Government, we did not shrug our shoulders and say that under the enterprise culture, things must take their natural course according to market economics. Instead, we tried to reverse the trend and to maintain jobs. In comparison with the Conservatives, we did so extremely successfully.

We told the Commission that EC chipboard was being dumped in the United Kingdom at below cost and that that practice was causing job losses. The Commission asked why we did not dump chipboard in Belgium—the country whose activities were causing us concern. The Commission did not realise that if British manufacturers had attempted to do that, every chipboard importer in Belgium would have been placed on a hidden, unofficial, unacknowledged black list, which would have prevented them from distributing any British timber in Belgium. There was, in effect, a barrier against United Kingdom imports and I am certain that the same happens today in respect of our textile industry.

I can draw the Minister's attention to the hidden subsidies in the Prato region of Italy, where social security contributions are virtually not paid because of the pattern of payments, which means that they have a 10 per cent. cost advantage in wages straight away. Many difficulties have arisen for the textile industry from such sources, which is extremely unfair.

The clothing industry had a deficit of £548 million; footwear had a deficit of £504 million; generating equipment had a positive balance of £358 million, but specialised machinery again had a deficit of £588 million; metal working equipment had a deficit of £129 million; industrial machinery had a deficit of £637 million; office and data processing equipment had a positive surplus of £674 million; telecommunications and sound equipment had a surplus of £668 million, but electrical machinery had a deficit of £409 million; and machine tools, which are the arbiter of the health of manufacturing industry, had a deficit of £20 million. There was a deficit with the Common Market in 1990 of £9,724 million, and for all goods, a deficit of £10,831 million.

That is an significant deficit, as is demonstrated by the important loss of jobs in manufacturing industry due to a combination of our membership of the Common Market and the policies of the Government—a poisonous combination for the health of our manufacturing and general industry.

I shall quote from an interesting article, which appeared in *Public Money and Management* magazine for the winter —No. 4, volume 10—written by Dr. Brian Burkitt, senior lecturer in economics at the department of social and economic studies at the university of Bradford, and Mark Baimbridge, who is a lecturer in economics at the same university. Describing our manufacturing industry in that article they say:

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

"the historical record demonstrates the damage caused to Britain by EC membership: between 1957 and accession to the EC in 1973 United Kingdom manufacturing output"—

in the 1960s, which the Minister seems so scathing about—

"rose by 67%, but from 1973 to 1988 it rose by only 3%. Britain is therefore in danger of becoming the first 'underdeveloping' nation: in 1970 the value of UK exports of goods, other than oil, fell short of the value of imports, including food and raw materials, by 3%. In 1988 the shortfall was 26%. Most of this decline was caused by trade with the EC in manufactures. In 1970 the value of manufacturing exports, other than precious stones, to EC countries, exceeded manufacturing imports from them by 30%, yet in 1988 they were 31% lower. This major turnround was not accompanied by an equivalent trade imbalance with the rest of the world."

That shows how our decline in manufacturing has been allied to our membership of the Common Market.

Supporters of the Common Market claim that 2·5 million jobs depend on exports to the EEC. However, between 1970, when we had a manufacturing trade surplus of £16·2 billion at 1988 prices, and 1988, when we had a deficit of £15·7 billion, we have lost about 3·75 million jobs in lost manufacturing capacity.

Another cost to our country is the Conservative Government's entry into the exchange rate mechanism. Given the rate that was agreed, our entry was overvalued and imposed a cost on exporters. It was also a blow to our democratic accountability and to economic management by an elected Government. ERM entry cost Belgium 500,000 jobs and cost France cuts in wages; devaluation and interest rates are now determined not by the economic needs of our nation, but by the demands of the exchange rate mechanism.

On 20 February, the *Yorkshire Post* said:

"Britain's membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism will cost the country 600,000 jobs over the next five years, the chief economist of the National Westminster Bank claimed yesterday.

And although likely effects on jobs were calculated before the Government decided on ERM entry last year, the Treasury refused yesterday to make them public. It eventually confirmed that jobs would be lost.

Both the Treasury and the Department of Employment said yesterday that the means to avoid huge job losses lay in the hands of employers' and employees' wage negotiators . . . A Department of Employment spokesman said: 'It is not possible to put a figure on the effect of ERM entry on jobs as it will depend on the prices and wage setting behaviour of employers and employees.

The sooner the disciplines of the ERM are accepted and reflected in pay settlements, the smaller will be the effect on jobs'."

The ERM imposed a decade of deflation on Italy and France because it required other members to achieve Germany's abnormally low rate of inflation. Both countries now have substantially higher unemployment rates than Britain, yet Britain must now go through the same process of deflation, but in a much shorter period and without the benefit of the easy American market that we had because of the overvalued dollar.

Tories prefer an overvalued currency, because they represent finance—money, and those who have it. Labour represents unions and workers, who will experience the main impact of deflation. Our view should be different: we cannot accept deflationary economic management and the disciplines of unemployment. When the Government and the National Westminster bank talk about discipline, they do not mean that Ministers will involve themselves in any such discipline; far from it. When the former Chancellor of the Exchequer talks about discipline, he is talking about workers' being disciplined—about their being told by management, "You cannot have a wage increase, and if you don't like it we will close down the factory."

When the former Chancellor—who endorses the use of such discipline against workers and their families—leaves his comfortably paid job as Chancellor, he goes off to the City and receives an outrageous amount of money: some £200,000 a year for two or three days' work a week. Meanwhile, he is still moonlighting here in Parliament, being paid £30,000 a year of taxpayers' money. It is a scandal and a disgrace. Workers outside should know about the double standards that prevail in this place. If the Tories want to encourage workers, they can always set an example by taking wage cuts and making their own sacrifices.

Another cost of our Common Market membership is the cost in food. The common agricultural policy costs around 70 per cent. of all EEC expenditure. On 14 July 1990, the *Financial Times* gave a figure of around £62 billion—£16 a week for every family in Britain. We impose a tariff on cheap food from outside the European Community, and pay between two and four times the world price for food.

We have been pouring nitrates on our soil year after year. We have ripped out hedges and paid cereal farmers —and other farmers, but particularly cereal farmers—big money to grow food. We pay them to store it and then the EC buys food on world markets if starvation occurs in central Africa, the Sahel and the Sahara, as it frequently does, while EC food rots in stores.

The Government, in order to get rid of these food mountains, have resorted to free hand-outs of food. I welcome that. It is a reflection of the crazy common agricultural policy and the way that huge food mountains are produced which are sold anywhere but inside the Common Market—and if they are sold at rock-bottom prices on world markets they inhibit the development of the indigenous agricultural industry of the developing world.

Even where there is a hand-out of free food from the Common Market surpluses, however, the Government adopt a churlish and mean-minded attitude towards it. They insist that the only people who can receive it must be on either family credit or income support. In Bradford, where there were long queues for the food, to a point where several pensioners fainted because they were outside for long periods in cold weather—over an hour and in some cases two hours—they were deeply offended to be told on reaching the counter that they could not have any food because they were not on family credit or income support.

If this is the result of a recommendation by the European Commission, the Government should stand up to it and insist that the food may be given out to all pensioners, irrespective of whether they are on family credit or income support. After all, since we have been in the Common Market since 1973, the pensioners will have paid for that food. The food is not free: it is bought and paid for by British taxpayers through their contributions to the common agricultural policy.

In that context, in spite of difficult circumstances, the voluntary organisations—because the Government will not allow local authorities to distribute the food—have coped magnificently with the distribution. They are very much to be congratulated on the work that they have

done. I hope—and I publicise the fact that applications for distribution must be in by 22 March with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—that more organisations in Bradford and elsewhere will make those applications.

We are in a balance of trade deficit with the EEC, I fear, for food as well. The information supplied by the Library demonstrates yet again that the benefits from the Common Market are somewhat sparse. I am sorry that the figures are proving somewhat elusive among my papers, but I can assure the House that the Library provided me with figures that demonstrated that our deficit in the balance of trade in food—I now have the figures to hand—is considerable. The figures are in millions of ecu. Our deficit is 11,282 million ecu, roughly about £5,000 million. So the common agricultural policy is expensive and wasteful and it does not help us in our balance of trade with other EC countries.

One last point worth making about the common agricultural policy is that it is an extremely selfish policy, particularly in its link with the Lomé convention and the Lomé countries, which are really the Francophile countries because when the Conservatives negotiated entry in 1973 they excluded the Commonwealth countries from any benefits that might arise. With few exceptions, if the Lomé countries package or process food, a tariff is slapped on it. That means that the developing countries are not given the full access that they should have to the wealthier Common Market countries.

Our textile industry also faces a cost in the Common Market because the Commission has been desultory in its attitude towards the multi-fibre arrangement and the relative failure—we are not quite clear about the true position—of the general agreement on tariffs and trade. The talks are not yet concluded, but the Commission has been pressed on several occasions to ensure that the MFA is extended, pending any outcome from GATT. The MFA regulates the imports of textiles and clothing from 26 developing nations into the United Kingdom and it is vital for the future success of the textile industry. I urge the Minister to make it clear to the Commission that the MFA must be retained if GATT fails.

What is the cost to our environment? Quite apart from the CAP, a directive is floating around the Commission that would increase maximum gross vehicle lorry weights to 44 tonnes, because that is the harmony weight in the Common Market. Our maximum gross vehicle weight is 38 tonnes. When that was agreed in 1983, the then Secretary of State for Transport said that it was the upper limit and that it would not be exceeded. He was pressed by a number of Conservative and Labour Members who were appalled at the thought of even bigger juggernauts going around the narrow lanes and roads of our cities, towns and hamlets.

The then Secretary of State gave an assurance, but the Commission now wants to harmonise road transport throughout the 12 member states and it has produced a directive that will be subject to majority voting. We shall be part of a permanent minority in the Common Market. The directive gives a derogation for the United Kingdom and Ireland, but it also provides that after a given number of years, yet to be decided, that derogation will come to an end. Those 44-tonne vehicles will then be on our roads, unless we take very clear and firm action to oppose that, and even then the directive may be imposed by virtue of our minority position.

There is yet a further pressure for harmonisation, and that is on voting systems. There will be a cost to democracy. There is pressure for the proportional representation system, which is prevalent in every other EEC state, to be introduced in this country. In its proponents' eyes, it has the merit of a rigorous centralised party system of control so that, for example, the members of the EEC assembly in Strasbourg or the other parts of the socialist group dare not give any opinion until they have cleared it with the central apparatus of the political party, in case they are dropped 10, 15 or 20 places on the voting list and essentially removed from office by the party apparatchiks. It is a measure for coalition governments, in which the programme is decided in smoke-filled rooms, rather than on the hustings, as the first-past-the-post system provides. That would destroy the relationship that we enjoy—although I suppose that there may be one or two people who do not enjoy it—between ourselves and our constituents, because all the constituencies would become multi-Member constituencies. It would be yet another example of the Community's diminishing the power of this Parliament. It would also be more difficult for people to gain access to the democratic process if control were transferred from London to Brussels and Strasbourg.

My concern about the cost of the Common Market is shared by the Minister. Yesterday we debated the Court of Auditors report. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), who is present today, contributed to that debate. He expressed great concern because fraud in the Common Market runs into millions of pounds a year. In that debate, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury said:

"There are some consistent and worrying themes. In particular, there is continuing evidence that certain Community programmes lack objectives that are sufficiently precise. In a number of instances the financial controls needed for proper implementation of certain policies are not in place, are not sufficiently rigorous, or are not being observed properly."—[*Official Report*, 13 March 1991; Vol. 187, c. 1045.]

That has been said in the House year after year. The Government consistently maintain that they have obtained adequate financial safeguards from the Common Market to ensure that expenditure is properly accounted for, accurately undertaken and is subject to rigorous scrutiny and control. However, it is not; year after year the same thing happens.

That situation will continue as a result of the Common Market's sprawling and amorphous bureaucratic nature unless the Government stand up and argue in the Common Market for proper control and so reduce the costs of membership.

We must always reserve the right to withdraw from the Common Market. That is an important lever in negotiations. I do not claim that we should withdraw in the little-Englander sense. We must maintain our trading and social relations with all the countries of Europe, not just the 12. We need not be bound by political union—we should set our faces clearly and solidly against that.

5.22 am

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has done the House a considerable service by identifying

[Mr. Chris Smith]

an extremely important issue for us to discuss. I wish to elaborate on several of his points which deserve closer attention.

My hon. Friend referred to the role that had sometimes been claimed by the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), and her so-called achievements in securing a better deal for Britain within the Community. My hon. Friend did not make as much of that as he might have done. The record does not bear out much of the rhetoric that we heard from the right hon. Lady at the time or subsequently. My hon. Friend quoted some interesting figures of the fluctuating net contributions that this country has made to Community finances.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South also made a valid point about the need to consider Europe not just in terms of the 12 member countries in the Community, but as a wider entity. He was right to do that.

The Labour party believes that the Community should be widened as soon as possible. Austria has already submitted its application for membership and we believe that it should be accepted readily by the existing members. Sweden is shortly due to submit its application for membership and we hope that Sweden and, indeed, the other remaining European Free Trade Association countries can be brought within the European Community at an early date.

Looking to the medium-term future, we hope that some of the emerging democracies in central and eastern Europe will be able, perhaps initially by means of an association agreement, but eventually by full membership, to play their full part in a wider Europe. On the need to look beyond a little-Englander mentality, my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South and I are on all fours.

My hon. Friend also drew attention in graphic detail, with a sector-by-sector analysis of the trade deficit, to the deficit between Britain and the European Community. He was right to do so. However, I am not sure that he was right to put the lion's share of the blame for that deficit on the Common Market. The lion's share of the blame for our deficit with the European Community, as for that with much of the rest of the world, lies with the Government's policies and inaction on the needs of British industry in the past 12 years.

The Government not only allowed unbridled credit growth in the period from 1986 to 1988, which ensured that consumption grew massively in our domestic economy and inevitably led to substantial levels of imports being drawn in, but they neglected the needs of the supply side of British industry. In his reply to the previous debate, the Financial Secretary made some glancing references to the relationship between the public and private sectors in the economy. I have to tell him that we in the Labour party believe in a constructive and involved relationship between the public sector, the Government and private industry to ensure that the supply side of the economy works properly —exactly the intervention that has produced the most successful economies in the world is rejected by our Government almost alone among the industrialised nations of the 1990s. They do not believe that such intervention is the right approach to running an economy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South also mentioned environmental issues. Of course, I take his point about the possible draft directives which may be in preparation at present, but we should think about using the instruments of the European Community to our advantage in environmental terms. I want to see a British Government who not only say yes to the provisions of the European Community social charter but put forward a programme for an environmental charter which provides the citizens of Europe with the right to ensure their own environmental protection. If we had a Government who wanted to play an imaginative and constructive role in the European Community, we might be able to achieve that objective. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South has raised a series of important issues.

Mr. Cryer: When we form a Government, we shall not have to wait for the Community. My hon. Friend suggested that we should have to negotiate to achieve something. It is important to recognise that we can set standards through the work of a Labour Government to which other member states can aspire if they wish. We do not have to go through a long set of complex negotiations to wait for those standards to be achieved in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is right. There are many policies can can and will be implemented by a Labour Government in Britain without waiting for cross-European action, and the sooner the better. However, although action on environmental rights would be useful if carried out in Britain on its own, it would be even more useful if we could achieve a cross-European approach on these matters, because environmental pollution knows no national boundaries. Action against environmental pollution and the protection of citizens from it should cross national frontiers.

The debate also raises a number of fundamental issues about the way in which the European Community budget is currently used and how it performs. I want to draw the attention of the House briefly to three specific issues. First, there is an absolute need to continue the drive to ensure proper value for money in the spending undertaken by the Commission and by the various funds of the EC. We debated that matter all too briefly yesterday when we had the annual debate on the report of the Court of Auditors. That report reveals that there is a need for constant watchfulness about the way in which some of the programmes of the Community are monitored and undertaken. That is not to say that those programmes are not valuable—many of them are—but we must ensure that we get proper value for money within them.

Secondly, there is undoubtedly a case for looking for and continuing to press within the Community for changes to the balance within the overall Community budget between agricultural support and all other aspects of expenditure. Agriculture still gobbles up the overwhelming proportion of the Community's budget funds and the farmers at the end of the line do not benefit by anything like the amount that goes in at the start of the pipeline. There is undoubtedly a need for reform and change within the expenditure of the Community and especially within the operation of the common agricultural policy. I hope that we shall begin to see some changes, especially with the external pressure from the negotiations on the general agreement on tariffs and trade. The process of the Uruguay round may provide just the extra external

stimulus that will provide for some sensible changes in the patterns of expenditure and agricultural support with the Community.

Thirdly, we must acknowledge the growing importance within the EC budget of the regional funds, especially as economic co-operation between the 12 member countries of the Community increases. If we are to move along the road towards greater economic and monetary union within the EC, the regional funds will have a crucial part to play in ensuring that we can still have some mechanisms for addressing the imbalances between different regions of the Community.

The Opposition do not wish to see a European Community divided between its rich and poor citizens and its rich and poor regions. The principal mechanism that can and must be used to ensure that that does not happen has to be a sensible and developing use of the regional funds.

My hon. Friend has rightly and sensibly placed the issues before us. He has considerable experience from his time in Strasbourg and from his distinguished career on the ministerial Benches in the House. He has a fund of experience to bring to bear on the issues. Therefore, I am sure that he will share with me a determination not to rubbish the EC and all that is stands for, but a determination rather to make the EC work successfully and properly for the people of Britain and Europe. Labour Members have a constructive approach to the developing co-operation of Europe—we just wish that Her Majesty's Government would show the same approach, which they have not done in the past.

Mr. Maude *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I take it that the Minister has the leave of the House to speak again.

5.37 am

Mr. Maude: If I had known that this would be such a wide-ranging debate covering almost every aspect of matters falling under the ambit of the EC, I might have been able to arrange for my hon. Friend who succeeded me as Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to have the pleasure of attending the House to pull together all the multifarious strands. That would have enabled a wider view to be taken than my narrow responsibilities allow and would also have enabled me to get a little more sleep. But such is life.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has brought an important matter before the House. He has taken his subject in its widest sense—the cost of EC membership to the United Kingdom. He has not adverted to or expatiated on the benefits of membership of the EC, but that is perfectly proper. However, it is always worth remembering that there are two sides to every balance sheet and he has given us only one. He has provided an account which I think it is fair to say is not impartial. He has distinct and definite views on the subject and they happen to be very different from those expounded by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). But that is a matter for them to resolve between themselves.

The Government are committed to membership of the European Community and to making it a success. That does not mean, as the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury seems to believe, that we should roll over and agree to everything proposed by Brussels to appear co-operative, decent, friendly and cuddly. Life is not like that. Proposals are made, we assess our broader interest and argue for it. The fact that sometimes we do so robustly shows that we are committed to membership of the Community.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South cast his net wide and referred at length to our balance of trade with the rest of the European Community. I shall not deal in detail with what he said—this is the last refuge perhaps not of the scoundrel but of Ministers in the middle of the night—as it does not fall within my responsibilities.

The performance of a country's industries in the world marketplace depends on how well they compete. In some circumstances, competition may not be fair, but the European Community has mechanisms to remedy distortions in competition. There are similar mechanisms in the GATT, which is one reason why we are so adamant that it must be improved and enhanced. We are as determined as anyone that it should be successful. An unsuccessful conclusion would strike a savage blow at the economies of the third world. The best service that we can provide is a free and open market for the goods that they are able to produce. The benefits that accrue to their economies from such market access will always vastly outweigh the benefits of direct financial aid. We should never forget that lesson.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South mentioned the effects of our membership of the exchange rate mechanism. I am not surprised that he is not enthusiastic about our membership, unlike the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury who thinks that membership is a good idea at any time, under any conditions and in any circumstances. The Government believed that we should join when the time and conditions were right. Subsequent events have shown that we joined at the right time and at the right rate.

Mr. Chris Smith: Does the hon. Gentleman agree with the Governor of the Bank of England that it was not right for the Government to reduce interest rates at the same time as joining the ERM?

Mr. Maude: That is not what the Governor of the Bank of England said. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister explained at length why we decided to lower interest rates when we joined the mechanism. Experience shows that that was the right decision.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South suggested that we joined the exchange rate mechanism at the wrong rate. I assume he meant that the pound is overvalued against the deutschmark and that United Kingdom businesses that seek to export to the rest of the continent are placed at a huge disadvantage. No dispassionate analysis of the facts bears that out.

The purchasing power parity of sterling against the deutschmark throughout the last decade and more was a little above the central rate at which we joined the exchange rate mechanism, which suggests that the rate we chose was about right. If it is right that that rate places exporters at such a crashing disadvantage, it is odd that when the rate of the pound against the deutschmark last summer was significantly above what it now is exporters were doing very well, particularly in their exports to

[Mr. Maude]

Germany, which were booming. It is wrong to suggest that the pound is cripplingly overvalued against the deutschmark.

The hon. Gentleman disparaged the discipline that flows from membership of the exchange rate mechanism. That discipline would have flowed in any event from a firm monetary policy. He objected to the fact that that discipline applied only to trade unions and workers. It applies, however, to everyone taking decisions about the economy. The traditional soft option that accompanied —I put it no higher than that—the British economy's gradual decline, in relative terms, between the end of the last war and 1979 or thereabouts—the traditional soft option of constant devaluation and a constant decline in the value of the pound against other currencies—has gone. For British businesses to remain competitive and to improve their competitiveness, they have to improve their performance. Consequently, their costs have to be controlled. There is no easy way out. It is uncomfortable. A discipline of that nature is meant to be uncomfortable. Only if we accept and work within such a discipline shall we see sustained growth and prosperity.

May I deal with what I am bound to say I took, in my naivety, to be the main thrust of the debate—the financial cost to the United Kingdom of membership of the European Community. The hon. Member for Bradford, South properly dwelt upon that at some length. I expect our contribution to the Community to be around £1.9 billion in 1990-91 and £1.1 billion in 1991-92. The fall in next year's figure is simply because of a refund of contributions in 1990 and a higher level of abatement, reflecting adjustments to contributions in previous years. The underlying figure is about £2 billion a year. By any standards, these are substantial sums. However, they would have been vastly greater without the abatement of our contributions that my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs Thatcher) secured under the Fontainebleau abatement mechanism.

By the end of this year, cumulative abatement under the mechanism will have totalled almost £10 billion in addition to the £3.2 billion worth of refunds secured before the mechanism took effect. On that score alone, the United Kingdom is £13 billion better off today than we would have been if the previous contribution arrangements, so skilfully negotiated by the Labour Government in 1975, had continued to apply. A further £7.5 billion worth of abatement is forecast from 1992 to 1994.

We have a well-earned reputation throughout the Community for exercising discipline and restraint on EC budget spending. We have continued to give firm backing to the 1988 measures to set a limit on Community own resources, to exercise budget discipline arrangements on agricultural spending and to fix medium-term expenditure ceilings in the financial perspectives that form part of the inter-institutional agreement. Within that framework, we exercise a rigorous scrutiny of budget spending, looking at it item by item and programme by programme to see where funds can usefully be directed—and where they cannot.

The arrangements negotiated in 1988, taken with our efforts to keep expenditure below the maximum levels that they imply, have so far exercised a firm discipline on Community spending. For example, the 1991 budget sets a level of payment appropriations falling more than 5 billion ecu below the ceiling implied by the own-resources decisions, despite rapidly growing structural fund spending and despite a series of unforeseen demands for expenditure associated with eastern Europe, with German unification and with the Gulf.

It remains of the utmost importance that this discipline continues. Although for a number of reasons agricultural spending since 1988 has been well below the ceiling in the financial perspective, upward pressures are developing, and it will be important to resist them. We shall encourage the Commission to take firm action by using its own management powers to curb expenditure and by a restrictive price-fixing package.

We should not, however, concentrate exclusively on levels of Community expenditure. How the money is spent and accounted for is of great importance, too. As the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said, we had the chance last night to discuss this matter in the debate on the European Court of Auditors annual report. We have already taken the leading role in seeking quantified objectives for Community programmes and in seeking stringent financial controls to ensure that money is spent properly and is effectively used. Those aims are reflected in the financial regulation of May 1990.

We also aim to underline the Community's commitment to the principles of financial management, to effective accountability and to value for money, by a series of suggested treaty amendments at the intergovernmental conference on so-called political union. These are intended to enhance scrutiny by the European Parliament, to clarify the responsibilities and duties of those concerned with financial control in Community institutions, to develop the responsibilities of the Court of Auditors and to underline member states' obligations to counter fraud.

The Community's financing arrangements are due for review at the end of this year. There will be an important set of negotiations then. In our approach to them we shall continue to be guided by the principles of budget discipline, effective accountability and value for money.

Remand Prisoners (Greater Manchester)

5.53 am

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): By convention, I should say that I am pleased to have the opportunity to raise the question of the use of police cells for remand prisoners in Greater Manchester. I am not pleased, because it should never have occurred. It is my duty to raise it, but I regret that I have to do so.

I put down my name for the debate on Tuesday and on Wednesday was told that I had won a place. Since then, the chief constable of Greater Manchester has announced his retirement. I assume that that is mere coincidence. Many people in Greater Manchester are disappointed that Sir James Anderton, who is a good publicist, has not made rather more fuss about remand prisoners being held in police cells for such a long time. One or two people feel that it is not just coincidence that he got his knighthood this year, and that that has encouraged him to say rather less about the scandal than he might otherwise have done. I wish him well in his retirement, but I hope that by the time he comes to hang up his truncheon and put his whistle away in June he will have sorted out this problem.

The issue has gone on for far too long. I have tabled eight or nine parliamentary questions on the subject and on two occasions I have had private meetings with Ministers to get assurances that something was being done. I am disappointed that those assurances have not been fulfilled. It is a scandal and an outrage that people are being held in the appalling conditions of some of the police cells in Greater Manchester when they have not been convicted of any crime. A lot more should have been done to ensure that this situation did not continue. At least one of the police cells about which I know is no bigger than the Treasury table in the front of the Chamber, and sometimes as many as three prisoners are held in that space.

The whole situation developed out of the Strangeways riot last Easter. The media was concerned about that, but once the rioting stopped they took little trouble to follow up the continuing problems. No one could have complained about the fact that in May, about 1,000 prisoners had to be held either in police cells in Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Lancashire, West Yorkshire, and even one or two places further afield. We all accepted that there was a crisis and that something had to be done about it. What worries me, many people in Greater Manchester and many middle-ranking policemen, is why the Home Office did not take steps at that stage to make sure that the problem was solved within a short time.

If it were possible, with a stroke of the pen, for the Home Office to make arrangements for the internment of Iraqi citizens in an Army camp, why was it not able to take rapid action to assess the problems with the building at Strangeways and the problems that were likely to ensue, and to find temporary accommodation suitable for holding remand prisoners, rather than allowing the situation to continue for months without a satisfactory solution?

It must have been obvious to the Home Office—it certainly was when I spoke to the then Minister with responsibility for prisons, the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) in June—that the situation had to be resolved quickly. He was talking then in terms of about 500 prisoners each week in June being held in police cells. The answer that I got showed that on 1 June there were 505, on 8 June 551, on 15 June 574, on 22 June 569 and on 29 June 581.

So the Minister was aware of the extent to which prisoners were being held. It was perhaps a little disingenuous of him to claim that everything would be all right by September, when the remand wing of Strangeways would be back in operation and the problem of prisoners being held in police cells would disappear. The Minister must have known that at that stage the planned capacity for the remand wing, which was to be reopened, was not sufficient to take away the 500 from police cells. In addition to the 500 in Manchester, others were held in Cheshire, Lancashire and West Yorkshire. The Minister must have known that the police cells would have to be used for much longer.

Police cells are not suitable for remand prisoners. Indeed, some of the cells are appalling. Stockport police station, for example, is an unfortunate building. The old Stockport police force wanted a new police headquarters. It made an application to the Home Office and was told that it could have half a police station as a first phase. Half a new police station was built in Stockport in the 1960s. As the second half was not built, there remains only half a station. It is an extremely cramped building. The charge room and the cells off it are exceptionally small. On a Thursday, Friday or Saturday night, the cells are overcrowded with those who have to be brought in, arrested, charged and held overnight before they can appear in court. In addition to the people brought to the station in those circumstances, it has been necessary to cater for six, seven and—sometimes—up to 10 remand prisoners.

There is a similar situation at Cheadle Hulme, which is the other police station at Stockport. Cheadle Hulme police station would make a good exhibit for a museum, but it is entirely unsuitable for present-day working. To hold prisoners in such cramped conditions is unacceptable.

The cells at Stockport police station are little more than cages. There are two rows of cells facing each other. There is a small square at the end of the rows—it is on the first floor—with a wall around it that is about seven or eight feet high. Over the top of the square there is a wire mesh. That is the exercise area. A prisoner has no opportunity to see the outside area. That provision is entirely unsatisfactory.

Apart from the cramped conditions that apply at Stockport, Cheadle Hulme and many of the other old police stations in Greater Manchester, there is an adverse effect on the police officers who have to work in such conditions. I admit, however, that one or two of the junior officers are rather pleased to get on what they call container duty. They work a 12-hour shift while looking after the prisoners and overtime rates are paid. That helps some of them out considerably with their financial problems. I notice how generous the Home Office is in paying overtime rates in these circumstances. It is a pity that it has been unable to spend the same sort of money on finding a permanent solution to the problem of accommodating remand prisoners.

Although container duty is rather popular with some of the younger officers—they are able to earn overtime rates without having to face a football crowd or to walk around during a cold night on the streets—it is not good for them. First, they get used to spending their overtime payments.

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

Secondly, I suspect that some of them become rather tired and perhaps do not perform the rest of their normal police duties quite as well as they otherwise would.

Container duty in Manchester is taking up the time of senior police officers who are required to organise the activity. It is having a considerable effect on other police activities within Greater Manchester. It is difficult to obtain exact information, but I suspect that on occasions the police have not been able to execute warrants to make arrest with the same vigour that would have been their practice in the past because they know that if they bring someone in on a warrant they will not have the space to accommodate that person. That is disturbing.

During the passage of the Criminal Justice Bill I pressed Ministers for information about how quickly they were chasing up probation defaulters. Again, I suspect that in Greater Manchester there has been a failure to chase some of them up quickly because the police did not feel that they had the necessary prison cell accommodation for the people if they carried out that duty. No police will admit that that is happening, but if the Home Office were to look into it, I think that it would find that that is one unsatisfactory aspect of the overcrowding of cells.

Because of the conditions in the smaller, more cramped police stations, there has not been an opportunity in Greater Manchester to find ways to ease the burden for police officers of all the paperwork that resulted from the passage of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. I am enthusiastic about developments such as the tape recording of interviews, the accurate recording of the entry of prisoners into police stations and quick detailing of charges, but I am amazed that in this modern age police officers still have to type routine charges on old-fashioned typewriters when so much of the work could be done automatically by pressing one key on a good word processor, as would happen in any modern office. Because of the cramped conditions in which the police have to operate, I think that there has been reluctance in Greater Manchester to get on with sensible mechanisation of much of the paperwork.

There is also the problem of what I might describe as the roundabout. Because the police cells are not suitable for people to be kept in them for any length of time, prisoners are continually being moved from one set of cells to another. That is done partly to reduce the chances of their escaping and partly to prevent them from becoming too friendly with people in one police station. When they go to court, they are sent to different police cells, and so it goes on.

It is difficult for the prisoners to cope with being moved around. Probation officers and solicitors have also had trouble in tracking down prisoners in order to carry out visits. The problem has eased slightly as they have gradually learnt to cope with it. Prisoners have very little opportunity to think about the consequences of their actions and to decide whether they will plead guilty or will be able to defend themselves.

It is very difficult for the families and friends of prisoners to visit them. The visiting facilities in Stockport in particular are completely inadequate. Chief Superintendent Whittle, who is in charge at Stockport, does a very good job, but he has admitted to me that the only way that he can make conditions tolerable for the prisoners and their families is by trying to make visits as long as possible. He gives prisoners the advantage of longer visits than they would have in a remand prison to try to compensate them for the difficult conditions. Often the visits have to be interrupted if another prisoner has to be brought in or taken out, or if a solicitor or probation officer wants to see a prisoner.

The position is also unsatisfactory for probation officers and solicitors. Those conditions make it difficult for a solicitor to speak frankly to his client, to persuade him, for example, that it would not be worth while to present a defence, but better to enter a guilty plea. They also make it difficult for a probation officer to obtain all the personal details that he needs to prepare a report for the court.

The Minister will be aware of the escape that was made from one of those police cells. That incident has remained in the minds of the police officers ever since, which has also led to substantial difficulties. There have been other eye-openers, with police officers being surprised at the attempts that even remand prisoners make to get drugs smuggled into their cells.

There has also been a great deal of temporary work undertaken, I make no complaint about that. The installation of a shower at Stockport police station and of toilet screens at Denton was very worth while.

Problems also arise in the provision of meals. The Home Office seems to assume that hot meals are available in all the police stations in Greater Manchester, but even where there are canteens, they are only open during the week, so at weekends it is necessary to send out for meals for Stockport prisoners from one of the Cheadle hospitals —and the meals are anything but hot by the time they arrive.

If those conditions had existed only from May until September, one would be unhappy, but tolerant. The promise was made that as soon as Strangeways remand wing reopened in September, all the problems would go away. Delays in completing the building delayed the reopening, and in October and November there was a dispute between prison officers and the Home Office, causing further delay well into November.

I was pleased to hear eventually during Question Time that the differences between the officers and the Home Office had been resolved, and that the remand wing would soon reopen. Therefore, when I spoke to Chief Superintendent White of Tameside police, in the other half of my constituency, I was horrified to learn that the problem had been only partly solved. The number of prisoners in police cells had fallen from 500 to 200 or 300. I was told that 210 remand prisoners and 73 convicted prisoners were being held in Greater Manchester police cells.

Chief Superintendent White said that the problem was becoming so bad that consideration was being given to bringing back into use the cells at Denton police station, which is a late Victorian or early Edwardian building. Anyone looking for an old police station to feature in a cinema or TV film should given it serious consideration —but it is totally inadeqauate for the purpose of holding prisoners in this day and age. Money is being spent on bringing that station back into use, to hold anything up to 12 prisoners. I am appalled at the prospect that it may have to be deployed for another 12 or 18 months and I hope that the Minister will be able to tell me that its use will be ended quickly.

There is some good news from Stockport, because, as its police station is unsatisfactory in many respects, the Home Office agreed to a major refurbishment. I wish that it would agree to build the second phase or a completely new station. Nevertheless, I understand that from 22 April no remand prisoners will be held at Stockport or Cheadle Hulme because of that refurbishment programme. That simply means that more of those prisoners will have to be held in the rest of the out-of-date, inadequate police cell accommodation within Greater Manchester.

It is not merely a question of people being held for a few hours. They are being held there day and night, seven days a week, and soon they will have been held in those conditions for up to 12 months. We must remember that, sadly, some of those prisoners are on remand for long periods of time. We must also consider that there were more than 70 convicted prisoners. How on earth can anyone be trying to develop some form of plan for those prisoners, so that they serve their imprisonment usefully, if they are being shuttled from one police station to another?

I understand that some of the senior police officers have been trying to do the best by these prisoners. I heard of one prisoner who was skilled in painting and decorating and was allowed to do some painting within the police station. I believe that some of the senior police officers tried to get educational materials for the prisoners, but they are not trained to do that sort of thing. At this stage, we ought to be told that the Home Office will stop it. The overcrowding is unsatisfactory, it is stopping the police from doing their proper work and there is always a risk of escapes.

I am also told that there is still a dispute between the Home Office and the prison officers, who say that because of the state of Strangeways its remand wing is only suitable for what they term "nice" remand prisoners. The difficult remand prisoners, who behave in socially unacceptable ways, are not suitable to be put back in the remand wing at Strangeways and have to be contained in police cells. They are the sort of people who excrete on the floor, pick up the excrement and throw it around. That is totally unsuitable anywhere, but it is especially unsuitable in police cells and it presents major problems for other people who are brought into the cells, some of whom may be detained there not because they have committed any crime, but for their own protection. Visits are extremely difficult if there is an anti-social and disturbed prisoner in one of the cells.

All that is costing the Home Office a fantastic amount of money. I am grateful that the Home Office has agreed to reimburse Greater Manchester police for the extra work. I hope that they are getting the full costs. Why on earth is the Home Office paying out money? Could it not have paid it out for more satisfactory accommodation? There were many prison warders at Strangeways running the old prison and the police keep asking what are they doing now. Why was it not possible for those prison warders to be moved to some other building in Greater Manchester? They could look after a larger proportion of the remand prisoners so that they do not have to be kept in police cells.

One could say, cynically, that one of the good effects is that so far there have not been any suicides. The prisoners are in such cramped conditions that suicide would be virtually impossible. However, the long-term impact on many of those prisoners must be horrendous. There is little or no opportunity for peace and quiet to come to terms with their position.

I believe that one of the other implications is that the police have probably been offering bail to more people because they do not have room to keep them in the police station. If that encourages the issuing of police bail, and if it has encouraged the police not to oppose bail on occasions, perhaps we can reduce the number of people held in custody in police stations.

Will the Minister tell us how long this situation will go on and how much it has cost the public? Perhaps he could also tell us whether the Home Office did an estimate in May of the cost of finding some alternative accommodation then and using prison warders rather than police officers. I hope that the Minister will tell us that, when all this is finished, the Home Office will be able to pay Greater Manchester police enough to refurbish most of the police cells, which have taken quite a hammering. I hope that he will also tell us that he will examine the issues of mechanising, and that of the recording of information under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, so that many police officers can be relieved of the routine tasks of writing out statements and charge sheets at length and can use modern facilities. I hope that he will say that he is examining the question of breach of probation and that such breaches are being taken up vigorously. It discredits the whole probation service if no enforcement takes place when probation orders are breached. I also hope that the Minister can assure me that the serving of warrants in Greater Manchester is not being delayed because of a lack of cells.

The present position cannot continue. Greater Manchester needs a clear undertaking from the Home Office that by April—or May at the latest—all remand prisoners will be removed from police cells and that no convicted prisoners will be held there. They must be removed not only from police cells in Manchester but from cells belonging to the surrounding police forces. Although I do not know the details, I understand that major problems still exist there.

6.21 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I well understand why the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) has taken the trouble to raise this important subject, even at such an early hour.

There is no doubt that the continued use of police cells to hold prisoners who should be in prison service accommodation is a continuing source of grave concern. Like the hon. Gentleman, the Government regard the present state of affairs as unacceptable; nor do they rely on police cells as a routine source of extra accommodation. The Imprisonment (Temporary Provisions) Act 1980 was passed by Parliament to cope with the lengthy prison officers' dispute of that year. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Act allows the police to hold prisoners if, for any reason, it is not practicable to secure their admission to an establishment.

Prisoners have frequently had to be held in police cells in recent years, sometimes because of such periods of industrial action by prison officers and at other times because not enough prison spaces have been available. That applied especially in London and the south-east, where the prison estate simply could not cope with the numbers involved. Pressure was particularly great in local prisons and remand centres; but new accommodation

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

began to come onstream as part of the Government's prison-building programme and there was a welcome fall in the number of people in custody. As a result, by the beginning of 1990 police cells were used only in very exceptional circumstances. However, following the disturbance at Manchester last April, more than 1,600 places were lost to the system. It was not possible to accommodate the inmates displaced by that loss of accommodation immediately in other prison service establishments. The situation was made more difficult by action by prison officers at other establishments, who were unwilling to take Manchester inmates because it would lead to overcrowding in their own prisons.

Although the long-term use of police cells now appears endemic, it is not. The Government's investment in new prison accommodation had begun to pay off and, had it not been for the Strangeways incident and the loss of accommodation in the north-west, we would not be in our present position.

It may be helpful if I explain one of the principal constraints. It is certainly one that was implied in the speech of the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish. It is true that during much of the period in question while we have had so many Manchester prison prisoners in police cells there have been spaces elsewwhere in the prison estate. The difficulty that we face is that the loss of accommodation in Manchester was loss of local prison accommodation. Local prisons hold a proportion of sentenced inmates, but their primary function is to service the courts by holding prisoners remanded in custody and those awaiting trial. In order for local prisons to perform this function they must be close to the courts that they serve. It is therefore not possible to use prison places in other parts of the country.

There is, of course, local accommodation available within reasonable travelling distance from the Manchester courts, and it was certainly our intention to use such accommodation, notwithstanding the logistical difficulties that it would pose. It is obviously far better for us to keep inmates in our own accommodation even if that means extensive escorting journeys to and from courts. It is here that the industrial action to which I have referred has obstructed us.

There is no doubt that other local prisons in the vicinity —for example, Liverpool—are overcrowded, but there have been spaces within the operational capacity—that is interpreted as the overcrowded capacity—of such establishments which we have wanted to use.

I do not underestimate in any way the concern to which the April disturbances gave rise and that anxiety is particularly acute in the north-west of England where both Risley and Manchester have seen major disturbances and acts of gross violence and vandalism. But however sympathetic one may be to the concerns of staff, the plain fact of the matter is that their unwillingness to accept Manchester prisoners from outside their court catchment areas has led directly to a large number of remand prisoners being held, as the hon. Gentleman rightly said, in entirely unsatisfactory conditions and to the police being diverted from more productive work.

That inevitable places a considerably burden on police resources and especially manpower, and I quite agree with what the hon. Member said about that. We are determined that the police should not have to shoulder such a burden for longer than is absolutely necessary. I take this opportunity to place on record my sincere appreciation of the work of the police, and that of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, and of the prisons Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs Rumbold), who regrets that she cannot be here this morning to answer the debate as she is in Brussels on ministerial duty.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish referred to meetings with the previous prisons Minister, and I say now, on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden, that she would be very pleased to meet the hon. Gentleman to discuss any points that may arise from this debate and which I am not in a position to answer.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I am grateful for that offer, but I would just like to tell the Minister that what I want now is some action. The trouble with the previous meetings was that I was promised that something would happen, yet it just keeps dragging on. I shall be very pleased to see the Minister next week, but I hope that the Minister here tonight will convey to her that what I want, either now or then, is an assurance that by the end of April this practice will stop.

Mr. Lloyd: I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister wants to see a solution just as much as, if not more than, the hon. Gentleman. Having explained the background and having indicated that one of the major problems is the attitude of prison officers in establishments to which some of these remand prisoners might have been moved, I want to explain what we are doing to solve the problem in a measurable period of time.

We recognise the heavy load that has been placed on the police. We see this is a matter which needs to be dealt with as expeditiously as possible. I will now deal with the remedy for the problem. As I have explained, 1,600 prison places were lost at Strangeways, but an extensive refurbishment programme has been undertaken to bring back quickly as much of that accommodation as we can. As a first step, about 200 refurbished places came on stream in December.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that the prison was picking and choosing which "nice remand prisoners" it should take. There are no constraints on who goes into Strangeways. There were allegations that it was picking and choosing who should go there, but the police are now deciding whom to deliver to the prison. The prison authorities are not selecting; they will take whomever is brought to them.

The prison service took the opportunity of the additional 200 places and the short-term breathing space offered by the pre-Christmas fall in the overall prison population to secure a significant reduction in the numbers in police cells. The prison estate in the north-west was reorganised. Preston prison became a local prison receiving prisoners from all courts in Lancashire. Changes were made at Liverpool so that that prison could take inmates from all courts in Cheshire. As a result, the only prisoners now in police cells are those who have appeared in court in Manchester itself.

The prison service has sought to maximise the use of training prison places, ensuring that closed establishments

are not unnecessarily retaining inmates who are appropriate for open conditions, and so freeing closed prison places for those who are being held in police cells.

The effect of all that activity was a significant reduction in police cell remands. At the beginning of November, the number in police cells was more than 1,000; by the end of December, it had fallen to below 500. However, since that time there has been a further difficulty. Although the prison population over the last year or so has been stable, in recent months there has been a surge in the overall level of the population. On 2 January the population stood at 43,458; on 1 March it had grown to 45,356.

Against that background, the prison service is adopting the following strategy. First, and most important, it continues to keep training prisons—that is, prisons holding sentenced prisoners, and which do not serve the courts—at higher levels of occupancy. The training estate is now running at about 97 per cent. occupancy which, given that that figure includes open prisons, is a very high level indeed. Priority is being given to two target groups of prisoners in police cells—sentenced adults and young offenders on remand.

A sizeable proportion of the inmate population in police cells is actually sentenced. In the normal course of events, when a prisoner is tried, found guilty and sentenced to a term of imprisonment, he or she returns to the local prison and is addressed by an observation, categorisation and allocation—OCA—unit. Those prison staff make the difficult decision of the security category that should apply to the inmate and the establishment to which he or she should be allocated to serve the sentence imposed by the court. It has, of course, been necessary for Manchester OCA staff to undertake that work not in one place in Manchester prison, but in numerous police stations across the north of England. That has led to a large backlog of work and some inmates have had to spend a long time in police cells even though they have been sentenced. A prison governor, assisted by two escort teams, is now working with the police to tackle that problem. As far as possible, sentenced inmates are now being concentrated in a few locations so that they can be more readily moved to training prisons.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Can the Minister confirm that currently there are 70 to 80 convicted prisoners in police cells in the Greater Manchester area? How soon will that practice stop?

Mr. Lloyd: I can confirm that there are convicted prisoners, but I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the exact number. As I have said, the problem is to interview, categorise, and then determine the prison to which the prisoners should be sent. That is difficult when they are spread between police cells, rather than concentrated in one remand prison where they would have been had the spaces been available. As a further measure in the light of the recent population surge, the prison service has brought back into use accommodation taken out for non-essential refurbishment.

In the south, we are changing the role of the Mount prison from a young offender institution to a category C adult training prison. I am glad to say that that activity is nearly complete and 484 cellular category C places should shortly be available. Coupled with this, a new local prison in London, Belmarsh, will shortly be coming on stream with 841 new prison places. That should bring considerable relief in the south and, indeed, can be used to have an indirect effect on the north-west. We should be able to achieve this by enabling midlands local prisons to allocate sentenced prisoners to training places in the south. That in turn should enable midlands training prisons to receive inmates from the north.

The top priority in the north of England is to get young men on remand out of police cells. The crucial structural obstacle to this is the lack of capacity in the north-west for young men under the age of 21 remanded in custody or committed for trial. Substantial numbers of these were held in Strangeways, but now it is necessary for us to rely on Hindley, which is simply too small for the task.

The position will be resolved completely when a new young offender institution and remand centre—Brinsford in Staffordshire—comes on stream in October. That will give 475 new places. The task between now and then is to make a temporary arrangement for remand and trial prisoners. Prison service management has explored urgently the possibility of converting other nearby establishments for this use. Both Werrington and Thorn Cross were considered, but it is clear that either of those options would require substantial building work. In any event, Werrington is required for juveniles. For the immediate purpose we have in mind, they are quite simply non-starters.

The only short-term option available, therefore, is to create more space in Hindley. In the time available that could not be achieved by building. Instead, action is in hand to transfer out of Hindley young men who are awaiting trial who do not require the frequent escorting to and from court that is necessary in respect of remand prisoners. We hope to release space by transferring these pre-trial prisoners to another establishment, in the first instance Stoke Heath. Stoke Heath is the establishment which takes from Hindley sentenced inmates and allocates them to the training young offender institutions around the country. In turn, young men in Stoke Heath who are serving sentences will require to be transferred even further afield.

The next priority is the clearing of sentenced adults. New arrangements being made with the police will enable larger numbers of sentenced adults in police cells than before to be available for transfer to training prisons. But the recent surge in population, coupled with the large number of places now out of use for essential refurbishment to provide integral sanitation, has meant that fewer training places are being offered for this purpose than we would wish. That leads to even more emphasis being placed on the need to get nearly 200 new places at Full Sutton on stream as soon as possible, and we are working to do that.

The number of adult prisoners on trial or remanded in custody will reduce considerably when the next phase of accommodation at Manchester comes on stream. Some 140 extra refurbished places will be handed over in May and we want to minimise the commissioning period for that accommodation. I am also pleased to say that following lengthy negotiations with the local branch of the Prison Officers Association, Liverpool prison has agreed to take from the beginning of next week 60 prisoners hitherto held in Manchester police cells. Those will comprise some sentenced prisoners and some prisoners on trial. We greatly welcome this important step.

The effect of these changes should be to achieve a further, very significant reduction in our use of police cells,

[Mr. Lloyd]

provided, of course, there is not a further late surge in the overall prison population. The overall picture will in any event change radically later in the year as 2,500 places in new establishments come on stream between April and October. Of course, apart from Brinsford which I have already mentioned, the most significant will be 649 young offender and remand places at Moorland near Doncaster in July.

I hope that it is clear from this complex explanation of our policy that this is far from being a problem that is easy to resolve. I hope also that it is clear that vigorous and ingenious action has been and is being taken to deal with this problem. There is no lack of commitment by the Government and we shall shortly be seeing very significant improvements in the system as a result of the building programme. The problem at Manchester has been so severe because we lost local prison accommodation. Local prisons have for very many years borne the brunt of overcrowding. That situation should be behind us over the next few years when 10 local prisons and remand centres will come on stream, beginning next month with Belmarsh in London. While we wait for these new places to become available the prison service will continue to make the fullest use of the prison estate so as to minimise the use of police cells.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: How much will that cost? Will the Home Office be able to refurbish the police cells in Greater Manchester which have taken such a hammering in the past 12 months?

Mr. Lloyd: I shall have to write to the hon. Gentleman on that question because I do not know what plans my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving me the opportunity to put on record the points that I have made. I agree that the problem demands attention, but I hope that he agrees that the permanent solution that he calls for is in train.

Northern Ireland (Political Developments)

6.40 am

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): It is appropriate for us to discuss political developments in Northern Ireland because in parliamentary terms it is still Thursday, so today we have seen the release of the Birmingham Six and an announcement at Question Time by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland about a timetable for talks with the political parties and various other interests. However, I appreciate that the Minister might not wish to go into too much detail on those matters when he replies because they are sensitive and some details cannot be given because some of the talks are behind closed doors. They develop in stages at which something else can be said and the points can be developed.

The two events earlier today raise, as always with Northern Ireland, issues of security, although in this case it is security associated with a miscarriage of justice. They also raise the subject of constitutional reform, as presumably devolved government is on the agenda for the first stage of discussion.

I wish to raise some extra items in this debate and to stress the economic and social background of the conditions in Northern Ireland. The adverse circumstances often act as a breeding ground for sectarianism. I also want to stress the willingness of more and more people in Northern Ireland courageously to stand up against terror and intimidation and the need for Northern Ireland to develop what could be called a more normal political scene based on the politics of class division rather than the current sectarian divisions. I shall develop that point at greater length than the other two points, which I shall touch on later.

Although I argue for the relevance of democratic socialism to Ireland, both north and south, I begin by referring to a definition of democracy which was once often quoted in political theory. It is the definition of Schumpeter in a book that he wrote in 1944 called "Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy." Schumpeter was an advocate of capitalism. He thought that democracy went together with it. He was a pessimist because he thought that socialism would take over. He feared that socialism would be undemocratic, which it does not have to be. Nor does it have to be based on the experiences in eastern Europe.

Schumpeter's definition of democracy is useful as a framework for the debate. He defined democracy as essentially a competitive struggle for people's votes, rather like competition in the marketplace between capitalists in a market economy for goods and services. The classical points used in favour of that system begin to be related to democratic institutions. It is rather cold, mechanistic definition of democracy and it has a bias within it—it is not value free. It stresses points, with which the Government might have sympathy, about democratic capitalism. The definition omits the spirit and norms of democracy in which civil liberties, a concern for others and a collective concern for the public good need to play a considerable part.

Such a form of democracy is very much a part of democratic socialism. Competition for votes works better when there is competition between political organisations. I should hope that they would be socialist parties. Some might argue for centralism and some for decentralisation,

but they would share a libertarian and collectivist viewpoint. Those views need not necessarily be incompatible.

We often have to put up with second-best democracy —a halfway house to the democracy that I have described —especially in a capitalist society or in a mixed economy in which the major parties divide essentially on class lines, although there may be a consensus about the democratic methods that should be employed.

The advantage of class divisions within a democratic system is that, at least in theory, they are subject to temporary compromises on divisions of interest, which allow a temporary position to be reached after which the parties can manoeuvre and hassle for their interests at a further stage. If, for example, a trade union puts in a wage demand for £10 a week and the employers do not wish to pay that, a compromise of £5 is often reached. Nobody is especially satisfied with that, but it allows people to keep the game going.

In a book called "In Defence of Politics", Bernard Crick defined such politics as being about the reconciliation of conflicting interests. That form of politics is distorted when topics that are alien to reaching temporary compromises and reconciliation begin to dominate. There have been violent disputes in countries such as Belgium where language division cuts across the normal class divisions.

The problems in Ireland are considerable. The politics of Fianna Fail and of Fine Gael are shaped by the civil war. It is as if an unnatural development has taken place in Northern Ireland. The two parties have emerged, rather than there being a left-right conflict such as we have in the British system. That has been nurtured by continued feelings about Northern Ireland and by articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution, which claim that Northern Ireland should be included within Ireland.

In Northern Ireland, those events have led to the classical unionist-nationalist tradition, which distorts class divisions considerably. In the heyday of single-party unionism and nationalism, the dominant body has been the unionists. Class interests and the elite of capitalism have often been associated with unionism rather than with nationalist interests. That has meant that the normal hassle between capital and labour has not emerged fully because, to gain a slightly advantageous position, part of labour has associated itself with the unionists rather than with the nationalists, who do not owe the same loyalty to the Province.

Another distortion of normal politics in capitalist or mixed economies arises when major parties are merely capitalist, as they tend to be in the United States, and as I fear is increasingly the case in Britain, where the distinction tends to be between two varieties of parties which accept general norms and values. I do not think that that is entirely lost in this particular system, but some of my fears are shared by publications such as those by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer).

If the type of system that is strong in America develops, possessive individualism will dominate, with private affluence on one side and poverty and public squalor on the other. Democratic socialism is particularly appropriate to democratic systems. Nevertheless, some healthy possibilities are developing in Northern Ireland politics —sometimes outside the Province, but nevertheless having an impact on it.

In Ireland there has been the election of Mary Robinson as President. That was partly a fluke, because of some problems that Fianna Fail was having at the time, but it enabled her, at her inaugural address, to talk about a victory and having tackled the faded flags of the civil war. Out of that have come the politics of Fianna Fail and Fianna Gael and the Sinn Fein tradition which is still strong in Northern Ireland.

In addition, there are electoral signs in Ireland of the Irish Labour party and the Workers' party providing the alternative which is healthy and necessary within a democracy. That will have its own impact on the other two political parties, some of whose ground it will have to take if they are to survive. There are also changes in Great Britain. We may be experiencing the death throes of Thatcherism. Certainly some political change is on the horizon, either within the Conservative party or following a general election. A different agenda is developing. All that is healthy for Northern Ireland because of the economic and social consequences that follow from it.

Unfortunately, Northern Ireland is stuck with a divided unionism between the Ulster Unionist party and the Democratic Unionist party—nevertheless a unionism— and a divided nationalism between the Social Democratic and Labour party and Sinn Fein. The SDLP is very much what its name suggests—a social democratic party, not particularly a democratic socialist party, but suggesting slight shifts in the agenda which point in a leftward direction, for too much has been set upon one of the communities in Northern Ireland.

There is little representation, even at local government level, of any other political parties. Both the major groups need to be pulled beyond the sectarian divide that they often fight and struggle within and which, for their own electoral advantage, they are to a large extent bound by.

In Northern Ireland, normal class politics is a minority activity of the Alliance and the Workers' parties, and I do not see that present developments in the Conservative party in Northern Ireland, or the possible future establishment of the Labour party there, would provide any magic answers to overcome the conundrum. There would merely be the extra minor element that they could not get into the political system.

Moves that undermine sectarianism will amend the nature of party politics. They will either change the nature of the current political parties or create opportunities for other parties. On some issues, such as student loans, Ulster Unionists and the SDLP forget their divisions. All the parties in Northern Ireland, except the Conservative party, opposed student loans.

Unionist and SDLP Members complain about the worst effects of the enterprise culture such as the closure of hospitals, yet they often troop through the Lobby with the Government. On the other hand, the speeches of Northern Ireland politicians show that different views are forced on them by their electorate.

The more that change in southern Ireland makes that country less worrying to Northern Ireland Protestants and the more that change in Northern Ireland makes it less worrying to Catholics throughout the island of Ireland, the more the politics of Ireland and Northern Ireland will change. That was probably the aim of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which mistakenly was concluded without the prior acceptance and involvement of Northern Ireland Protestants.

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

A factor for change in Northern Ireland is the overcoming of the enterprise culture. That must be strongly pursued because Northern Ireland suffers from many problems. The scourge of unemployment is massive and long lingering. Privatisation, which often increases unemployment, is particularly inappropriate for Northern Ireland. The Ports Bill will destroy port trusts such as that in Londonderry. Such ports are held in trust for the community and are part of communal provision that should be allowed to continue.

A further factor for change is the logic of collective cross-party and non-party activity in Northern Ireland. Several groups are challenging the terrorism of extreme Protestant groups, the IRA and other extreme republican groups and the over-reaction of state and security forces. New Consensus has three groups operating in Northern Ireland, Ireland and in this country opposing terror and intimidation. A specific group organised by Nancy Gracey in Downpatrick is called Families Against Intimidation and Terror. It opposes sectarian violence and is concerned about the role of the state. It says that Amnesty International and other civil liberties organisations concentrate on state violence, whereas about 90 per cent. of violence in Northern Ireland is perpetrated by paramilitary organisations which use intimidation and crude devices such as knee capping.

The peace train organisations run trains between Dublin and Belfast to show that the IRA threatens people, as it has in this country in terms of train services, in a quite unreasonable way. Those organisations attract support from a wide spectrum of party-political involvement and from people who have no connection with political parties. The trade unions are attempting to overcome many of the problems and have mounted campaigns such as "Hands off my mate."

Given the long haul before there is any change in Irish politics—there are no easy solutions—and a shift to a normality that has never been known in the democratic era of Irish politics, boundary questions, constitutional issues, terrorism and sectarianism can then be tackled in the best way—democratically. If democracy is to flourish, more than a mechanism is needed; the values and concerns that I have stressed must be nurtured.

No one ought more strongly to urge the need for social conditions for democracy in Northern Ireland than democratic socialists. Terror and intimidation will thereby be undermined. In no way should we condone them.

7.1 am

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I am sure that we are all grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) for raising such an important topic at this hour of the morning. Occasionally it is useful to turn away from the immediate problems of a particular sectarian or terrorist outrage, and even from the day-to-day manoeuvrings connected with what is euphemestically known as the Brooke initiative, and to look instead at the longer term and at my hon. Friend's analysis, as he sees it, of the situation in Northern Ireland.

My hon. Friend began by mentioning two particular matters—the Birmingham Six and the Brooke initiative. All of us must welcome the release of the Birmingham Six. My only regret is that no word of compassion was uttered by Government Ministers about what happened to those men over the years. No Minister appeared to be able to say, "I'm sorry." No one on the Government side commended the work done by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) during his campaign.

As for the Secretary of State's initiative and the statement that he made earlier today, the House will welcome the fact that the Taoiseach of the Republic has accepted the message sent to him and the Secretary of State's document. We must hope that the other parties to the discussions will be able to do so, too. They will have to look carefully at what is involved, but if in holy week the Secretary of State is able to say that all the parties have indicated their acceptance, that will start a new chapter in dealing with some of the problems to which my hon. Friend referred.

I do not intend to deal with all my hon. Friend's analyses. I do not necessarily accept all of them. I understand, however, his interpretation of history and the current situation. I think that he is right to point to some of the important developments in Northern Ireland outside the institutions of political parties and government. Some have been helped by the Government; others have been helped by voluntary organisations within society. The Minister of State is here to deal with a matter concerning which he deserves some praise. I rarely praise Tory Ministers. I hope, therefore, that he will note down the time and the date.

The work that has been done in the education programme for mutual understanding is of the utmost importance, as is the work that has resulted in cross-school relations between the voluntary and state sectors, within the integrated education sector. One of the best ways of overcoming fear is to learn about what the other side stands for and believes in. That does not undercut existing loyalties or threaten previously held positions. It is enriching to learn about those whose opinions one has not really examined before. The experience does not water down people's own beliefs and they should not fear it. It should cause them to re-examine their own positions and to realise that in the island of Ireland there are competing traditions and loyalties.

An important event that has received some recognition in the Republic and in the north, but not here, was the agreement between the two Ministers responsible for education. The glossy document that they launched in Dublin, concerning what was happening in Europe and in Ireland at the time of the battle of the Boyne, and what that battle meant to the different traditions and parties, was significant.

My hon. Friend also mentioned the Anglo-Irish Agreement. This is not the time to attempt a treatise on its origins, but it encompassed an acceptance by the Government and parties of the Republic of the fact that there was a distinct unionist tradition in the north, with a life and origin of its own—separate from this island. That tradition does not exist on the apron strings of successive British Governments; it has a vibrancy and organic growth of its own in the island of Ireland. That recognition, too, was significant.

The agreement also recognised that there is a powerful nationalist tradition in the north which is worthy of respect and encouragement. Whatever else one thinks of the agreement, it signified recognition by the two

Governments of the legitimacy of the two separate traditions and of their right to encouragement and respect —another factor of the utmost importance.

Despite the aberrant attitude of the Government to Glor na Gael there has been a recognition of the role of the Irish language as an entity which belongs to both traditions. It should be revered, resuscitated and encouraged. It represents a unifying strand between the two traditions. Old languages under threat contain much human emotion, passion and tradition. They should not be maintained artificially by being rammed down people's throats; they should be kept alive by encouraging those who want to use them to work and be educated in the language, and by assuring them that they will then have a role to play. It is sometimes forgotten that the first major printed book in Irish was issued by the Presbyterians in Belfast.

My hon. Friend spoke about Families Against Intimidation and Terror. Often, the work of the voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland is not recognised here, although they work in our constituencies as well. I pay tribute to the fact that Mr. Quintin Oliver, chairman of the voluntary sector, has been offered, and has accepted, a post on the council of the President of the Republic. That was a tremendous gesture by the President and it showed an understanding of the position of the voluntary sector not just in the north, but throughout the island of Ireland.

This sector is of particular importance in Northern Ireland. It brings together communities from Shankill and the Falls, from the Waterside and the Bogside, from rural Ireland and from urban Ireland. It brings together people from both communities who suffer those afflictions that do not ask what tradition a person belongs to before they strike him. That includes multiple sclerosis among many other diseases. It also brings together people involved in cultural activities—music, literature, history; all matters of great importance. They enrich any society, but in the circumstances of Northern Ireland, they have an even greater role to play. They do not challenge people about whence they came or demand to know what their hopes and aspirations are. They recognise only common humanity.

It would be wrong not to mention a greater voluntary organisation that exists throughout the island of Ireland, but particularly the north—the trade unions. Unfortunately, under the dispensation of the Government, trade unions have not been recognised for the role that they play in our society. They have waged various important campaigns in the north—the most recent called, "Hands off my mate"—to keep sectarianism and terrorism off the factory floor, out of the shops, and out of industry and commerce. They have not always been successful, but they have made tremendous efforts.

My union has seen many casualties. Bus drivers have been killed, shop stewards have been killed for no other reason than that they were Protestant, and some of our members were killed at Enniskillen. These people have sought to do what my hon. Friend has recommended—identify each other by class, so as to defend their interests and enhance opportunities for themselves, their families and their communities. The trade unions in Northern Ireland have played a long, commendable and honourable role in the troubles that have beset the island. They have also sought, through cross-border co-operation and membership of the Irish Congress of Trades Unions, to create an understanding in the Republic of the problems of working people in the north and to make the argument about the future of the island of Ireland on an all-Ireland basis.

The trade unions have also argued the point made by many, including the Labour party, that problems will affect the island of Ireland as a result of 1992, and they have highlighted the need for greater co-operation in a whole range of economic and social issues, if 1992 is not to engulf both parts of Ireland. They must make sure that, as an offshore island which will have none of the so-called benefits of the channel tunnel, they will still be able to play a proper role in the emerging Community.

I am sure that we are all indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East for the rare opportunity that he has given us to take ourselves away from the day-to-day horrors and incidents of Northern Ireland so that we may try to take a longer look at what is happening and to recognise and pay tribute to the many in Northern Ireland who are doing so much that is unsung, unseen but not unappreciated, at least not by hon. Members.

7.15 am

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) in his words of appreciation of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes). The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East was fortunate in the ballot and he chose to introduce into our discussions on Northern Ireland matters and issues which are hugely important but which, because of the pressures of security and political development, frequently do not receive the attention that they deserve. I thank the hon. Gentleman for the spirit and the grace with which he introduced the debate.

This is the same parliamentary day on which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made his announcement during Northern Ireland Question Time. As the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East has recognised, there is little that I can add to my right hon. Friend's statement at this time. Like the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, I welcome the Taoiseach's acceptance of the statement as a basis for moving forward. My right hon. Friend made a significant period available to all the parties precisely because the issues at stake are important. The significance is real and it is right that the parties should have the opportunity to consult and to consider carefully before making a response.

The speech of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East had the quality of consistency, for the House is aware of his commitment to democratic socialism, which he restated today. I noted en passant his reflections on what is happening within the Labour party, but, in the spirit of bipartisanship that has marked the debate so far, I shall not intrude into those private discussions.

The hon. Gentleman listed three factors that are important to democratic socialists—civil liberties, people working together and concern for the common good—and linked those factors to his broader initial reflections on the concept of democracy. I do not wish to suggest in any way that the three factors are not associated with democratic socialism, but I ask the hon. Gentleman to accept that they are in no sense restricted to it. They are among the pillars

[Dr. Brian Mawhinney]

on which democracy is based. They are the common aspirations and commitments of all who are committed to democratic institutions and democratic ways of behaving.

The hon. Gentleman talked of wishing to see more class division in the politics of Northern Ireland. I understand what he means, but perhaps it is an unfortunate phrase. He said that one of the problems that has bedevilled the island of Ireland over the centuries is the concept of division. To wish away certain existing divisions and to replace them with class division seems not necessarily to advance things much further.

I understand the spirit of the hon. Gentleman's comment. He was encouraging a reversion to more normal types of political activity, separated from issues of constitutionalism and the overbearing influence that history sometimes has on the conduct of politics in the island of Ireland, as he chose to illustrate his point from the Republic as well as the north.

At the very heart of democracy is the concept that people should freely give their consent to the government of the state and that the will of the majority should prevail, although that will is subject to periodic test on the understanding that the majority can change. It has to change on the basis of persuasion. That has been part of the problem of the island of Ireland and of political developments in Northern Ireland for a long time.

What has been known colloquially as border politics —the constitutional issue—has so overwhelmed the other concepts of politics that, as the hon. Gentleman rightly pointed out, they have tended to be sidelined. In his references to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, he alluded to the importance of article 1 being that it restated the fundamental democratic concept that the status cannot and will not be changed unless consent is freely given by the majority. Of course, article 1 went on to say that if such a change were to take place, Governments would react and respond accordingly.

The affirmation of consent freely given is very important, because it delineates the constitutional framework within which political developments within Northern Ireland will have to be seen for the foreseeable future. I know of no nationalist or republican, no matter how ardent, who believes that the constitutional position is likely to change democratically in the immediate or forseeable future. Therefore, it is important to hold that point in mind when we discuss the broader issues.

The hon. Gentleman was right to draw attention in the first instance to the importance of economic policy to political development in the Province. Unemployment is too high. It is higher than in Great Britain and has been for some time, although the hon. Gentleman will share with me the satisfaction to be derived from the fact that it is running at about 28,000 fewer than it was at its peak in 1986. The hon. Gentleman will have heard the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), affirm at Question Time what I affirmed in the Appropriation debate on Monday —that the strength of Northern Ireland's economy is enabling it better to weather the current economic difficulties. That is why Ministers spend much time seeking for Northern Ireland further investment from anywhere in the world, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

Northern Ireland is a place where profitability is possible and is frequently achieved, and which needs jobs. We are more than happy to welcome with open arms all who can contribute to investment and jobs. Getting people off the streets, getting them trained and into employment, and giving them a stake in the Province is an important element of the political development that the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

Having said that, the hon. Gentleman may wish to reflect on his remark about the inappropriateness of privatisation to Northern Ireland—not least in the light of our experience in respect of Shorts, which moved from the public to the private sector comparatively recently, just a couple of years ago. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East will be pleased to learn, as I was, that I think probably about 700 more people are employed by Shorts today, as a private sector company, than was the case when it was in the public sector. That improvement is a little difficult to square with what I thought was a touch of the democratic socialism edging its way into the hon. Gentleman's broader argument.

We can make common cause on the hon. Gentleman's point concerning the need to mobilise citizens in resisting terrorism. It is a fallacy in any society that those paid to offer a service of care to the community by upholding the law ought to shoulder full responsibility for the community in discharging that task. All of us have a responsibility, as citizens, for the communities in which we live.

In that regard, I pay tribute to the work of New Consensus, those with whom it is associated, and the various groups that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, for the stand that they have taken, which crosses communities in Northern Ireland and brings people together, in sending the message that the citizens of Northern Ireland are united in rejecting the ways of those who, because they cannot win the argument at the ballot box, resort to terrorism and violence.

Although the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East did not say so, I am sure that he would want all the citizens of Northern Ireland to be reminded that they have a responsibility also to offer their support and encouragement to the security forces and the police, to stand alongside them as they serve the community—frequently in the face of danger—and to make available to them whatever information they have which could lead to the apprehension, arrest, trial, and conviction of those who break the law, not least by committing acts of terrorism.

The fact that we have a good security service and police force does not absolve the public from their responsibilities as citizens and their obligation to observe common standards of decency and humanity.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Families Against Intimidation and Terror has highlighted the case of Mickey Williams, who telephoned 999 after hearing screams which had to do with an incident that apparently involved the IRA. Mickey Williams received a death threat and was forced to flee the country. His home was invaded by people who were even prepared to tell Mr. Williams' eight-year-old child that his father would be killed. Families Against Intimidation and Terror subsequently campaigned widely, with the result that the death threat against Mr. Williams was technically lifted outside Northern Ireland. The IRA member concerned was arrested. The IRA will not allow Mr. Williams to return until that case has been dealt with, but

that incident shows the kind of changes that can be made by people standing up for themselves and for the normal processes of law and order, and refusing to be intimidated.

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman offers an example of the more general theme in his speech.

One of the issues that New Consensus has focused on has been integrated education, and its development in our schools. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) for his kind personal comments, and I noted the time and the date. While it would be nice if he were to make it a regular occurrence, I understand why he may not always wish to follow that course. However, he is right to point out the significance of what has been happening in our schools in the past few years.

For the first time, parents have the choice, under statute, of integrated schools as a third option alongside what are colloquially referred to as state schools and Catholic schools in Northern Ireland. It is an option which they ought to have. It is a matter for the parents to decide how they want to have their children educated, but there is no doubt that there is a small but growing movement, and a growing number of parents who wish their children to be educated in the same classroom as children from the other side of the community, in schools that value both traditions equally.

Having said that, it is clear that the number of children in integrated schools for the foreseeable future will be only a small proportion of those in schools. Therefore, it was necessary for us to consider what might be done to bridge the community divide for all the other children.

As the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East knows, we wrote into the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 a number of curriculum changes, and he has highlighted education for mutual understanding. I appreciated his comments, as I appreciated his support in what was seen in some quarters as a reasonably contentious order. Nevertheless, there was support across the Chamber for those aspects of it and I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues for the support that they gave to education for mutual understanding and the other new course, cultural heritage. It is important for the House to understand that those will be compulsory for all schoolchildren between the ages of five and 16.

The other curriculum development that I think is of special importance is the move to have a common history curriculum taught for the first time in our schools in Northern Ireland. As the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East pointed out, given the influence of history upon the politics and political development of the island of Ireland, that common history curriculum will also make a considerable contribution after a time.

I was also grateful to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East for what he said about the development under the general title of "Kings in Conflict". I well remember having the pleasure of welcoming Mrs. Mary O'Rourke, the Education Minister from the Republic to the Ulster museum when we both launched that initiative, amid the "Kings in Conflict" exhibition, which ran so successfully at the museum for a number of months. I am pleased that it has moved to fruition and, as the hon. Gentleman said, my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Belstead was able to go to Dublin recently to launch the final video version. Like him, I am impressed by it, and I can say that because I did not have a direct hand in planning it. Like the hon. Gentleman, I believe that as it is used it will influence for good the next generation and the generation after that in Northern Ireland.

Mr. McNamara: And in the Republic.

Dr. Mawhinney: Yes—and in the Republic. I restricted my remarks simply because this is a debate on political development in Northern Ireland, but the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North is right to point out that it will have a significant influence in the Republic, just as it will in the north.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East was also right to stress the importance of the cultural traditions programme. One of the difficulties about the Irish language has been that for whatever reasons—this is not the time or the place to analyse them—it has become politicised over the years. It has been taken out of its cultural context and put into a political context. The Government believe—and as the Minister responsible I strongly believe—that it needs to be redeveloped in its cultural context. As the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East said, in that context it spans the community in Northern Ireland. He will have taken heart from the fact that I was able to announce the prospect of significant Government grants to the Ultach trust, for example, which was set up to develop the Irish language, without any political upset in the Province.

He will also have taken heart from the fact that I was able to announce a grant for an inquiry into the development of an interpretative centre at Dan Winter's cottage, the site of the origins of the Orange order in Northern Ireland—another cultural tradition of the Province involving, again, no political perturbation.

In all those ways, we must try to undermine what the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East has described as sectarian politics. We have had a measure of success, not only in the social, economic and community—relations sphere but in that of elective politics. In some ways, that could be described as the most significant development in the past couple of years.

Of the 26 councils in Northern Ireland, about 10 now have a form of shared leadership: if the mayor or chairman comes from one tradition, his deputy comes from another. That development has been widely welcomed in the Province and, where it has come about, represents a challenge to the other councils that have not yet adopted the practice. Moreover, it has been widely welcomed throughout the community in Northern Ireland. We need only consider the standing and moral influence of councils such as Dungannon to appreciate that the concept of sharing—which does not always run smoothly, but which nevertheless is fundamentally important—is influencing people's attitudes.

Another welcome development is the way in which local politicians are joining forces with Ministers—trying to develop local economic plans with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North, or community relations plans with me. It is encouraging to note that, over the past 12 to 18 months, 10 councils have embarked on relationships with the Government that will involve them in employing community relations officers to work together with councillors and local people to bridge the community gap. Eight more councils have agreed to the arrangement and will be appointing community relations officers; we are

[Dr. Mawhinney]

negotiating with five more. Only three out of the 26 are not either involved in the scheme or seriously considering it. That represents a development in elective politics. One of the requirements is that the programmes cannot proceed unless the elected representatives of the people vote in open council to endorse the scheme, which carries with it the thumbprints of elected politicians from both sides of the community.

All those developments contain a message of hope and encouragement—whether they relate to the fundamentals of democracy which all of us affirm and reaffirm, to the concept of consent freely given and the importance of persuasion rather than threat and intimidation, to the economy, to the social sphere in the commitment to fair employment and the provision of good services, to community relations and education, or to local councils. We are able to send out that message this morning. This measure carries bipartisan support, not in the intricacies of political theory or the details of Government policy, but in the bipartisan commitment to all activities that seek to bring people together—as the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East said, to affirm civil liberties, to encourage working together, to promote the common good—and it will be a measure of agreement widely welcomed in the Province. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving us the opportunity to send that message today.

Science and Engineering Research Council

7.39 am

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the important issue of some of the possible consequences of the financial crisis currently facing the Science and Engineering Research Council. May I say, Mr. Speaker, how honoured we are to have you gracing this debate at such an early hour.

There was an important debate, initiated by the Opposition, in the House on 6 February on the funding of science in this country. Not surprisingly, quite a lot of the discussion at that time focused on the position of the Science and Engineering Research Council. I do not wish to repeat much of the argument in that debate on the Government's general record on science funding. I would just like to make one point that was repeated in the debate. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) the Labour party spokesman on science is here, because he made this point effectively in the debate, as did others.

I very much regret that the Government have not published, as has been the normal practice in recent years, the advice given by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils. Whatever view one takes of the Government's overall funding of science and, in particular, the latest allocations announced to the science budget generally and to individual research councils, there can be no dispute about the funding crisis at SERC.

On 7 February the Science and Engineering Research Council issued a press notice with the heading

"SERC's measures to combat shortfall in its funding".

Away back in November, because the level of its funding for the current year was being outstripped by inflation, the council had to implement severe measures to cut back spending, including, I believe, a virtual freeze on recruitment. The announcement about the proposed level of funding for 1991-92 for the research council has aggravated that situation.

We have to understand that SERC has a very important role to play within the general framework of science in this country. I respect the position of the Medical Research Council and am a former employee of the Agricultural and Food Research Council, and I understand that they have problems; but the situation confronting SERC stands out as particularly serious. I very much regret the statements that have appeared of late, some in the quality press, that somehow we should not be involved in big science, that somehow there is a case for retrenchment in, if not actual withdrawal from, British participation in what is loosely described as big science, especially astronomy and nuclear physics, the two areas which are particularly threatened and at risk.

I put it to the Minister that it is the Science and Engineering Research Council's role to support that science, because in practice the huge costs involved in equipment and in international subscriptions are such that no university department will pick up this work. SERC is the only organisation which can sponsor much of this research. That is why it is so crucial that it recognises its responsibility to do so.

I make no bones of the fact that my first reason for raising this subject at this hour concerns my interest, as a former scientist and an Edinburgh Member of Parliament, in the future of the royal observatory, Edinburgh. That

observatory and the other SERC observatory, the royal Greenwich observatory at Cambridge are currently the subject of a review. That review was initiated prior to the funding crisis becoming apparent, and certainly prior to any decisions being taken by the council about the funding crisis. However, there is no doubt that the financial crisis puts pressure on that review and makes it more likely that some bad decisions could be taken because of the need to save money in the short term. The review was initiated when Professor Longair accepted another important appointment, and the council decided that that would be an appropriate time to consider the contributions made by the two observatories.

The royal observatory has 122 staff, 20 of whom are based at Hilo in Hawaii. It also funds another 40 local staff in Hawaii. In this modern age, it makes sense for observatories to base their modern telescopes in favourable locations. The real telescope work is carried out at Hawaii.

The royal observatory has a valuable record across the whole spectrum of astronomy. It provides national facilities for astronomers throughout the United Kingdom. Astronomers from a whole range of universities use its facilities. We benefit from the close relationship of the observatory with the astronomy department of Edinburgh university. I emphasise that it is the only SERC laboratory in Scotland. Its director is also the professor of astronomy at Edinburgh and the Astronomer Royal. There is no doubt that that symbiosis between the university department and the SERC staff has created a successful climate for scientific endeavour, which helps to make the observatory such a useful facility for astronomers throughout the country.

I do not want to take too much of the time of the House detailing the achievement of the observatory. I shall concentrate on only a few aspects. What stands out in Edinburgh is the work on instrumentation. It is an important area in astronomy and in the learning of more and more about our planet. The observatory's work is internationally renowned. It has recently delivered a spectrometer to Hawaii which is acknowledged to be three or four years ahead of any of its rivals, including those being developed in the United States. Two large 8m telescopes are to be developed in the late 1990s, one of which is to be based in Hawaii. It is a tribute to the royal observatory staff that they will be managing the 8m telescope in Hawaii. There will be one in the northern hemisphere and one in the southern hemisphere.

The instrumentation department undoubtedly has an exceptional international reputation. Optical engineers, experts in computer software work and scientists in other disciplines work together in that department. Basically, their work is related mainly to telescopes used by astronomers. We should never lose sight of the fact—it was something of which I was very much aware when I worked as a scientist—that the exchange between pure and applied scientists means that the work in some areas of science can be of great benefit to work in other areas. Examples of that relate to work carried out by scientists at the royal observatory in Edinburgh. They analyse slides and pictures of the sky using the sophisticated Cosmos machine which measures the density of photographic emulsion. The pictures are digitised and analysed by computer. Those instruments and that software can be used to improve the detection of cancer cells in cervical smears. This approach can also be used to detect breast cancer at an early stage from X-rays of women's breasts. That is an important collaboration between the Medical Research Council and the scientists at the royal obsdervatory in Edinburgh. That is an important example of the spin-offs that can result from research, particularly when there is such a high-calibre team as that operating in Edinburgh.

The team has also collaborated with the Admiralty in analysing the bubbles that are left by submarines as they move under water. The Admiralty is using some of the team's facilities and techniques to improve submarine detection.

There are other areas of activity at the royal observatory in Edinburgh that I have not had time to mention but which are outstanding by international standards. It would be an act of scientific vandalism if SERC, during its current review, destroyed those teams. That is what is at stake.

There might be a proposal to merge aspects of the work of the royal Greenwich observatory at Cambridge with that in Edinburgh. I can think of nothing more damaging than to transfer the instrumentation work from Edinburgh to Cambridge. If that were proposed, many of the scientists would not move to Cambridge. Such a proposal would destroy one of the jewels of the SERC's effort and that would be nothing short of an act of scientific vandalism.

The threat to the royal observatory in Edinburgh is not a direct consequence of the funding crisis confronting SERC. However, we in Edinburgh fear that the additional pressure that is being brought to bear on the council to make cuts and achieve rationalisations, even when they cannot be justified, could lead to damaging decisions being taken that would seriously affect the long-term contribution that the royal observatory in Edinburgh with its tremendous history, can make in that area.

I want to refer briefly to the threat to nuclear physics, which is another aspect of big science to arise from the crisis facing SERC. A great deal has been made of the fact that about two thirds of the funding of the nuclear physics board within SERC is directed to CERN, the European centre for nuclear research. We must consider these issues objectively. If we examine a graph of CERN's total budget at 1989 prices, between 1980 and 1989 it is clear that the budget has effectively been constant. There was a slight increase, but that was due mainly to new member states joining. Since 1980, the CERN budget has risen in real terms by less than 5 per cent., despite the cost of building the LEP—large electron-position collider. It would be wrong to say that the CERN contribution was a particularly unpredictable element of the nuclear physics board's budget.

The problem is that the nuclear physics board is having to bear the brunt of proposed cuts within SERC. It seems that the council proposes to hit hardest the nuclear structure research as opposed to particle physics.

There is international recognition of the value of the research and the excellence of the British contribution to it. It would be a great setback to not only British science but science throughout the world if some of the proposed cuts were implemented. I shall give only one quotation because I know that there is another debate to follow this one. It is from Claude Detraz the chairman of the European organisation of nuclear physics laboratory heads. With

[Mr. Gavin Strang]

reference to the proposed cuts in nuclear structure research and in particular the proposal to end the support for such research at the Daresbury lab, he said:

"It seems unusual to say the least that such a brutal change should not be accompanied by a detailed evaluation of the anticipated evolution of the field in the next five to ten years."

That is my crucial point on what is happening to nuclear physics research in general and the nuclear structure physics of the Science and Engineering Research Council.

It would be a tragedy if long-term benefits to British science were sacrificed for short-term financial considerations. Undoubtedly, the announced cuts and the further restrictions that they are likely to place on the work, are not the result of a proper objective review of the science and whether it is an area that Britain should be in. I recognise that hard choices have to be made. We cannot give scientists their head simply to carry on working on whatever they want throughout their careers. I respect that. As a former working scientist in my research establishment, I am aware that there were areas in which it was necessary to be fairly ruthless and tell scientists that they had to stop their work because it could not be justified.

I do not dispute that hard decisions have to be taken, but they should be taken on the basis of a proper, objective view of the value of the science and the contribution that it can make.

A supplementary budget for SERC for 1991-92 must be announced before the recess. That is the only way in which we can avoid short-term financial considerations doing long-term damage to British science.

7.57 am

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Well——

Dr. Bray: In one sentence.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, in one sentence.

Dr. Bray: We are about to embark on next year's public expenditure increase round and we must find increases for science budgets in the next financial year, whatever happens in this year.

7.58 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Michael Fallon): The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) has done the House a service in raising the importance of science for the second time in six weeks. I begin by informing the House that the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), who has direct ministerial responsibility for science cannot be here. He is engaged on scientific work. He is chairing a session of the Engelberg forum on bio-ethics in Switzerland.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East referred to the publication of advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils. There has never been any obligation on the Secretary of State to publish that advice. It is confidential advice, and therefore, it is for the Secretary of State to decide whether to publish it.

The core of the debate is the budget of the Science and Engineering Research Council. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East made a good case for big science. Of course, the big international sciences such as astronomy are important, even though they are expensive.

It is equally important that the council's budget be properly balanced to ensure that the key smaller grants around the universities and the smaller scientific institutions are also given sufficient headroom. That is the purpose of the council's current review.

The hon. Gentleman referred specifically to his concern and that of his constituents about the future of the royal observatory in Edinburgh. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State visited the observatory recently and he has seen for himself the high quality of the work there. I can confirm to the hon. Gentleman—and I have the council's agreement to give him this assurance—that the royal observatories in Edinburgh and in Cambridge will continue as separate establishments. There are, therefore, no plans to close either of them.

The review in hand has two purposes. It is intended to ensure that some of the more over-optimistic elements of the council's programme are properly balanced against the need to protect the smaller grants as well as the larger programmes. There should be no doubting the Government's commitment to science. The real-terms increase in the funding for science of 23 per cent. over the past 10 years is a good example of the importance that the Government attach to this area.

It being Eight o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That—

(1) the provisions of the Order [8th November] relating to Business of the House shall be further modified, as follows:

(a) in paragraph (1) shall be inserted the words 'and in paragraph (7) the word 'nine' shall be substituted for the word 'ten' in line 64';

(b) for paragraph (3) there shall be substituted: '(3) Private Members' Bills shall have precedence over Government business on 22nd March, 19th and 26th April, 3rd and 10th May and 5th July; and

(c) for paragraph (4) there shall be substituted: '(4) Private Members' Notices of Motions shall have precedence over Government business on 15th March, 17th May, and 14th, 21st and 28th June, and ballots for these Notices shall be held after Questions on 1st and 15th May, and 5th and 12th June'; and

(2) Orders of the day which have been set down for 12th, 19th and 26th April and 3rd May shall be read and discharged; and the said Orders shall be set down for 19th and 26th April and 3rd and 10th May, respectively.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Sadler's Wells Theatre

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

8 am

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I should begin by declaring an interest, although it is entirely non-pecuniary, as a director of Sadler's Wells theatre, which lies in my constituency. It is the future funding, survival and continued excellence of the work of that theatre that I wish to raise this morning.

As the Minister will know, Sadler's Wells was founded 300 years ago, and relaunched 60 years ago by Lilian Baylis. In the past nine years, it has presented 124 seasons by British companies and 69 seasons by foreign companies, covering 18 different nations to a total of more than 2 million people. Many of its productions have been financed and presented entirely by Sadler's Wells. Many have won awards. But for Sadler's Wells, we might never have seen, for example, the grace of the Central ballet of China, the excitement of Cumbre Flamenca, the rhythms of the Kodo drummers, the flair of Michael Clark or the innovations of the Paul Taylor dance company.

In 1988, the Lilian Baylis theatre was opened alongside the Sadler's Wells theatre to complement the work of the main theatre and to provide a valuable new venue for small-scale professional and community work.

Since 1981, a community and education project has been in place at Sadler's Wells involving and serving hundreds of local people. I invite the Minister to come with me almost any day to Sadler's Wells to see the pensioners' groups, the tenants' and residents' organisations and the groups of schoolchildren who are enabled by the community programme to see how a theatre works, to learn about dance and drama, to meet performers and often to find out at first hand about the productions taking place on the main stage.

As an exciting possibility for the medium-term future, the theatre, together with Thames Water and the London borough of Islington, has been exploring the idea of achieving an entirely new theatre immediately beside the present site. That could present a wonderful new asset for the performing arts in London. In short, Sadler's Wells has an international reputation and represents one of our capital city's finest artistic assets.

Lilian Baylis refounded Sadler's Wells as a theatre for all the people—accessible to all—and I am proud to say that that remains the theatre's policy to this day. Lest it be thought that I am perhaps a little biased in my appreciation of the work that Sadler's Wells does, I will quote the assessment made by the officers of the London boroughs grants scheme of the theatre's work and standing. Its report to the London boroughs grants committee says:

"Sadler's Wells theatre remains a key venue and one certainly worthy of support. The Lilian Baylis theatre and associated community and education projects underscore the company's unique position and conscious regard for a less exclusive and broader based definition of the arts. The indications are good."

Yet for all that, Sadler's Wells receives only 6 per cent. of its entire annual income from public funds of any kind. By comparison, the Royal Opera house receives 42 per cent., the English National opera, which came into being largely as a result of work undertaken at Sadler's Wells, 56 per cent. and the National theatre, 56 per cent. I do not want to denigrate in any way the work of those three great institutions, but the comparison serves to show how amazingly Sadler's Wells performs on a shoestring of public funding.

The theatre has made strenuous efforts to attract commercial corporate sponsorship. It has received in particular strong support for a five-year period from Digital and it receives 20 per cent of its income from sponsorship sources. But especially in a recession, the scope for increased income of that kind is inevitably limited.

The theatre is thriving artistically. It has had one of its best ever seasons, attracting audiences to a series of excellent productions. But through no fault of its own it finds itself currently facing serious financial difficulties. Just four weeks ago, we had to make painful budget-saving decisions at our theatre board meeting.

There are a number of particular prolems. Sadler's Wells royal ballet has moved to Birmingham, taking substantial rental income with it. The sad ending of the new Sadler's Wells opera caused a one-off financial loss in resolving the immediate problems of cessation. The American financier who had committed himself to the creation of the Lilian Baylis theatre pulled out with massive bills unpaid. As a result, the theatre has a historic debt which it will take several years of frantically hard work to pay off. Therefore, the public subsidy provision for the theatre becomes crucial in determining whether its community and education work can survive, whether its commitment to excellence and innovation can continue, and whether its very survival can be guaranteed.

The position over public subsidy is difficult and uncertain to say the least. First, the Minister will be aware of the division within the London boroughs grants committee and its current failure to agree a budget. He will also be aware of its standstill nature, at very best, even if a budget is agreed. He will be aware of the fact that the arts are listed as the lowest priority within the various categories in that draft budget. Although Sadler's Wells passes the committee's assessment with flying colours, the sheer uncertainty that is affecting the theatre, as with hundreds of other London arts organisations, is inevitably harmful.

Secondly, the transformation of Greater London Arts into the London arts board has created further uncertainty. It is good news that a chairman for that board has now been appointed. But there is still no chief executive and no clear mandate for future policy. It will take time to develop that, but in the meantime there is the danger that new initiatives will suffer. After several years of preparatory work, Sadler's Wells submitted an application for revenue funding to Greater London Arts, just two days before the abolition of Greater London Arts was announced. It was prohibited from entertaining any new applications, and the Sadler's Wells application, sadly, fell foul of that rule.

Thirdly, the theatre's funding from the London borough of Islington is small, as is only appropriate in view of the constrained funds of a relatively small local authority and the regional, if not national, nature of the theatre. Despite poll tax capping, Islington has held its grant for Sadler's Wells more or less steady and I strongly hope that that will continue.

Fourthly, and most important, the major source of public subsidy should be the Arts Council. In 1986, when the GLC was abolished and a funding crisis resulted, an

[Mr. Chris Smith]

arrangement was reached for Sadler's Wells to receive, albeit indirectly, £100,000 in funding from the Arts Council in the first year. The money was channelled through some of the touring companies appearing at Sadler's Wells, as the Arts Council claimed that Sadler's Wells was a so-called receiving theatre and as such was ineligible for direct support under Arts Council rules. I shall return to this point, which is crucial to any decision on the future funding of the theatre.

None the less, in 1986 that £100,000 was an enormously welcome and essential lifeline. In 1987, funding fell to £90,000 and in 1988 it fell further to £60,000. This year, it has been £53,700. In a recent decision, the touring board of the Arts Council reduced the forthcoming year's funding to £30,000. In other words, within five years, during which the theatre has experienced acute financial difficulty, the Arts Council's grant has been cut by more than two thirds. That is disastrous for the theatre. I urge the Minister as passionately as I can to ensure that the decline in funding is reversed.

Sadler's Wells does not fit into any neat Arts Council category; it is not a normal receiving theatre. It is a unique entity as it carries out a proactive, entrepreneurial and international role in opera, dance and ballet. It frequently selects, finances and presents its productions at its own risk, on its own initiative and with its own style and success. It links its productions with the education and community work that it has built up, and it provides a base from which companies can launch tours throughout the country.

To do that, Sadler's Wells requires public assistance with its programming and infrastructure. It requires substantially more than the £30,000 that has been allocated by the Arts Council. Surely an uprating of the 1986 figure of £100,000 to allow for inflation should be considered. There may not be a ready made pigeon hole for Sadler's Wells in the Arts Council's structure, but it must look only to the Arts Council for the bulk of its public support. I hope, therefore, that the Minister will do what he can to secure better Arts Council support for a theatre that I am sure he, like me, holds in high esteem.

To see the joy on a child's face, transfixed by the performance on stage, to share the delight of a local pensioner in learning the mysteries of theatrical technique, to savour the grace and dignity of dance at its exuberant best—those are what Sadler's Wells is all about and those are what I ask the Minister to help to secure for the future.

8.15 am

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Tim Renton): The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) has a longstanding and informed interest in the arts. This morning, at 8 o'clock, even after an all-night sitting he has argued his case for the Sadler's Wells theatre with passion, skill and courtesy and, in his final words, with very considerable eloquence.

Just before Christmas I visited Sadler's Wells to see the ballet Cinderella, presented by the London City ballet. As the hon. Gentleman has just described, there were many children in the audience—as there should have been at a performance of Cinderella just before Christmas. The joy to which he has just referred was very evident in their eyes, as was their pleasure in seeing the ballet extremely well danced. Joy was to be seen not only in the eyes of the children; it was in the eyes of the grown-ups, too, including those of my wife and myself. I well understand, therefore, his affection for and pride in this famous theatre—an affection and pride which are felt locally.

I first visited Sadler's Wells when I was 17. The hon. Gentleman reminded us that it has been a place of entertainment for over 300 years. More high jinks than high art went on there during the early part of the theatre's life. It has had its times of success and failure, which is typical of theatres throughout the country and the whole world.

Sadler's Wells's golden period began in 1931 when, against all the odds, Lilian Baylis arranged for the building of the present theatre—"a lyric house" as she saw it, to complement her temple of dramatic arts at the Old Vic. What a delightful phrase that is—"a lyric house." With Dame Ninette de Valois—another quite remarkable woman who is, happily, very much still with us—Baylis proceeded to lay the foundations of what today are our two royal ballet companies and the English National opera. That wonderful and unique achievement is inevitably and indelibly linked with the Wells.

It was very kind of the hon. Gentleman to invite me to attend performances with him at Sadler's Wells. As I have just mentioned, I was there to see Cinderella just before Christmas. I was also there in January when I had the great pleasure of attending the theatre's diamond jubilee celebrations—a memorable occasion indeed which underlined the formative role of Sadler's Wells in the blossoming of ballet and opera in this country, a blossoming which, surprisingly, has happened only recently.

As the hon. Gentleman reminded us, the theatre remains a vibrant force in the cultural life of the capital, presenting the work of a wide range of dance, opera and other companies from home and, with some distinction, from abroad, too. I know that, as the hon. Gentleman told us, the theatre pursues the commendable policy of attracting new audiences and that, in the Baylis tradition, does all that it can to ensure that seat prices are affordable.

I understand, too, that recently the theatre has had a particularly successful year in terms of the quality of its productions, high attendance levels and the balancing of its budget—no mean achievements. In all of that, I am at one with the hon. Gentleman. However, as I think he suspects, that is the easy part of my speech. Now I have to turn to the more difficult area. First, however, may I pick up his point about the possible new development.

I, too, recently met Stephen Remington, the director of Sadler's Wells, primarily in order to learn more about the proposed collaboration with Thames Water to build a new theatre for Sadler's Wells as part of a major redevelopment of the new Riverhead site. That is a serious proposition, and I wish the venture well. It will be a significant and welcome addition to arts facilities in the capital if it succeeds.

Not surprisingly, Mr. Remington took the opportunity to inform me of the theatre's revenue funding position. I listened with great interest, but I had to explain that this was very much a matter for the relevant funding agencies —the Arts Council, Greater London Arts, the London boroughs grants committee and the hon. Gentleman's local authority, Islington borough council. The system that we employ in this country for Government funding of the arts relies in many ways on what in recent weeks I have

had to refer to with almost numbing frequency as the application of the arm's-length principle. As the hon. Gentleman well knows, it is not my job to make judgments on artistic policies and priorities. I might often like to do so, but by tradition—a good one—such judgments are a matter for the Arts Council and its advisers, and for the regional arts bodies. I do not fund individual arts organisations directly. I allocate grant-in-aid to the Arts Council and it is for it to decide—in the light of its funding policies and after expert assessments from its panels—the allocation of funds within and between the various art forms. The Arts Council is also responsible for the allocation of funds to the regional arts associations shortly to become the new regional arts boards, which, in turn, decide on the pattern and levels of funding to their clients.

Funding of the arts, as the hon. Gentleman, with all his experience, knows, is always a very sensitive issue. Getting the allocations right between all the bodies with a good claim on public funding is not and never has been easy. This is a task best left to the sort of disinterested but expert advisers on which the Arts Council can call. I suspect that, despite his heartfelt appeals to me today, the hon. Gentleman would agree with me on that basic principle.

It has been an underlying principle of Arts Council policy over the years that it should not fund what are referred to as receiving theatres. The hon. Gentleman used the expression himself. A receiving theatre does not have its own producing companies. It just attracts companies to its house. This decision is based on a judgment of the most effective use of the inevitably finite resources available to the Arts Council.

A proper division of responsibilities is for the Arts Council to support producing companies and for local funding bodies to support the receiving theatres in their areas. That policy has been applied with great success, enabling the growth of a marvellous range of drama, dance and opera companies that tour very extensively. The Birmingham Royal Ballet, London Contemporary Dance, Phoenix Dance, Glyndebourne Touring Opera and Opera 80 are just some of the Arts Council clients that give performances at Sadler's Wells. At the same time, there is a network of receiving theatres, from Bradford to Swindon, from Hull to Plymouth, that are maintained essentially with local support.

Sadler's Wells is regarded by the Arts Council as a receiving theatre and, on that basis, it has specifically declined to accept that it has a funding responsibility to the theatre. I know that Sadler's Wells fiercely argues that it is not simply a receiving house but that it acts in an entrepreneurial capacity in promoting the shows that are presented there. The council has considered that view with great care, but suggests that many receiving theatres act as promoters in the sense that they choose and promote the companies that perform in their theatres; and that by definition Sadler's Wells is not predominantly a producer, or even a commissioner of work.

Mr. Chris Smith: This point gets to the heart of the argument about the Arts Council's approach to Sadler's Wells. Will the Minister answer two questions? First, has the Arts Council, in reaching that decision about Sadler's Wells, taken into account its role in attracting international companies into Britain, and introducing them, for the first time, to British audiences? Secondly, if that is the argument of the Arts Council, why does it provide funding directly to the South Bank Centre?

Mr Renton: The South Bank Centre is different, because it provides a complex of facilities, such as concert halls, and so receives a large grant. As to the hon. Gentleman's first point, the Arts Council has taken into account the fact that Sadler's Wells receives international touring companies. In one or two instances, applications are to be decided on a project basis, which will deal with international touring companies coming to Sadler's Wells in the year immediately ahead.

As a result of the GLC transitional funding arrangement, it was agreed that the theatre would receive financial help, but on a reducing scale for a three-year period, during which time it would negotiate with the local authorities for a replacement of their metropolitan grant. It was on that basis that Sadler's Wells received £100,000 from the Arts Council in 1986-87, reducing to £53,000 in 1988-89.

The hon. Gentleman referred, as I expected him to, to Greater London Arts. That body did not assume any responsibility for funding Sadler's Wells after the abolition of the Greater London council and does not therefore provide core or revenue funding. It does support from time to time specific projects that meet its funding guidelines. Sadler's Wells has applied for project funding and has been invited to apply further when funding guidelines for 1991-92 are published in a few weeks' time.

The new London arts board, to which the hon. Gentleman also referred, will be fully operational on 1 October 1991. Its establishment will provide a new framework for arts funding in London and Sadler's Wells will naturally be at liberty to pursue its case vigorously with the new board. I am glad that the London arts board has a chairman, Clive Priestley, whom I appointed the other day. He is experienced in arts matters in the capital and I think that he will bring a great quality of leadership to the arts board.

I accept that a good deal of uncertainty has been generated as a result of the delay in the London boroughs grant scheme being settled for the fast-approaching new financial year. I have been in touch with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on this matter. My right hon. Friend prescribed a maximum level of expenditure, at the figure of £30·1 million, which was recommended by the London boroughs grants committee. I share the hon. Gentleman's disappointment that the committee, at its meeting earlier this week, did not agree a budget. However, I was pleased to learn that at that meeting, all-party agreement, in principle, was reached on the grant for Sadler's Wells, and for a number of other arts clients, for 1991-92. I understand that the Sadler's Wells grant is to be maintained at its current year level—£73,000. I am sure that this outcome will be welcome.

I understand that Islington borough council, which this year is funding Sadler's Wells to the extent of £24,000, proposes to maintain its funding in the year just starting, although with a reduction of 4 per cent.

I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman will be disappointed by what I have said. I should have liked to give him more encouragement. However, as I said, I do not become involved in decisions relating to the funding of individual arts organisations. I have great sympathy with any company that seeks to safeguard its financial future and expand its artistic horizons. As the hon. Gentleman will know from his long experience, resources for the arts will always be finite. Fine words butter no parsnips. I suspect that, under a Labour Government, those resources

[Mr Renton]

would be even more finite, and therefore more limited, than under a Conservative Government who have increased the grant to the Arts Council by 12·5 per cent in the current year and 11 per cent. in the coming year.

More generally, much of the recent uncertainty about arrangements for the funding of the arts in London has now been removed, with the firm starting date set for the new London arts board. This will create a climate of renewed confidence and an opportunity for comprehensive reappraisal of existing policies. Against that background, Sadler's Wells will wish to consider how best to take this matter forward. I am confident that, given the dedication and talent at its disposal, Sadler's Wells and its board will meet and overcome the challenges of the future with their usual resourcefulness. I wish the hon. Gentleman and the other members of the board every continued success.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Eight o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 15 March 1991

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

The Gulf (Ecology)

9.35 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I beg to move,

That this House calls on Her Majesty's Government to display the same effort as they injected into military combat in fighting oil slicks in the Gulf, burning oil fires, and as soon as possible cholera, hepatitis, typhoid and other diseases arising from open sewers and related destruction in Kuwait, Baghdad and other cities; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to send a task force of environmental experts to the Middle East.

Were proof needed of the proposition that "Modern war creates more problems than is solves", the events in the Gulf from 15 January to 15 March 1991 would provide ample evidence. We have opened a Pandora's box without any clear idea of solutions. Yet, however we sleep-walked into war and however that war was conducted, particularly after it was clear that the Iraqi forces in Kuwait had become a rabble of looters on their way north, the necessary parliamentary inquest is more appropriate to a two or three-day mid-week debate than to a private Member's motion on a Friday. *[Interruption.]* Last night in the debate on the Easter Adjournment, I spoke about the Basra bombing. I do not propose to regurgitate what was said then, but I hope that there will at some time be answers to the serious questions that were raised.

It is profoundly unsatisfactory, to the point of being a cause for shame on us, that the opportunity for the first debate since 21 January—excluding the truncated debate initiated by the Scottish National party in late February—as opposed to ministerial statement, should have had to be as a result of my extraordinary luck in the ballot.

The reality of the human and ecological catastrophe in, let us call it, Mesopotamia is apparent for all who have eyes to watch television. Let me therefore deal with the motion, which concentrates on three problems, in perhaps ascending order of important. The first problem is that of the oil slicks. What is their latest known position? What is their status? What is the forecast about their possible dissipation, given the Nowruz experience during the Iran-Iraq war? What assessment has the Natural Environment Research Council, acting for the Department of the Environment, now made of the biological effects of oil spillage in the Gulf, particularly of the likely effects of oil on the coral ecosystem?

If I ask in particular, as I did on 7 February, about the coral islands of Qarah, Umm Al Maradim and Kubbar, it is because Dr. Nigel Downing—about whose work I contacted the Department of the Environment in late January and whose phone number I gave to the Prime Minister's office nine days ago—told me, speaking from his eight years' experience working for the Kuwait science institute, that they are crucial for the protection of fish larvae and the replenishment of fish throughout the northern Gulf. The islands support the lesser-crested tern, ospreys and many other birds.

I am sure that all hon. Members present understand that we are about to embark on the major fish breeding season, that fish are starting to spawn and that the perturbations caused by oil slicks could break the food chain, perhaps causing famine in fish-dependent communities in the Gulf states and Iran. There is a major concern: what is being done to protect the mud-flats, which affect so much of the primary productivity of the Gulf and the plankton? If the desalination plants constitute an understandable priority, will protective booms for the mud-flats be considered? We must also consider the mangroves and the salt marshes. I understand that in some salt marshes the oil is 2 m thick.

It was extremely courteous of the Minister to send me the Conservative central office brief. The key points on the first page include the following information:

"The Government has ordered 3 oil recovery skimmers worth £300,000 which will be sent to Bahrain.

90 tonnes of anti-pollution equipment—mostly booms—from industry stocks held in Britain were flown out to the Gulf on the 28th, 29th and 30th January."

Is there any shortage of equipment? Mr. David Olsen, the technical adviser on pollution to the Saudi Government, suggests that there is. I refer to my question on 19 February, when I asked:

"Why should Mr. David Olsen, the consultant adviser on the environment to the Saudi Government, complain about a shortage of equipment?"

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces said:

"I cannot answer for Mr. David Olsen. However, we have done our bit by sending about 90 tonnes of equipment which has been held here by the Department of Transport to help clean up the problems in the area."—[*Official Report*, 19 February 1991; Vol. 186, c. 134.]

That is nothing like the scale of the operation that is clearly needed. Can the Minister persuade the House that the mechanism for getting scientists and experts out to the Gulf to examine the database has been co-ordinated by the United States, Germany, Italy, France, Japan and others who have a contribution to make? What financial support has been given to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and to the International Council for Bird Preservation? I understand that the Saudis have asked for the team to monitor the spring migration and the numbers of breeding sea birds.

I refer again to the brief from Conservative central office from Rachel Whetstone. It says:

"The Government has supported the RSPCA team which is in the Gulf training volunteers to clean oil drenched birds."

The brief continues:

"Despite international efforts, some 10,000 to 20,000 off shore birds, particularly socotra cormorants and grebes, are thought to have died as a result of oil drenching. In the last week, a number of early migratory birds, for example mallards, have been found covered in oil. These numbers will undoubtedly rise as the migrating season advances. In addition, the livelihood of local communities dependent on the sea has come under threat."

Rachel Whetstone's figures are grossly underestimated.

I should like to refer to the problems of the humped-back dolphin and dugongs, the sea-cow of the Gulf, green turtles and hawksbill turtles, socotra cormorants and a host of other species which are once again the victims of the inconceivable barbarity of the human brain.

I put on record a letter from the Bahraini ambassador, who writes:

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

"I believe that the serious ecological disasters of the Gulf war need an expert international effort and action to combat the devastating immediate and long term ecological consequences not only in the Gulf region but worldwide. The unprecedented magnitude of the oil slick and burning oil wells will, no doubt, have dangerous consequences on the global environment. Therefore, I whole heartedly support your timely initiative to raise this question with a view to calling on Her Majesty's Government to send a task force of environmental experts to be despatched to the Gulf region to help extinguish the hundreds of fires at oil wells and preserve the human environment in general, and the marine environment in particular."

That was the view of the Bahraini Government.

What recommendations on wildlife have Ministers received from Roy Dennis of the RSPB and from Burr Heneman, the director of the United States section of the International Council for Bird Preservation? There are a number of comparatively small decisions and actions that could save species. For example, the rare bridled tern which breeds at the height of summer needs vegetation or shade to keep cool. I am told that a little provision could be made to create substitutes for destroyed vegetation in the traditional breeding ground.

My experience is that there are officers and other ranks in the services who know and care a great deal about wildlife. At least those who are known to have an interest might be approached to implement the type of recommendation that Roy Dennis and Burr Heneman will almost certainly make. As with every other question, I have given notice of the issue to relevant Ministers.

I refer to a matter that I raised as an example yesterday on the Scottish Natural Heritage Bill. It concerns the red-necked phalarope which nests in Shetland—there are about 30 pairs—and winters in the Indian ocean. It comes to us to breed, but in a few weeks it will be passing through the Gulf. Perhaps none of them will get through if they land in the oil slicks. That is a concrete example that concerns those of us who wish to find an answer.

In their report Roy Dennis and Burr Heneman say that to understand how migrant waders use the coast, detailed counts will be carried out in April and May. Data will be collected on species, numbers and percentages oiled at a selection of sites representing oiled and unoiled areas. Four teams of two ornothologists will undertake field work in four main areas. The daily monitoring will include the mapping of bird distribution through tidal cycles in April and May as well as collecting data on species, numbers and ages and state of migration. If possible, an attempt will be made to catch and ring waders as well as to collect biometric data. The main questions to be dealt with are how many waders use the coast on their spring migration, do different flocks of waders choose particular bays to feed in before making their long flights or do they trickle up the coast, and what percentage of birds get oiled? I have put the Department in touch with Michael Rands, and I hope that some reference will be made to these problems.

Before moving to the next part of the motion which is in ascending order of importance, I must say that I do not wish to give the impression that birds are the most important issue with which we must deal, but that is the way the motion is structured.

Before moving on to the next part of the motion on oil fires, I have one further question and it contains an element of recrimination. Why was little or no thought given to deliberate oil spills by Iraq as an instrument of war? In a 55-minute speech—I shall be briefer today as many colleagues wish to speak—in column 403 of the *Official Report* of 19 December 1990, I warned of oil spills. It took no great prescience to do so on my part as Saddam Hussein was making precisely those threats. May I ask why, before the war was started—it is not simply a matter of hindsight—booms and other equipment were not in position or at least available?

I refer the House to an answer given by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 7 February 1991 to my question about the islands in column 221 of the *Official Report*. I challenge whether the scale of the problem was sufficiently understood. In an answer on 11 March 1991, the Secretary of State for the Environment said:

"In my Department, which has had the lead in environmental aspects of the Gulf conflict, around 20 civil servants have been involved to some degree in responding to these issues, including requests for assistance from the Gulf states. For about 5 staff, this has been a major part of their work. In other Departments closely involved the position is similar."—[*Official Report*, 11 March 1991; Vol. 187, c. 369.]

Does that represent the scale needed to tackle the greatest ecological disaster of our time? Criticism about the oil spillages is as nothing to the anger that some of us feel about the oil wells. We have continued to nag at every parliamentary opportunity—and every other opportunity—on

"flames such as Mother Earth has never witnessed."

We nagged during Prime Minister's questions on 13 November and on 11 December. At the scientists conference we were dismissed and told that we were exaggerating and being alarmist and we were rubbished.

I am especially distressed at the Secretary of State for Energy's response to figures given by the King of Jordan and, subsequently, to the warnings of photo-chemical smog given most prominently by Paul Crutzen of the Max Planck institute. I wish to put on record part of a letter of 23 January from the Secretary of State for Energy. It states:

"Since your letters of 24 December and 6 January, my private office have sent you a copy of the Meteorological Office's report on the possible environmental impacts if Saddam Hussein should set fire to the Kuwaiti oil wells. The report suggests that, in the worst case scenario, there would indeed be environmental harm but that the only possible longterm effect is the impact of carbon dioxide emissions on global warming which would be almost negligible."

It is the word "negligible" that some of us question. The Energy Secretary went on:

"There is no indication of global environmental catastrophe. The Met Office, as you know, have an excellent reputation in this field and their report should now ensure that these issues are seen in a proper perpective."

Who on earth wrote the final draft of the Meteorological Office report? I have given notice of that question, so I hope for an answer. Was it really Dr. Keith Browning FRS, with whom I spoke on the telephone at Christmas, but who was understandably inhibited in what he said to me? It would be one thing to say, "We don't know", but another to play down the worst possible scenario and to write a report that allowed the Secretary of State for Energy to dismiss our fears as "negligible".

If, by chance, the document produced by the Met Office on the possible environmental impacts of burning oil wells, and which I am about to go through, was not Dr. Browning's original report, but doctored by Whitehall, the Commons should be told. The first paragraph of the Met Office document states:

"The Meteorological Office has been asked by the Government to assess the environmental consequences of burning Kuwaiti oil wells. The estimates given below are based on preliminary calculations and on limited information."

That is strange wording for a fellow of the Royal Society. The paragraph continues:

"There are uncertainties due to lack of knowledge in many areas, ranging from the characteristics of the smoke emitted, to the chemical reactions which would take place and the nature of the weather conditions."

If there were uncertainties, how did Dr. Browning reach the conclusions that he did? Paragraph 2 of the report states:

"For the purposes of estimating environmental impacts, the Meteorological Office was advised to take the following worst case scenario: the quantity of oil burnt would be equivalent to one year of Kuwait's pre-invasion production of 80 million tonnes (Mt) per year spread out over one year. This would give rise to approximately 2 Mt of sulphur in the form of sulphur oxides, 0·5 Mt of nitrogen in the form of nitrogen oxides and 60 Mt of carbon as carbon dioxide gas. A further assumption is that 6% of the oil would be converted to black smoke, yielding 5 Mt. Other assumptions could lead to different emissions and the amounts, in particular, of smoke could be significantly less. There are several possible effects, as considered in the following paragraphs."

Paragraph 3 states:

"The only possible long term effect is the impact of carbon dioxide emissions on global warming. This will be almost negligible."

Did Dr. Browning really write about,

"the only possible long term effect"?

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Can the hon. Gentleman tell us the difference between the emissions and consequences of the flaring of oil and gas in an uncontrolled way and some of the uncontrolled emissions that occur when oil and gas are used commercially? Surely that results in the same combustion. I ask my question in the spirit of genuine inquiry.

Mr. Dalyell: I shall have a go at answering that on another occasion. My blunt answer must be that my speech is long enough and others want to participate——

Mr. Bottomley: It was a genuine question.

Mr. Dalyell: I am sure it was. It is an important question, but I would rather not be diverted.

Paragraph 4 of the Met Office document states:

"Acid deposition from sulphur and nitrogen compounds could be significant close to Kuwait, but would probably not have serious widespread long-term consequences."

Did Dr. Browning write that? The paragraph continues:

"Close to and downwind of Kuwait, the concentrations of ground-level ozone could be comparable with those typical of photochemical smogs in major cities."

If Dr. Browning was talking about photochemical smogs, how do we draw the general conclusion that scientists warnings can be dismissed? Paragraphs 5 and 6 of the Met Office report state:

"Close to Kuwait, the plume could cause a considerable reduction in daylight and daytime temperatures.

Emissions of black smoke could produce effects in areas remote from Kuwait, if the smoke were sufficiently dense and reached the upper atmosphere."

Did Dr. Browning really use the words "if" and "could"? The paragraph continues:

"Whether or not the smoke reached the upper atmosphere would depend critically on the absorption of sunlight by the smoke, which depends on its physical characteristics, and hence on details of the combustion. Other relevant factors are the efficiency with which rain and other processes remove the smoke from the atmosphere."

The effect of the smoke on global temperatures is likely"—I stress "likely"—

"to be small. Downwind of Kuwait, the obscuration of sunlight might significantly reduce the surface temperature locally".

Was the word "might" really Dr. Browning's? The paragraph continues:

"This in turn could locally reduce the rainfall over parts of SE Asia during the period of the summer monsoon. The uncertainty of these estimates, and the great natural variability seasonally and locally in the monsoon, are emphasised."

As far as I am concerned, the document has the fingerprints of Whitehall all over it. It has played down the consequences. For 24 years I have been a weekly columnist for the *New Scientist* and I am used to reading heavyweight articles from scientists. The document does not appear to be the kind of paper to be produced by a scientist. If I am wrong, I shall be told.

Paragraph 8 of the document states:

"If the smoke reaches the ozone layer, the smoke particles and nitrogen oxides could lead to small reductions in ozone concentrations within the northern hemisphere. However, any effects at a given location on the ground would be short lived."

Was that really the considered conclusion of the scientists? I have dwelt on that document at some length because the tragedy is that if the truth, as it was known to many scientists, had been acknowledged, Saddam Hussein—given his knowledge of what might happen to southern Iraq—might not have ordered the ignition of the oil wells. When we were playing down the ecological catastrophe, doubtless, the Iraqis were listening. If we had told the truth about that ecological catastrophe, other events might have been different.

Dr. John Cox, who was the most prominent in his warnings, is the scientific equivalent of the Birmingham Six. John Cox, Tim Eiloart, Penny Kemp and others who campaigned at the conference in time to avoid the ecological disaster are owed a bit of an apology. I hope that the Minister is rather more gracious than the Home Secretary was to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin).

I must also pay tribute to Mr. Ormerod, Mr. Ron Huzzard and others of Labour Action for Peace. In its most recent pamphlet it stated:

"Scientists at the conference organised by the Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons"—

it has an honourable record in this matter—

"on 14 November estimated that one million civilians could be injured and over 100,000 killed in a Gulf war. A Washington think tank gives a military casualty list of 210,000, with 40,000 dead. Dr. Hugh Middleton, a psychologist said: 'We believe it would be an irrational response, akin to mass mental illness, to go to war in the Gulf, in the face of all these potential casualties'."

It makes no difference that the casualties were mostly on one side because there has been nothing like it in terms of casualty ratios since the Conquistadors. I fear that the numbers, as predicted, have turned out to be true.

One must be fair and I want to draw attention to what the Green party has said about the environmental consequences of the Gulf war. That may or may not meet with the approval of my Chief Whip, who is courteously present. However, in the past few months a number of us have shared platforms with members of the Green party. I quote from a letter by Roger Giles of Exeter:

"As you know the Green Party co-organised the symposium on the environmental consequences of the Gulf war which was held in London on 2 January.

[Mr. Dalyell]

As a result John Wakeham, Energy Secretary, immediately sought to play down the conclusions reached by many eminent people present at the symposium, using the device of writing to John Hannam (Exeter MP and Energy Committee Secretary), and releasing the letter to the media, the purpose being to head off any public opposition to a war which such consequences might prejudice.

I have seen the various papers emanating from the Department of Energy, including the letter from John Wakeham to you dated 7 January in which he refers to 'your anonymous caller'. Presumably this refers to the DoE official who disputed the scientific basis for Mr. Wakeham's attempted put-down.

I should say that I recognise it is not usual to correspond with an MP from another constituency, but I must say that I am unhappy with how Mr. Hannam has dealt with this matter.

Exeter Green Party's Suzanne Dunstan took part in the original symposium on 2nd January (and subsequent gatherings) and was also a member of the Green Party trip to Baghdad in January. The matter is clearly, therefore, one that concerns us greatly.

I am aware of your considerable efforts in this area, and have followed reports of your endeavours in Hansard. I note that you have managed to secure a debate in the House of Commons on Friday 15th March.

Exeter Green Party feels particularly aggrieved about this matter. We warned before the war commenced that environmental catastrophe was probable. The Government disinformation machine sprang into action to counter this. Sadly the predictions have become reality. As I have said I have taken this matter up with John Hannam. The best service he has been able to offer is that of a post office from the Department of Energy. I have enclosed a copy of the correspondence for your information. Remarks such as '. . . any action taken by Saddam Hussein to blow up oil wells in Kuwait will not pose the environmental disaster which your party are forecasting' are a pretty damning indictment. It occurs to me that we have an environmental disaster on a vast scale. Apart from seeing the world's largest ever oil spill, and all the horrific consequences of burning oil wells, we have a Gulf equivalent of Chernobyl and also the unknown effects of bombing chemical plants.

It does concern us greatly that a Government Minister can see it as his duty to distort the facts as Mr. Wakeham has done. I hope that you will manage to expose the untruths that have been promoted during the last few months. Hopefully the truth will out, even if it is only reluctantly, belatedly and as the result of persistence on the part of yourself and other determined individuals.

The priority now, as we see it, is for the co-operation on the part of the allies to conduct a destructive war, to be channelled into making good the environmental catastrophe which has taken place. I made this crucially important argument to Mr. Hannam recently. He was so moved by my arguments and the need for urgent action—that he sent me a standard acknowledgement thanking me for my thoughts!"

I have seen that letter from the secretary of the Conservative party energy committee, in which he says: "the advice is that any action taken by Saddam Hussein to blow up oil wells in Kuwait will not pose the environmental disaster which your Party are forecasting."

The environmental harm is clearly colossal. Vipin Gupta of Imperial college, London, who is the analyst of the images, said that by 21 February black smoke covered 11,000 sq km. Since then, there are pictures of darkness at noon in Kuwait, with 3 million to 6 million barrels a day going up in flames. After 30 days, the area covered by soot cloud could be 4 million sq km. The earth's surface temperature is already 10 deg lower than normal. Kuwait's oil is rich in sulphur and 3 million barrels a day, burning for a year, will pour out about 4 million tonnes of sulphur dioxide into the atmosphere. Together with nitrogen oxides in the smoke, that will produce millions of tonnes of acid rain.

Frank Barnaby says that the smoke cloud seems to be affecting the region's climate, dramatically increasing the amount of rainfall. However, the rain is not the healthy, life-giving rain of Britain but sinister, black and oily—of a kind last seen after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

The Minister cannot dispute those facts because the Conservative party brief says:

"Satellites have also detected smoke 750 miles downwind of the war zone in Iran and 'black rain' has been reported as far as away as southern Turkey."

Rachel Whetstone's report also says:

"The fires have resulted in dark, 'twilight' skies at mid-day within a 50 kilometre radius of the burning wells. Temperatures have fallen below the average for this time of year. In the heavily affected areas photochemical smog is developing, which may cause sore eyes and throats and create breathing difficulties for the elderly and newly born."

On 28 February, James Meek, of *The Scotsman*, wrote:

"The southern Kuwaiti desert was like the day of Judgement. Not a nuclear winter, but a petrochemical autumn. The consequences of the Iraqis burning of the oil wells was tongues of flame all round the compass and the ground vomiting black, stinking smoke. Rain lashed down the faces of the US marines, to make them look like coal miners, and a strong wind rushed across the dunes. Long before the sun went down, its light was soaked up by a dense, unnatural twilight."

On 4 March, Gordon Airs, of the *Record*, wrote:

"I drove north to the Iraqi border, and saw the price that Kuwait has paid to be freed. It is a ruined land. I passed 50 oil wells blazing fiercely, turning the blue sky into a giant blackness."

What effort has been made to monitor hydrogen sulphide and what can be done? I return, yet again, to Paul Krutyen of the Max Planck Institute for Atmospheric Physics in Mainz, who investigated the North sea potential danger in the early 1980s when there was a possibility of attack. Professor Krutyen told me to contact Russell Seitz. The ever-helpful science section of the Library has provided the following note on the eco-consequences of the Gulf:

"I am now writing to you with the results of my telephone call to Mr. Russell Seitz in Massachusetts.

As you indicated, Mr. Seitz has suggested that measures could be taken to improve the combustion of the oil burning in Kuwaiti wells and installations. Mr. Seitz told me that he has submitted his views in a letter to the journal *Nature* for publication on 21st March. As you may know, *Nature* normally insists that ideas and material it has agreed to publish must not be aired elsewhere beforehand. Both Mr. Seitz and the editor of *Nature* (John Maddox) have agreed that, in this instance, the following information may be used by you in the debate and attributed to Mr. Seitz provided that it is made clear that the full details will subsequently be published in *Nature*.

The essence of this proposal is that oxygen (in practice, air) could be inserted into the Kuwaiti oil fires in order to aid complete combustion, thereby lowering the volume of carbon (soot) and partially combusted hydrocarbons being released into the atmosphere. Mr. Seitz pointed out the difficulties of fire-fighting under the present conditions in Kuwait, as much of the country's infrastructure has been destroyed and water is in extremely short supply. In particular, he raised the possibility of a shortage of transport for the heavy equipment needed to fight the oil fires, such as earth-moving machinery. Air is obviously not in short supply, but there is the question of how the equipment needed to blast large volumes of air into the fire columns will be moved to the sites of the fires. Finally, Mr. Seitz highlighted that the current situation is unprecedented and that unconventional combustion engineering may therefore be needed to tackle a problem of this scale."

I am in no position to judge whether that is a sensible suggestion. However, if Professor Krutyen, with the backing of the Max Planck institute, says that it is a constructive way to proceed, the Government should consider that constructive suggestion.

The crisis is of such a magnitude that it cannot be left to contracts with firms that operate on the say-so of Red Adair and have never tackled anything on such a scale. I shall not criticise the apparent dependence on a man who is now in his mid-70s, with a stroke behind him, because he is backed by an organisation. Instead, I ask, should the world think it sufficient to leave the problem in the hands of Red Adair, Boots and Coots, the Bowden Wild Well Control, and a Canadian firm, Safety Boss, which are geared through their experience to tackling one or two blow-outs at a time?

The motion calls for a massive multinational civil engineering project on the scale of the military operation. Nothing less will do. There has been no experience of dealing with such a huge conflagration. I do not expect the Minister to dispute that because Rachel Whetstone's brief to the Conservatives concludes:

"Any action is impeded by unexploded mines and booby-traps. Many of the wells in the Saudi/Kuwaiti neutral zone require pumping to bring the oil to the surface, and these fires have, or soon will, die through lack of fuel. The problem lies with the 500 odd wells in northern Kuwait that will produce a self-sustaining fire that could burn indefinitely."

That is the problem that we face.

We must be practical and ask who will clear the mines and booby traps in temperatures of 200 deg C. I heard on the excellent Radio FM coverage, the young Paul Wayne, Mr. Adair's grandson in the firm, state that he needed two dozen water pumps per well and ask where the water was to come from. Raymond Henry, vice-president of Mr. Adair's firm, talked about 10,000 to 15,000 gallons of water being needed per minute on each site. It will take two months to lay pipes to bring sea water 100 miles from the sea. That is absolutely out of the range of firms such as Mr. Adair's, however brave and technically skilled they may be. We need an international operation. I have given Energy Ministers notice of that question, and look forward to hearing their thoughts.

Another related question is how the 0·5 tonne cranes will get near enough to their task in substances where the sand is so hot that it is like melting glass. Hon. Members may have heard Mr. Adair say:

"No one can tell how long it will last—I don't care who it is—if we can do this in three years, we'll be lucky."

It is not known how long it will last and the costs involved are mind-boggling. Each support person is paid $700 a day and the fire fighters receive $1,500 to $1,700 a day.

When the Prime Minister saw what he called

"the depressing and appalling sight of smoke clouds over Kuwait",

I wonder whether he recollected the exchange that we had when I asked oral question 1 on 11 December:

"To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to the answer of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) of 13 November, *Official Report*, column 446, if he will specify those figures which he possesses relating to oil stocks, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide, which differ from those given by the King Hussein, showing in each case the comparable figures and the source for those which he uses."

The present Prime Minister replied:

"No, Sir. The calculations rest on assumptions about the consequences of a conflict in the Gulf which, by nature, are not quantifiable. The best way to avoid any adverse consequences is for Saddam Hussein to comply with the United Nations resolutions in full."

I then asked:

"Is not the spine-chilling truth that no mining engineer, no scientist, and no politician knows for certain what will occur if 300 deep-mined oil wells are detonated?"

My mistake was to suggest that the figure was only 300; it is now 500 or, if the Kuwait Petroleum Company's figure is right, 800. I continued:

"In those circumstances, might not the fires rage for months, if not years, in a fashion quite outside human experience? In view of that, should not the damage to the planet, let alone the human slaughter and the Arab ecological disaster, rule out any talk of a military option?"

The Prime Minister replied:

"As the hon. Gentleman says, no one can be absolutely and precisely certain about the outcome. In so far as it is possible to make an assessment, we see no reason to agree with any of the views put forward thus far as to what the outcome may be."—[*Official Report*, 11 December 1990; Vol. 182, c. 814.]

On what basis did the Prime Minister say that? The Government had had notice of my question. A month earlier I asked the former Prime Minister to make a statement on her discussions in Geneva with King Hussein of Jordan in relation to the ecological consequences of war in the middle east. The former Prime Minister replied:

"My bilateral discussions with King Hussein did not cover this subject, as I made clear to the hon. Gentleman on 7 November. However, if a tyrant is never to be fought in order that freedom and justice may be restored, tyranny will triumph in all its brutality and the environment of human rights, which we seek to extend, will have received a fatal blow."

I replied:

"If King Hussein is right and 50,000 million barrels of oil equivalent go up in flames, what will be the result in terms of carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide, and what would that do to people and the planet?"—[*Official Report*, 13 November; Vol. 180, c. 446.]

The former Prime Minister did not answer that question. As I am not making a party political point, I shall add, in candour, that the Labour party leader, my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), saw me courteously and privately at the end of November to discuss the ecological consequences. I am not making a party point, but saying to politicians, my colleagues—for goodness sake, what kind of scientific assessment is made before actions are set in motion that could have the most disastrous consequences? The hell of the matter is that, had politicians been less dismissive of the scientists' warning, Saddam Hussein and Iraq might have taken more notice of the effect on southern Iraq, parts of which are likely to be as badly affected as Kuwait.

The final section of the motion calls on the Government to fight disease in Kuwait and, as far as possible, in Baghdad and other cities. I shall confine myself to one question on Kuwait. I am told by Bill Spiers, of the Scottish Trades Union Congress, who has deep knowledge of the Palestinian problem, that a respectable case can be made for saying that the Palestinians are responsible for much of the prosperity of Kuwait, and that many of them have made their home there for 30 years. Will they be allowed to languish there, uncared for, or simply sent on their way with nowhere to go?

Earlier in the week I telephoned the Foreign Office to ask for Her Majesty's Government's views. I hope that if my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) has a chance to speak, he will repeat the moving speech that I heard him make in Committee on the

[Mr. Dalyell]

problem of what he called the pogroms. His speech contained other powerful sections drawn from his deep knowledge of the Palestinian communities, which he has visited.

During the war, it was reiterated time and again that the coalition had no quarrel with the Iraqi people. If we assume that that is true, do we not have an obligation to offer medical and health-related help? Whatever the recent past, the here-and-now is that more than 4 million people in Baghdad face a public health crisis of vast proportions because of what international health authorities call

"grossly inadequate water and sanitation services."

The Red Cross says that, unless Iraq immediately receives massive international relief, the city could soon suffer outbreaks of cholera, typhoid, hepatitis and polio. The drinking water for millions of people comes from the Tigris river, which is being fouled by gushing streams of raw sewage. Water purification plants have been disabled and the electrical generating plants that powered them have been destroyed. Dr. Mohammed Ani, director of immunisation and primary health care for the Iraqi Ministry of Health, said:

"We are being killed indirectly."

I was moved by John Pilger's accounts when he said that the weakest, youngest and oldest would be the first to suffer. Mr. Rojo, the correspondent of *El Mundo*, said that 50 children a day were dying in Baghdad for want of electricity. He referred to water-borne diseases as "that silent assassin." The water-borne diseases may prove the greatest danger. Dr. Ezio Gianni Murzi, an Italian who represents the United Nations children's fund in Iraq, sees as a major problem the 65 million cubic yards flowing from Baghdad into the Tigris every month. Air raids targeted plants that manufactured purification chemicals such as chlorine. With the pumping stations knocked out, water cannot be pumped from the river to the treatment plants. How are the Government responding to the urgent appeal from UNICEF and the World Health Organisation for water treatment chemicals? What is the supply of chlorine in Baghdad? Have the coalition even asked?

Raymond Naimy, a UNICEF emergency official, said that Baghdad's water supply had been cut by 90 to 95 per cent. at a time when Iraq's brief chilly spring was ending, and the scorching summer was to begin. The risk of disease will increase dramatically as the weather turns hot over the next few weeks. I shall be personal for a moment, though relevant—my father, as a young man before the first world war, was private secretary to Sir William Willcocks. Britain's most famous imperial water engineer, who attempted to recreate the ancient irrigation systems, and thereby fashioned most of Iraq. Central to his scheme, Willcocks completed the Hindaya barrage in 1914. The management of rivers is central to what is a hydraulic civilisation. How can a third world country be expected to repair such damage by its own efforts?

Because of the shortage of time, I will simply say that the same argument applies to Kuwait. There is a desperate need for us to do something about the appalling health problems there. I raised the matter at Scottish Office Question Time on 6 March, and I have been told that a brief has been sent by the Scottish Office to the Minister who will reply to this debate. Meantime, on 13 March, the Minister of State, Scottish Office wrote to me saying:

"Following my answer to your supplementary question on 6 March . . . you asked about the assistance which might be given by the NHS in Scotland to alleviate the problems of communicable diseases in Kuwait and Iraq. I understand that the international arrangements for the provision of emergency medical aid to these countries is being co-ordinated and undertaken by the United Nations and its agencies such as UNICEF. This should helpfully ensure that assistance is fully synchronised and appropriately focused. I can assure you, however, that any specific request for help from the National Health Service in Scotland, which is compatible with these arrangements, would be quickly and sympathetically considered. Moreover, I have no doubt that if a Scottish doctor or other professional wished to participate in the current international response, health boards would look favourably on any such proposal."

What about sanctions? We are left only with our own unproven assessments about whether, given longer, sanctions would have worked. But consider the strength of the United States and British insistence that sanctions must remain in place until Iraq has complied with all the relevant United Nations resolutions. The Foreign Secretary said that sanctions should not be lifted lightly or prematurely, and he claimed that their potency should not be underestimated. In that case, how come that a weapon that was deemed inadequate to dislodge the Iraqis from Kuwait is now deemed too important to surrender, now that they have gone?

In addition to all the other problems, there are the problems created by the thousands of returning troops, maimed and injured to Baghdad.

There should be an urgent response to the UNICEF and WHO requests and requirements. We should go further. Far from acquiescing in President Bush's statement that he would not give a dime to Iraq, we should offer some places in British hospitals that were cleared for our returning wounded to maimed Kuwaitis and Iraqis, be they Shi'ites, Kurds or other injured.

Ambassador von Richthofen understandably sent the Minister of State for the Armed Forces a copy of a letter that he wrote to me following a question that I put to the German ambassador at Lord Kimberley's defence group about provision in Federal Republic hospitals. I hope that the British Government are prepared to have discussions with the EEC countries about that. It might be helpful if I were to read into the record Baron Hermann von Richthofen's letter to me, in which he wrote:

"Thank you very much indeed for your kind letter dated 19 February 1991.

With reference to the matter of German medical support for British forces in the Gulf, I should like to inform you about the whole issue:

Firstly, the Federal German Government has offered facilities in German hospitals including beds for wounded soldiers both for British and American troops. The British authorities have not accepted this offer as yet.

Secondly, there have been flights carried out by the German Armed Forces from Cyprus in support of British forces; casualty evacuation could be part of it.

Thirdly, since the end of last year German medical officers have been working in British Armed Forces hospitals located in Germany in lieu of their British colleagues currently deployed in the Gulf.

In addition to this governmental support also private initiatives are taking place. For example one of the major German Ambulance Organisations (Johanniter Unfall-Hilfe) has offered its full service for British Gulf casualties in close co-operation with St. John's Ambulance.

I felt it appropriate to send a copy of this letter to Mr. Archie Hamilton, MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces."

On 18 February 1991 I asked the Secretary of State for Defence what facilities were available in Bundeswehr

hospitals for Gulf wounded, and the Minister of State for the Armed Forces replied that there were no plans to use Bundeswehr hospitals for the treatment of British personnel wounded in the Gulf.

What is the Minister's response to an article in *The Sunday Times* by Sean Ryan under the headline:

"Vast Gulf pollution cloud heads towards Europe"?

I am told that that is not true, but perhaps the Minister should comment on it.

Hon. Members will know that I am not emotional about many subjects. But I suggest that, emotionally, we shall be haunted for a long time to come by what has happened in the last few weeks. We shall be haunted in particular by what occurred on the Basra road. That was done in the name of the American Congress and the British House of Commons. It is up to us to establish the truth. I do not know where the truth will lead us, on that and other matters, but for our future relations with the Arab world, we have a solid obligation to get to the truth, wherever it may lead us. What was done will haunt not only those in my age group but those in the age group of my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), on the Opposition Front Bench, and that of the Minister.

This debate represents a small attempt to discuss alleviating what some of us believe was a historic mistake.

10.25 am

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): That we should be having this debate at all is a measure of the tragic suffering in the Gulf. I wish at the outset to pay tribute to the great scientific expertise and diligence of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), to whose speech we listened with the greatest care and attention, as it deserved. Indeed, his ecological warnings have proved all too true.

However, had there been no use of force by us—had we abstained from war—the human, animal and bird suffering would have been infinite. I fear that we see the left wing's failure of perception in large degree. Saddam Hussein's hatred of humans is mirrored only by his equivalent hatred of the world in which we live. As the Secretary of State for the Environment said on 28 January of this year, words are inadequate to describe the callousness and irresponsibility of his action in deliberately unleashing this environmental catastrophe.

Had Saddam Hussein accepted one of the many peace initiatives put forward by the allies, in which Her Majesty's Government were in the forefront, he would have saved not only 140,000 Iraqi lives, his own people, but the physical devastation of the earth and sea. It was unthinkable, but it happened.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow referred to a number of ways in which the west could respond, and has responded; the purpose of this debate must be to look forward. He spoke about the UNICEF paper. I dined last Friday with Dr. Jolly and heard about the awful things that have happened to Baghdad's water supply. The hon. Gentleman castigated the Government for, he claimed, doing nothing, but I am delighted to report that a joint Oxfam-Save the Children Fund team is out there looking at the situation. I have no doubt that when they return with proposals, the Overseas Development Administration will look at them with great sympathy.

At the height of the war, I put to the Foreign Office questions about the sort of actions that the British Government might take to help Iraqi children after the war. The response was good and warm and I have had subsequent correspondence and meetings on the subject. I have no doubt that the Government's response on behalf of the children of our former enemies will not be wanting.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Miss Nicholson: I must get to Devon urgently to open a new school, so I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way.

The response of the British Government was immediate and effective, for example, in offering key expertise and funding from Britain. Our Prime Minister responded immediately, and I have quoted the Secretary of State for the Environment. That came as no surprise to my hon. Friends and it should not have surprised Opposition Members. Our former Prime Minister committed the United Kingdom to an environmental outlook several years ago. Our former United Nations ambassador, Sir Crispin Tickell, is one of the world's leading environmental specialists. He has been committed to the environment since he was a boy and has been at the forefront of Britain's work in this area.

As a result of that great work, we were thus the first country to respond financially to the International Maritime Organisation's appeal for money. We immediately gave £1 million. The Department of the Environment's key experts in pollution control and the ecology went immediately to the Gulf to help. We have ordered three oil recovery skimmers, with a value of £300,000, to go to Bahrain. On 28, 29 and 30 January we sent no fewer than 90 tonnes of anti-pollution equipment to the Gulf by air. We undertook that first-class cluster of important measures at the very height of the war.

What more can we do now, despite the fact, which can be so readily overlooked now that our own forces are not so heavily involved, that the conflict in the Gulf is continuing? We can help more. The United Kingdom has vast knowledge of induced breathing difficulties—a lucky heritage, in terms of knowledge, from London's smog. It is important to work on that, because the incomplete combustion of oil-producing carcinogens may cause cancer. Our medical help might be offered to assess and limit that damage to humans and animals. Perhaps both historically and currently, due to our background, we have more knowledge about the health and welfare of many of the peoples of the Gulf and surrounding countries, including even India, than many other countries. I am sure that our work would be well considered, well respected and well accepted by those nations. I hope that we shall help in that way.

The United Kingdom also has much weather expertise. Indeed, we talk about it all the time. The Meteorological Office has been running special weather models throughout the war. Perhaps it could continue to do so and to offer two-day forecasts of the dispersion and wash-out of pollutants. That would offer valid warnings to people in the Gulf area and beyond. When I use the word "valid", I cannot help but remind the House of the public's disbelief in the validity of the Met Office's forecasts in recent years. Much time has passed since the Met Office could not understand why everybody laughed when its spokesman said plaintively, in a public statement, "We cannot understand why the general public do not believe our forecasts. After all, they are right for 50 per cent. of the time." I could do as well by flipping a coin, but I most

[Miss Nicholson]

certainly do not have its great expertise in matters relating to the Gulf. Perhaps scientific uncertainty over the behaviour of the smoke in certain conditions could be reduced by measurements of smoke plume characteristics by the Met Office's research aircraft. Those investigations are critical to confirm whether climate-effect predictions are valid.

We also have extensive knowledge of acid rain from, for example, the Department of Trade and Industry's Warren Spring laboratory. Perhaps our involvement in such work in the Gulf would also help our long-term understanding of pollution processes that are relevant to acid rain in Europe, which would be of large and continuing importance to our own industrial behaviour patterns and to the measures that the Government have introduced to ensure the best control of such things.

Finally, our expertise in the environmental impact of such incidents is crucial. Environmental impact and environmental assessments lie at the heart of our own Government's policy on the environment. Perhaps the universities, especially Imperial college, could help. Indeed, the Secretary of State for the Environment has suggested that the Meteorological Office and other areas of United Kingdom expertise may well be useful in the next stage of this ghastly tragedy.

The Government, so far, have responded in an appropriately thoughtful, professional and effective manner. I and other colleagues await our next moves as a country and a Government with interest and high expectations.

10.34 am

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): To her credit, the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) may well have listened carefully to the powerful exposition of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), but sadly the Government Whip did not listen with quite the same respect. The man whose cynicism has deepened with the length of time that he has spent on the Treasury Bench could say only at the close of my hon. Friend's remarks, "The Belgrano revisited".

Before turning to my main points, I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow. I speak on behalf not only of Opposition Members and some Conservative Members, but certainly on behalf of the vast numbers of our fellow citizens whom we represent in the House. His indefatigable energy, remorseless integrity, intelligence and care have sustained him throughout his quest for the truth—yes, I advise the Government Whip that it was the truth—about the Belgrano and about many other issues going back over decades. I pay tribute to him also for his approach now to these important and vital issues when we are attempting to calibrate the true cost of the enterprise in which we have just been involved.

The bitterly hard thing for some of us to accept on the Ides of March is that we have had to listen to the list of the casualties of that enterprise, as given by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow, and who could do so without a deepening sense of foreboding about the true cost of the enterprise? It is vastly greater than the popular media and some of the more gung-ho Conservative Members would have us believe.

There are those of us, such as myself, who have been Saddam Hussein's bitter opponents for as long as he has been in power in Baghdad. There are people, such as myself, who have marched, petitioned, written, railed and ranted at the dictatorship in Baghdad, and it is bitterly difficult for us to see the attitude of those Conservative Members who did not want to hear what we were saying and who wanted to say little and do even less about the bestialities that were committed by the dictatorship in Baghdad. For them, the dictatorship was merely a bloody good customer. That is the truth of the matter.

Those of us who had a track record of opposing the dictatorship argued that if we got into a war of the kind that was being contemplated, the consequences would be so devastating that they would outweigh any good that could be done. No one ever argued that force against a dictator such as Saddam Hussein was not justified. We argued whether such force was wise and whether the cost of the use of that massive force would outweigh the good that it would do. Conservative Members would do themselves some credit by acknowledging that. When we hear from them that it was all a great success and was achieved, to quote the *Daily Mail* last week,

"at a cost of a handful of lives",

we begin to see the vast gulf—I hope that the House will forgive that unintended pun—between the truth as outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow and that popular perception. The liberation of Kuwait was not achieved at the cost of only a handful of lives.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Surely the vast gulf, which can be perceived by Conservative Members and by anybody listening to the debate, is between what the hon. Gentleman said at the time of the conflict and his attempt now to rewrite history.

Mr. Galloway: I can be accused of many things, but seeking to distort the truth is not one of them. I am about to say, if the hon. Gentleman will let me, exactly what I said throughout the months after the invasion of Kuwait on 2 August and what I have been saying for 15 years, which is a hell of a lot longer than the hon. Gentleman has been talking about the regime in Baghdad. Perhaps we can consult the record on that.

The true cost has been and will be paid by people in that area, by the ecology and environment of the area, and by all of us on the globe. The true cost is far greater than the straw hats and trumpets brigade—the vulgar triumphalists, some of whom sit on the Conservative Benches—want the country to believe. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow described the vast environmental and ecological disaster which that enterprise has created. I hope that the Government have something constructive to say, not only about what they will do to try to arrest what is happening. Month after month, hon. Members, in particular my hon. Friend, predicted exactly what has happened on the environmental front. The Government should also say why the same effort that moved half a million men and all their fighting equipment was not expended on simple matters of civil and marine engineering, such as booms and other equipment. They could have been air-lifted with the military equipment and would have obviated some of the difficulties that we now face.

The same mentality that turns a Nelson's eye to environmental costs turns a Nelson's eye to the vast mountain of incinerated human beings who were killed

because they had dark faces and because they had the misfortune to have been born in Iraq. The vast majority of human beings who made up that mountain of dead people never supported Saddam Hussein, never voted for Saddam Hussein, never voted for the war, and never in any sense offered any support to the Baathist regime in Baghdad, yet they were shot "like fish in a bowl". They were massacred "like rabbits in a sack". Other disgusting metaphors were plastered across our newspapers over the past few weeks. No one can talk about environmental damage or damage to the atmosphere without coming to terms with the fact that the massacre on the Basra road will haunt the world, as my hon. Friend said, for many decades to come. A Conservative Member smirks. Perhaps it does not haunt him.

No amount of washing of his hands will remove the black spot—*[Interruption.]* I note that the Government Whip has stopped yawning and is calling for the men in white coats. History will judge who were the lunatics who took control of the asylum over the past few months.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): When will the hon. Gentleman refer to ecological problems in the Gulf and stop playing party politics?

Mr. Galloway: Anyone who knows my opinion of the Labour party's performance over the past few months would not accuse me of playing party politics in this matter. If the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) thinks that the environment includes only oil, ducks, drakes, trees and plants and not human beings, he has a strange idea of the environment.

Mr. Dalyell: Will my hon. Friend explain the powerful analogy about half-drowned men?

Mr. Galloway: I was about to refer to the plight of the Palestinians who are trapped in their ghetto in Kuwait city. A day or perhaps two days after the war, the Prime Minister gave me a courteous answer and has acted on the problem in the intervening days. I referred to the dangers of a new pogrom—a new Sabra and Shatilla-type massacre—occurring in Kuwait city. A couple of days after I raised that matter with the Prime Minister, Robert Fisk and other senior and eminent journalists in this country—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) guffaws his contempt for Robert Fisk, too. Perhaps I should be gratefgul to be included in such company. The hon. Gentleman should save his contempt until he makes his speech. I should not be diverted by such puerility.

Fisk and other journalists from the English-speaking world have written movingly of their sense of foreboding as the witch hunt mentality develops in Kuwait city. For nearly 20 years I have been concerned with Palestine. The people of Dirr Yasshin, the people who have been beseiged and massacred in country after country in the middle east, the people of Sabra and Shatilla this very morning are locked in their homes—when there is a virtual curfew in the area—wondering whether the knock on the door in Kuwait city will be as deadly as the knock on the door has been for Palestinians in countries throughout that area. That is because of a caricature of the position of the Palestinians who opposed the invasion of Kuwait and opposed aggression against Kuwait but could not stand by neutrally when, in their view America transformed it into a war of the big powers against an Arab country.

I was in the occupied territories, in the town of Jericho underneath Mount Temptation, talking to a moderate professor of politics, Sa'eb Erakat. That man has met our Foreign Secretary and his predecessor, and James Baker and his predecessor. He is on the regular circuit of discussion with international leaders. He is currently incarcerated under town arrest in Jericho, many miles from his university in Nablus, which, in any case, has been closed by the military authorities for the past three years. He addressed the Palestinian approach to the Kuwait-Iraqi-American-British conflict, and said, "We Palestinians were a drowning people, adrift on the ocean, with international ships sailing in the opposite direction pretending that they could not hear our call of distress. Along came a ship flying our flag as well as its own, the flag of Iraq. It stopped by us drowning people adrift on the ocean, and offered to lift us on board. What were we to do—ask for the human rights record of the captain or for the bona fides of his ownership of the vessel before we climbed aboard? The ships that sailed in the opposite direction were responsible for our plight." That is part of the environment of the area and it will be part of the history of the events of the past five months.

10.50 am

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): I am sure that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) is passionately sincere, but the somewhat hysterical character of some of his remarks has not made it easier for me to support, as I fully intend to do, the main tenor of the argument of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). The fact that the Opposition Back Benches are occupied almost entirely by hon. Members who have taken an uncritical attitude of opposition to almost any use of armed force by Her Majesty's Government does not make my task any easier. There is a conspicuous absence of those who may be called moderates on the Labour Back Benches.

I am glad to have the opportunity to make a small contribution to the debate. The hon. Member for Linlithgow has done the House and the nation a service by focusing attention on this issue and by setting out so vividly and in such detail the scale of the ecological and environmental consequences of the Gulf war. He knows the high personal regard which I have for him. I cannot always follow him in his battles—sometimes they seem to be battles against windmills. I usually part company from him sharply when he pursues, as he rather notably did not do today, the conspiracy theory of history. I am a devout believer in the cock-up theory.

As it happens, I believe that the Government have done well in their action to help clear up—perhaps that is not the right expression for putting a sticking-plaster on a gaping arterial wound—after the war. At any rate they have done well by rushing like Mrs. Partington with her mop vigorously pushing back the Atlantic ocean. The Atlantic ocean, as admirers of Sydney Smith will recall, beat Mrs. Partington. If the hon. Gentleman is in the business of blaming the Government for showing less enthusiasm for clearing up the mess than for getting into the war, I am not with him. The action announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 28 January was prompt and well judged as a contribution to clearing up the most immediate threat to the environment from the conflict—the spreading oil

[Sir Anthony Meyer]

slicks in the Gulf. The effort, prompt as it was, does not begin to match in scale the effort that we put into the war or the real needs of the truly alarming environmental catastrophe. That, alas, mirrors human attitudes. It is easier to get massive support for a war than for cleaning up its aftermath.

Heaven knows, I did not want to get into the war. Even now I am not finally convinced that it was the lesser of two evils. It is just that I was driven to the conclusion that it was going to happen anyway because Saddam Hussein was determined to have a war so that he could pose as the Arab champion against Israel. If it was going to happen anyway, there was no realistic possibility of making it less awful by delaying it. It was the much criticised last-minute efforts at mediation by France and the Soviet Union which eventually convinced me that war was inevitable.

Just because I have no fault to find with the Government, either in their conduct of the war or in their response to the ecological catastrophe which has, entirely predictably, ensued, it does not mean that any of us can sit back and say, "We have done what needed to be done." Far from it. It is to public opinion in this country and the world outside that we need to address our warnings insistently and stridently.

The damage done by allied air action in Iraq and still more by the Iraqi scorched earth policy in Kuwait is irreparable. The most enormous efforts are called for from the world community even to mitigate the worst effects of that damage. To make matters worse, these efforts are called for at a time when famine once again threatens great swathes of Africa and the many millions of men, women and children who live there. The efforts that must be made to limit the damage in the middle east must be in addition to, not in place of, the efforts that the rich world makes to alleviate famine in Africa.

No hon. Member wants war. I wish I could say the same of the press, but I have found it hard to read *The Sunday Times* or *The Sunday Telegraph*, let alone the *Sunday Express*, *The Sun* or *The Star* without sensing a real relish for battle. I cannot avoid the feeling that even among the more responsible people, such as hon. Members who certainly did not want a war, there has been insufficient appreciation of how horrible war is. Because of that insufficient appreciation, I am not sure that in balancing the pros and cons of recourse to armed force, we necessarily came to the right conclusion. Yes, of course war brings out some heroic qualities of courage and self-sacrifice, but so do concentration camps. I hope that we will not start romanticising them.

It is a matter for rejoicing that the casualties on the allied side were so light, but the casualties on the Iraqi side were appalling. As the hon. Member for Linlithgow said, many of us will be haunted for the rest of our lives by the pictures of the carnage on the Basra road. I have no right to condemn the military action which produced that slaughter any more than I had a right to condemn the bombing of Dresden in 1945 or the dropping of the second nuclear bomb on Nagasaki. All three are copybook examples of the senseless butchery which war almost invariably brings in its train. When we weigh up whether in any given situation war is the lesser of two evils, we should recognise that such horrors are inseparable from it.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that before we jump to any conclusions about what happened on the Basra road we should have far more facts? May I repeat to him a request that I put to the Leader of the House during business questions and again last night on the motion for the Easter Adjournment, that the Government should give to the House the information that they have about the timing and their state of knowledge of what occurred? Then and only then can we make a judgment.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I have little doubt that those facts will emerge. I have great faith in the persistence of investigative journalists to delve into those matters. It will all emerge in the course of time. One of the troubles was that the war ended so abruptly that public interest switched rapidly from horror at what happened on the Basra road to surging relief that the hostilities had ended. That has been a major factor. I have no doubt that such facts will emerge and I am glad to think that when they do the verdict will remain the same—that the military action probably was justified. That will still not relieve my sense of horror.

We are supposed to be debating environmental consequences, rather than the slaughter of men, women and children. The hon. Member for Hillhead equated the two, but there is a distinction in logic which has to be drawn. There is a danger of overstating the case. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) made a number of remarkable interventions during debates on this matter, and laid himself wide open to the charge of overstating his case. But all too often it is the prophets of doom who are nearer the truth in the end than the bland reassurers. We are not yet at the end of the Chernobyl fall-out, and I say that as a supporter of nuclear power.

Clearly, we will all be baffled by science in this matter. The worldwide consequence of the smoke clouds from the burning oil wells and the spreading oil slicks are presumably too dependent on winds and tides and ordinary climatic factors to be safely predictable, but the regional and local consequences are only too predictably dire. The consequences for public health in Iraq of the destruction of the sewers and the water supplies are all too predictable and, of course, disease knows no national frontiers. There is a strong case for a relaxation of sanctions to the extent that is necessary to permit the importation not merely of medical supplies, but of the equipment that is needed to repair the damage to the sewers and the electricity supply. I hope that the Minister will be able to reassure us about that.

I hope that the debate will focus public opinion on the consequences of war—not just on the number of people killed or maimed for the rest of their lives or those left without partners or parents or families whose life is permanently blighted, but on the destruction of cities and the ruination of the countryside. Modern methods of warfare spread such destruction and ruination many hundreds and perhaps thousands of miles from the battlefield.

Anyone who travels around Europe is constantly reminded of the loss of fine buildings and great works of art in earlier wars. This country has also suffered, especially from the destruction in London, Coventry, Liverpool and other great cities. I am not convinced that public opinion or the Government give full weight to such considerations when taking the fateful decisions about

whether the need to deter and punish aggression outweighs the predictable consequences of even the most "successful" war.

I think that I am still of the opinion that the decision to go ahead with military action in the Gulf was the lesser of two evils, but I do not by any means rule out the possibility that I may later have to change my mind.

I am certain that I am in no position to condemn Opposition Members, even those whom I have categorised in my speech as extremists, for their opposition to the war. I am still less able to criticise those who, like the hon. Member for Linlithgow, have continually reminded us of the awful consequences.

11.3 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): With two minor exceptions, I agree with every word of the careful and worthwhile speech of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer). My two points of dissent are that I hold a different view on nuclear power and I am clear that Governments, both here and in the allied countries, did not take sufficient account of the environmental implications of the Gulf war before they committed us to military activity.

My views differ from those of the majority of Labour Members who are in the Chamber in that, like the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West, when the French and Russian initiatives failed I came to the view that, irrespective of what had gone before, there was no international alternative to military action. I did not find that view comfortable, because it was not one that I thought I would have reached. It does not change my view or that of all my colleagues, that the war was the result of diplomatic and political failure by world Governments. To reach a point at which there was no alternative to military action meant that we had failed the world community.

I listened with respect to the powerful speech by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway). Like him, I have been to the occupied territories. It is almost irrelevant, but my first intervention in the press was made in my local paper when I was a teenager, and it was in support of the Palestinian cause. One of the failures that Britain has exemplified is the failure to understand exactly what drives people such as the Palestinians to accept support from wherever it comes. They do that because they have been denied support for so long by others. It is the same reason that persuaded Archbishop Tutu and Nelson Mandela to support those who were driven to military action in South Africa. There comes a time when people cannot accept that peaceful passive resignation will lead to a satisfactory and just conclusion.

I entirely endorse the plaudits extended to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). He has persistently sought, as I have done, although I concede that I have probably been less successful, to make sure that the environmental implications of the Gulf war were on the agenda of the House and the country. I agree with the hon. Member for Hillhead that there was and is massive concern in the country that the Government and politicians were not properly addressing that matter.

I and my party agree with every word in the motion. Our party conference started this morning in Nottingham and that is why my colleagues are not present for the debate. I may not be able to stay until 2.30. The hon. Member for Linlithgow has brought to the debate his well-known scientific expertise and his dogged parliamentary perserverence. I hope that the Government will take seriously the widespread support, not just for a proper analysis, requested by the hon. Member for Clywd, North-West, of what has happened in terms of future decisions, but for vigorous action to deal with the consequences of the war and its environmental implications. I hope that we shall show as much determination in that as we showed in our prosecution of the war.

I also reiterate what the hon. Member for Clywd, North-West said about the press and people being jingoistic, aggressive and enthusiastic about things military and suddenly becoming uninterested about their environmental results. The balance is completely wrong.

One of the issues that must now be addressed is the potential implication of what has happened to the environment and the ecology in the middle east. The loss of marine life as a food source will have consequences for subsidence fishermen in the Gulf. That means that they and many others are at risk of becoming poorer and less able to survive than they ever have been in a marginal economy. Unless we have a much more co-ordinated, urgent and more widespread international response than we have seen so far, we shall leave the ravage of the war writ upon the seas and the land of the countries of the middle east and, potentially, condemn a politically very delicately balanced region to further risk of military conflagration.

It was said that the United Nations intervened to bring about a peaceful middle east, but economic and human poverty and degradation as a result of the war could make that peace far less likely, unless, in a different way, we now intervene. Therefore, the ecology and the environment are integrated with the peaceful future of the countries in the Gulf.

I shall deal specifically with two issues, that give us cause for continuing concern. The first is oil fires. I am advised that the figures that I am about to give are not specific, but the numbers are large enough to be able to be generally substantiated whatever their specificity. It is said that there are 650 or 700 oil fires—perhaps 800—burning in Kuwait. That means that between 3 million and 6 million barrels of oil are burning each day. The main economic source of that part of the world is literally going up in smoke. The consequences are widespread and they have been well set out. I hope that the Government will give full credence to the work that has been done at Imperial college by the global environment research centre, to which the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) and others have referred.

There are consequences for human health that add to the chances of suffering from respiratory disease, infection and discomfort. There is the inevitability of acid deposition that makes those complaints worse.

There are consequences that will lead to the pollution of water, which is the principal source of life and survival. There is the risk of serious pollution of surface water as well as the pollution of underground water supplies as a result of soot and other fall-out from emissions.

Potentially there is a serious threat of a large-scale abuse of salt and polluted fresh water if these materials are used to dampen down temperatures and to put out fires. There are consequences for the soil in the region, the land and, therefore, agriculture. Acidification of the land would have a direct effect on the ability to produce crops and food for animals, upon which the economy depends.

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

Animals may be at risk from unexploded mines. The region is at best economically marginal and we should be keenly aware of the consequences.

There will be a huge consequential effect on marine life. The world often ignores marine pollution even when we take account of land pollution. It is an example of out of sight, out of mind. Wildlife, fish and marine ecosystems will inevitably be damaged and the time scale for their recovery is uncertain. Previous spillages in the Gulf have added to the present problems.

Lastly, there appear to be direct consequences in the form of sand encroachment, not least through sand storms, as a result of the disruption to the ecology of the middle east. That will have an effect on human settlements and agricultural settlements. We must pay full cognisance to that.

It is easy for us, in the comfort of an unaffected western society, to underestimate the consequences of environmental disruption., The results mean literally life or death for those who live much closer to nature than most of us in this society ever do.

Secondly, we need to have equal concern about the consequences of oil spillage and oil slicks. It seems that 3 million to 7 million barrels of oil have been discharged into the Gulf. Minimum bird mortalities are estimated at 10,000; the estimated current maximum is 20,000 birds. These include cormorants, grebes and potentially will include migrants which arrive in due course. There will be an effect on the fishing and shrimp industries as a result of the oil spill. The mud-flats will be affected. A series of beings in the food chain of the marine ecosystem are, without any doubt, affected already as a result of the oil spillages. The results are dramatic.

Desalination plants are at risk. Most importantly, there is unknown damage to the coral reefs in the middle east. Power stations and palaces can be rebuilt but coral reefs cannot. They are the rain forests of the sea. They support hundreds of species. They are a vital link in the food chain. We do not even know the damage that has been wrought to the reefs.

Thirdly, we know that Iraq and Kuwait were effectively a chemical and petrochemical cocktail. It is possible that 26 toxic substances have been released from petrochemical and other industries as a result of the conflict. I, too, pay tribute to the Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons and the work that has been done so far, but we do not know yet how many plants, refineries and storage tanks have been damaged. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), the former leader of the Liberal party, has expressed concern about the damage that would be caused by the release of toxic substances. There has been disruption of low-grade nuclear facilities in Iraq, and it is likely that there is contamination in small areas around those plants. Ground and drinking water must be monitored urgently, especially in Baghdad where the risk to human health is the greatest.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The rationale for bombing chemical weapon and biological weapon establishments was that the intense fire that ensured would destroy the contents within the establishments. I have always thought that to be an extremely dangerous rationale. There was no guarantee that that would happen. There is no way in which we can monitor the fall-out. The experience of Halabja tells us that fall-out can continue for quite a long time after the event.

Mr. Hughes: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is one of the areas in which the evaluation of the consequences of military activity was never properly undertaken.

That leads me to the political conclusion, which I want to reach in a way that will give support to the motion of the hon. Member for Linlithgow. The Government have given £1 million to the International Maritime Organisation and three oil skimming vessels to the Government of Bahrain. I congratulate them on doing that, but that response was inadequate and belated. When I saw the European Environment Commissioner in Brussels before Christmas I told him of my concern that European governments and the European Community had not considered formally how it might anticipate what might happen to the environment in the middle east. I fear that we did not anticipate what might happen.

On 6 February, the Secretary of State for the Environment wrote a letter entitled

"Oil spills in the Gulf"

to all hon. Members. In it he said:

"It is impossible to anticipate or prevent all acts of this kind."

Of course it is impossible to anticipate or prevent all—I stress all—such acts. It may have been impossible to prevent Saddam Hussein spilling the oil. However, it was not impossible to anticipate his doing that, but the international community did not anticipate or prepare for that eventuality.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: The hon. Gentleman said that the Government's contribution to the International Maritime Organisation's international trust fund of £1 million was belated. How can it be belated if we were the first country to make a contribution? It is impossible to get much further up the pecking order than that.

Mr. Hughes: My point is that the Government's response to the possible environmental situation in the middle east was months late. Nothing happened until the oil was spilt and fires occured. Hardly any work had been carried out before.

Mr. Arnold *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hughes: It is no good the hon. Gentleman shaking his head. No work was carried out. If he can prove that work occurred, I should be interested to hear the evidence. We reacted after the event when we should have reacted before. I should be happy to let the hon. Gentleman intervene if he can provide the House with evidence that this country reacted and was prepared.

Mr. Arnold: I was responding to the specific point about the IMO and the fact that Britain made the first contribution to the fund.

Mr. Hughes: Our reaction to the environmental catastrophe in the middle east was belated because that catastrophe could and should have been anticipated. We failed in that respect.

Mr. Dalyell: It must also say something about Parliament when, in debates following the Consolidated Fund Bill, hon. Members plead with the Government to

act. It is not a matter of hindsight. The matter was foreseeable and foreseen, predictable and predicted. To that extent, a certain amount of recrimination is justified.

Mr. Hughes: I entirely agree. The call for the world to be prepared for the consequences of the political decisions taken last year did not simply come from this House.

There are billions of pounds worth of contracts now up for grabs in the middle east. I do not know how many of them are for environmental improvements. This country leads the world in marine and terrestrial pollution technology. We have the best qualified people to carry out an environmental impact assessment of the damage in the middle east. Such a course was proposed by the global environment research centre at Imperial college, and I invite the Minister to agree that we should make such an offer to provide those people.

When the Secretary of State for the Environment meets Environment Ministers in the Environment Council next week, I suggest that he proposes that such an initiative should be set up, which perhaps Britain could offer to lead, to collaborate on behalf of the European Community with the relevant states in the Gulf and carry out that environmental impact assessment. He should suggest to his European Community partners that in each Community country and in the Community as a whole we should set up a liaison body with the Governments of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere including, if possible, Iraq to facilitate the necessary environmental work. If the City-Kuwait group could be set up in this country to facilitate contracts for rebuilding the physical environment of the middle east, for heaven's sake we should be able to set up a similar body to provide money for the environmental reconstruction of the area.

We can of course use the IMO as a clearing house for anti-pollution advice and for environmental rescue measures. However, we should do more than that. More money is needed and I am not alone in making that statement. It is supported by the world conservation centre, an arm of the United Nations Environmental Programme, which has stated:

"Every effort is being made . . . however lack of available funds, shortage of staff and lack of equipment is limiting progress."

We must all be aware that Kuwait is effectively starting absolutely from scratch.

I also want to repeat a point that I put to the Secretary of State during the war in the Gulf—a point that he was courteous enough to say he would consider. We should stop being reactive and start being pro-active. We should learn from the lesson of our failure to have in place an agency that could be more effective on the environmental issues.

The United Nations Environmental Programme should be strengthened to become the United Nations environmental protection agency. It should, by a further Geneva convention, have the same protection, responsibility and authority as the Red Cross or the Red Crescent. It should be able to enter areas of conflict to protect the environment, just as others go in to protect the injured and the ill. If there has been a sea change in the Conservative party's attitude to Europe, there is an opportunity next week for the Secretary of State for the Environment to make that change clear with his partners in respect of this most important issue on the environmental agenda. Unless we react coherently and immediately, we risk famine as marine and terrestrial food stocks diminish in the middle east. The refugee crisis and the human suffering will be worse.

There should be no argument about the matter. Only when we have acted in such a way shall we be able to answer the question asked by the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West; only when we have responded to and dealt with the environmental catastrophe shall we be able to judge whether Operation Desert Storm was a success. If we do not follow the military action with environmental rescue, that operation may be a very costly failure.

11.27 am

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): The motion moved by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has been helpful. I hope that this debate will have the consequences requested by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), although I do not suppose that that can be said about every debate in which the hon. Member for Linlithgow and I are involved.

Action on the European level is one of the ways in which we can achieve an international grouping. I am sure that the House would agree that such a grouping is necessary. I am touched by the fact that I have a copy of a similar proposal from a committee of experts on road safety led by Mr. Christian Gerondeau and other European experts. This proposal suggests how to reduce the number of road casualties. It is of interest because in the United States and the European Community combined over the next five years we will kill 500,000 people on our roads.

In parenthesis, perhaps I should draw a contrast between the human costs of war and the toll on our roads. During the Falklands conflict in which the hon. Member for Linlithgow was interested, 255 British service men were killed. Over those same weeks, 311 British motor cyclists died. One group received a memorial, but the others did not. In the year before I went to serve in Northern Ireland as a junior Minister, 183 people there were killed on the roads and 63 people lost their lives as a result of bombs and bullets.

If one could wish away war or the loss of life on roads, one would wish away war because it does more than cause loss of life and change to the environment and in this case, sadly, to the ecology. It is also an obstacle to what people in the Catholic Church call the preferential option for the poor, which is that when one has a choice of making life easier for the rich or making it easier for the poor there is an obligation to help those who are worse off. War is an obstacle to prosperity and, by definition, it is the opposite of peace. There will not be justice or development while there is war.

The European Community has taken a useful initiative aimed at reducing road casualties, like the 5 million ecu going towards a similar approach to deal with the environment. It will also be useful. In part, they will be useful because they can bring together the pathfinders and the scouts and enable them to put on the pressure to ensure that we overcome what was described in a recent article in *The Financial Times* as the biggest plague on this earth. That is AIGS—apathy, ignorance, greed and stupidity.

It is most important that ignorance is overcome, and for that reason I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister. As well as being able to answer some of the questions put by the hon. Member for Linlithgow, and

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

those that will no doubt be asked by subsequent speakers, he will be able to tell us how to build on what has been done. It is good to know that Britain has been leading the way within bodies such as the International Maritime Organisation. That does not deal with the query about whether our help was early enough or whether more could have been done by, for example, using booms. These details do not matter as much as raising the awareness of the opportunity to reduce avoidable disadvantage, distress and handicap. That must be what was underlying the interest shown by the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

A long time ago, under a previous Government, the hon. Gentleman and I used to meet occasionally to play tennis. We did not quite get to the point of playing without a net in the way that we did a week or so ago after an intervention of mine. Since my last, somewhat truncated, discussion with him, I have been to El Salvador to observe the elections and to help the country to establish an electoral system. That in turn will help to end the civil war.

El Salvador may not have the ecological problems that have been thrown up by the conflict in the Gulf but in a country with a population smaller than that of London, 75,000 people have been killed since I first went there 13 years ago. That murdering went on without being awarded the attention of the House or other bodies. It has been called the country where Catholics kill priests, such as Archishop Oscar Romero, who was once one of the saints of this world, and the six Jesuits and their two household staff, who were taken out and had their brains blasted out on the lawn of the university that they had set up. That was in the best university in central America.

There is evil in people, and that evil needs to be confronted. We could debate how that could be done, but the important thing is to overcome it. There are good people who are trying to cope with it. That often means saying inconvenient things that are sometimes unpopular and may not even be right. If we all kept quiet until we could be convincing because we had evidence to produce, we should never get anywhere and there would be no need to have a Parliament. Every one of the 160 or 170 countries has a Government. There is no problem with that, but the difficulty is being able to tell one's Government that they have got it wrong and that there is an opportunity to get it right or to suggest that the country goes in for some collaborating, risk taking or co-operation.

In issues such as the environment and the ecology, it is clear that what appear to be simple solutions will not work. When the oil was deliberately being poured into the Gulf, booms around the affected area would not have been of any help because that area was not controlled by the coalition forces, although it was later on. Booms would have been helpful in places such as Bahrain or anywhere with a desalination plant. However, that is only a detail and my contribution will not be valid if I concentrate on picking up such points.

However, perhaps I may be allowed to pick up a possible answer to the question that I put to the hon. Member for Linlithgow. I asked him about the extra consequences of the localised, partial combustion in a concentrated area, as compared with the more complete combustion of the refined product spread around the world in our motor cars, in our power stations or our central heating systems. That is the question that the scientists should address.

Mr. Dalyell: The question is about to what extent the soot rises towards the stratosphere. If it goes high, the monsoons could be affected, with terrible consequences for the food chain for millions of people. If it goes low—nobody knows how it will behave—the regional effect would be concentrated and terrible.

Mr. Bottomley: That is the question. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who allowed me to intervene in his speech to put my question. Others may be able to answer it during the debate.

One of the reasons for reading the *New Scientist* over the years has been the hon. Gentleman's column. If more people were aware of that column, more people would be willing to hear his unasked-for guidance so that he would have more opportunity for getting allies. He does not need help in getting attention for his views. I had the misfortune, or the fortune, when the Parliamentary Private Secretary to my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) when he was a Minister at the Foreign Office after the tragedies in the south Atlantic, of hearing him.

It is not for me, as a junior Member of Parliament, to give the hon. Member for Linlithgow too much gratuitous advice on how to create coalitions and alliances. However, if we more often heard from him speeches that we could support, we would achieve more together than we would by making personal and partisan remarks. Sometimes, those remarks are provoked, but we should not give in to such provocation because there are better ways and higher levels of debate. We could not be criticised as being the members of the awkward squad.

One of my pastimes is buying books written and printed in the middle and late 1930s. It is interesting to read what people were saying in Germany and this country and to see why we allowed ourselves to be treated in the way shown in the Low cartoon of 1936. It showed the League of Nations cowering in the corner away from one, aggressive looking man—Hitler.

The issue that is not at stake in today's debate, but underlines our consideration of the subject, is whether it would have been possible to persuade Saddam Hussein not to invade Kuwait. Although Saddam Hussein has been involved in other activities before that, in Iran, with the Kurds and with the majority of his population, who have never had much opportunity for a say in the political direction of their country, the war started on 2 August with the invasion of Kuwait. We shall never know whether it would have been possible to persuade him to live up to his promise not to invade. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) went to see Saddam Hussein in the autumn of last year. He could not persuade Saddam to get out of Kuwait. Sadly, that argument did not work, but could we have achieved its purpose in other ways?

Having prevented Saddam Hussein from moving on to take Saudi Arabia after Kuwait and, presumably, moving on to his way of resolving the Palestinian issue—with all that that means for the Israelis' fears about their future—would it have been possible to stop a third world war starting? I believe that there was no prospect of stopping Saddam Hussein's aggression, other than joining the war which he started. I say that with no pleasure.

On Saturday, I was in a village in El Salvador, where I talked to people about their elections. I was there when small arms fire broke out. That reminds me of the newspaper headline, "Small earthquake in Peru—no one hurt." No one was hurt in those 15 minutes at Los Ranchos, near Chalatanango. We crouched on a site near where mortars had fallen two or three days before. The next day, I was with a doctor near another place where a mortar had fallen. The mortars in El Salvador had no more military purpose than the Scuds that were sent to Tel Aviv and Riyadh.

It is frightening to be under fire. It is ghastly for those who have to go through it. It is to be avoided if possible. With Saddam Hussein, it was not possible. I hope that we can now clear up the consequences of his actions. I hope that it is possible for Iraq to reach the stage of choosing its own Government and that there are not the massacres in Iraq, as people fight for political control, that, sadly, have occurred in El Salvador and many other countries. Most hon. Members present are the type of people who are involved in Amnesty International, trying to stop individuals being persecuted, or in aid organisations. There is an hon. Member here who served with Voluntary Service Overseas and one who was a director of a charity involved in such work. I spent six years as a trustee of Christian Aid. None of us is under any illusion about the amount of misery and hardship faced by people because they have not had a chance to have a political system that delivers peace, prosperity and justice.

This is a never-ending quest. I suspect that in 10 or 20 years' time we shall have the same debates about the same problems. We cannot turn our back on what is happening. Every one of us has a responsibility to do as much as any other person. The hon. Member for Linlithgow can be given credit for having done more than any of us for the environment and the ecology.

11.42 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): In opening what I hope will be a brief contribution, I put on record my warm tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for choosing this subject for debate and for his consistent work on the environment in the middle east and the potential catastrophe that a war there would cause. My hon. Friend outlined the matter well in an Adjournment debate before Christmas, detailing the consequences for the environment in the region of oil spillages, burning oil wells and chemical and biological warfare during a conflict. My hon. Friend deserves full credit for doing that.

My hon. Friend has stood out on many issues at many times, often from a lonely position. It is a credit to him that he stood up to much of the nonsense said about him and that he pointed out the truth of many issues, such as that of the Belgrano and what is happening now. I remember standing beside him in Trafalgar square when he said that the words "I told you so" were not very becoming to politicians. In this case, my hon. Friend has a right to use those words. He predicted what would happen if there was a war in the Gulf. He should be applauded, respected and listened to for doing that.

In considering the history of the region and the consequences of the war, we should cast our mind over history, including its more recent history. Only three years ago, the problem of the Kurdish people in northern Iraq was brought to the world's headlines when chemical weapons were used against them in the village of Halabja. That was not the first time that chemical weapons were used against the Kurdish people by Iraq's first army and it was not the last.

Several of us raised protests in the House. The Government protested and raised the issue of chemical weapons at a conference held in Paris in September 1988, but they did not take action on Britain's relationships with Iraq. I clearly recall a delegation of which I was part, with my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), the then general secretary of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Meg Beresford, members of the National Peace Council and several Kurdish people, which went to the Foreign Office to ask exactly what the Government's policy was. We strongly pointed out the carnage that was occurring in Halabja through the use of chemical weapons, the destruction of Kurdish villages in the north of Iraq, and the forcible movement of Kurdish people to the south of Iraq.

To be fair to the Minister, the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), he agreed with us about the horror of the use of chemical and biological weapons and said that they were illegal under the terms of the 1925 Geneva protocol. He did not agree that the British Government should stop supplying trade and credits to Iraq. We believed that the British Government should stop subsidising trade with Iraq and should stop allowing other countries to export weapons to Iraq. There was a ban on the export of weapons from this country, but the funding of trade with Iraq gave that country hard currency with which it could buy weapons elsewhere.

I have a plan, which was produced in the *Bangkok Post* early in February and which was recently sent to me, showing that weapons came from the USSR, France, China, the United States, West Germany, Brazil, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Chile, Jordan, Spain, Egypt, South Africa, Switzerland, Libya, Austria, Saudia Arabia, Romania and Kuwait, which sold Iraq 50 tanks. Iran has been selling Iraq weapons since the end of the war between those countries. We should think carefully about relationships and the trade between countries. The problems in Iraq are a consequence of those relationships.

The environmental problems to which my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow referred are not new—there have been such problems in Iran and Iraq for a long time, although they are much worse now because of the war. In much of the reporting of and discussions about the war and its consequences, people have deliberately forgotten the role played in modern civilisation by the Mesopotamia valley. In many ways, it is the cradle of civilisation. The Tigris and the Euphrates have brought much learning and much discovery to the world. They brought agriculture to the world when there was no proper agricultural system in this country. There were universities in Baghdad long before they existed in this country. Iraq is a place of enormous civilisation and much learning, but much of that was ignored during the war because it did not fit in with the image presented when some people wanted to go to war against that so-called dangerous regional power.

More recently, there have been environmental problems in the area. There have been endless discussions and disputes about the use of water from the Tigris and Euphrates and about who draws off water at certain places. During September, when I was in eastern Turkey, I travelled to Diyarbakir and down to Cizre, on the

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

frontier with Iraq. I looked at the problems of water supply and at the over-irrigation that occurs in certain parts of south-east Turkey and northern Iraq. The drawing off of too much water leads to problems further down. There will be continual conflict on environmental matters in the region until the problem of water supplies and the sharing of those supplies is resolved. Future wars in the region could be about water, as this war was, I believe, about oil.

We must also recognise that there is fundamental political instability in the region. It stems from the attitude taken at the end of the first world war, at the time of the Versailles conference and the treaty that followed it. The treaty envisaged the right to self-determination for the peoples in the region. I believe that it acknowledged implicitly the rights of the Armenian, Kurdish and Palestinian people to have their own states. Those wishes were denied because of the creation in 1922 of modern Turkey and its frontiers and because of the British operation of the Palestinian mandate. They were denied partly because of British and French political activity in the area and because of the drawing of the modern frontiers. I believe that those frontiers will be a cause of future instability.

We should also remember that the Royal Air Force took part in the bombardment of Kurdish villages in 1922 and used chemical weapons to bomb Kurdish people who were fighting for their liberation in 1922 in northern Iraq. That is not very long ago in the mind of a historian or in the popular memory of the people of Kurdistan, who feel bitter about what the RAF did in 1922 and about the damage caused to their community and their environment. We must recall those issues in our discussions about the war.

I opposed the war, and I continue to do so, because I believe that it was the wrong way to solve the conflict. I regret the consequences that we are now seeing—the loss of life of American and British soldiers, of conscripted soldiers in Iraq, of the Republican Guard and of hundreds of civilians in towns and villages all over Iraq. The latest figure of the total number of dead in Iraq is likely to be more than 140,000. The idea that we should hold a victory parade in the near future is distasteful.

War is a disaster in terms of costs, for the environment, for the people of the region and for the region's political systems. The environmental disaster was predictable. Oil slicks at sea caused by the bombardment of tankers and the deliberate setting off of oil well sluices by Iraqi forces have caused terrible environmental carnage throughout the Gulf, as my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow said. The slicks will destroy sea algae, sea mammals, fish and the ability of sea plants to produce oxygen, which will result in the deoxidation of the sea. It is possible that the sea, or at least a part of it, will be dead.

The burning of the oil wells, which is likely to continue for years, will blot out much of the sun. That will damage the ability of Kuwait—and especially that of southern Iraq—to produce the necessary food. Clearly, that will cause long-term problems. There are already health problems in Kuwait, in Basra, in Baghdad and in other cities in the area. Any community that relies on a centralised water supply and sewage disposal system is vulnerable to air attack. That must have been known when the American and British air forces carried out their bombardments. The destruction of the sewage facilities and of the water system will quickly lead—if it has not already done so—to the growth of cholera and other diseases in the area.

We are dealing with a complete disaster, but our ability to cope with it and to get relief and aid to Iraq and Kuwait is clearly hampered by the lack of a political settlement. I am worried that the political complexion of the area is being decided by the United States on the basis of its own interests rather than according to the needs of the people of the area. Until there is a political solution and the Kurdish and the Palestinian peoples have a right to self-determination, the political conflict will continue.

The environmental destruction will continue as the lack of resources in the area means that oil well fires are not extinguished, water supplies restored and sewage disposal systems repaired. There should be a massive deployment of resources to resolve those problems. From August, however, there was such a massive deployment of resources to the region. To date the conflict has cost Britain £3 billion—it will cost the United States much more. I accept that Kuwait has offered to pay towards the cost, but, in that sense, it all becomes mercenary. Such expenditure is distasteful when millions of people face starvation in Africa. Similar resources have not been deployed to save them.

The middle east is facing an environmental disaster, but countries have been unwilling to offer adequate resources to stem the flow of oil and to put out the fires. There must be a commitment to protect that environment.

People in the poorer countries witness the determination of the west to get involved in military conflicts and to gain commercial advantage from them. That advantage is being gained at this moment in the city where the reconstruction contracts for Kuwait are being shelled out. The victims of Bhopal have been ignored. The landless people of Brazil believe that they have been thrown out of the Amazon rain forest because of the logging operations of multinational corporations. Those people believe that the only thing in which the western industrialised countries is concerned is self-interest and looking after their own political power.

I hope that this debate will draw attention to the deep concern throughout the country that the environmental consequences of the Gulf war will be horrific, not just for the immediate area, its people and wildlife, but for the rest of the world. If the oil-induced cloud continues, the effect on rainfall throughout the region will be considerable—it will have a similar effect on the Indian sub-continent.

Once one starts upsetting a climatic system, the effects know no boundaries. I hope that the Minister will demonstrate a true commitment on the part of the British Government to get resources into the region to resolve some of the environmental disasters we are now witnessing.

11.56 am

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for initiating the debate. I describe the hon. Gentleman as such advisedly. He has many obsessions, most of which I do not share, but I share his obsession for the tropical rain forests of Latin America and with the ecological consequences of the Gulf war. However, sometimes the

hon. Gentleman seems to be an outrider for the Apocalypse. We must put the problems of the Gulf in context and then we must tackle them.

The World Conservation Monitoring Centre has undertaken a useful assessment of the situation in the Gulf. In its briefing paper, prepared a few days ago, it states:

"The smoke cloud is relatively low with a ceiling of 10-15,000 ft. This is not high enough to affect stratospheric climate circulation, so predictions of widescale disruptions of rainfall and monsoon patterns are exaggerated . . . Many of the wells in the Saudi/Kuwait Neutral Zone require pumping to bring the oil to the surface".

It says that the fires that are now disfiguring the middle east will soon die out through lack of fuel. It also states that the soot that has been thrown up by those massive fires is harmless, but "black rain frightens people."

We must assess the problems that we face and we can and must tackle them. It is worth recalling the cause of the ecological disaster in the Gulf. It can be summed up in two words, Saddam Hussein. That brutal and callous President of Iraq is still at large. He caused the ecological disaster because of the way in which he went about his business. We should have known that man for what he was, as he showed no compassion for human life when he gassed the Kurdish people. However, he understands international media and opinion and he knows that we care about the environment. He let loose his dreadful action because he knows that we care about the birds, turtles, dugongs and fish to be found in the Gulf region and he hit us where it hurts.

We must consider, first, the problem of the oil slick caused by Saddam Hussein on Friday 26 January when Iraqi troops deliberately released 300,000 tonnes of oil into the Arabian Gulf in an attempt to contaminate Saudi Arabia's desalination plants and hinder the allied war effort. The damage has been extensive. His action created an oil slick 80 miles long and 14 miles wide—one of the largest ever known. The oil came from the Iraqi shelling of Khafji oil tanks, the deliberate release of oil from tankers and sea terminals at Al Ahmadi and Mina al Bakr, and from the offshore platforms in Iraq and Kuwait, both under his control at that time. Secondly, in the final week of Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait, he set alight the Kuwaiti oil fields and caused 650 separate fires.

Clearly, we must understand the problem and tackle it. In the case of the oil slick, the World Conservation Monitoring Centre boiled the matter down to facing and coping with the scale of the problem. It tells us:

"The slick along the Saudi coast has shown virtually no movement for the last two weeks. It is now packed into Musallamiyah Bay, held by booms and sand barriers to the south of Abu 'Ali—it is present as 'hundreds of acres of solid oil, 5-6 inches deep'".

We must tackle that problem and the problem of the other oil slicks and patches, although those are on a much smaller scale.

The centre's brief on the ecological problems and the oil clean-up is specific about the scale of the problem and what must be done. Its report that very little co-ordinated action is being taken to clean up the area is worrying. It says:

"Every effort is being made by MEPA and volunteers to rescue and clean birds of oil and to clean oil from shores. However lack of available funds, shortage of staff and lack of equipment is limiting the progress. Meanwhile, little is being done other than putting out booms around key industrial sites and desalination plants. Only some 40-50,000 barrels have been recovered. The problem is lack of equipment and lack of cash."

Time and again, it returns to lack of resources. I welcome the International Maritime Organisation's newly established international trust fund to clean up the Gulf.

The House can take pride from the fact that Britain made the first donation of £1 million. We still need instant donations from the undamaged Gulf states—Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and the Emirates—which are most concerned with the current problems. Britain has not been backward in coming forward, not only with cash but with technical support. The Department of the Environment has sent pollution control and ecological experts to help in the Gulf. The Government have ordered three oil recovery skimmers, worth £300,000, to be sent to Bahrain, and 90 tonnes of anti-pollution equipment—mostly booms—from industrial stocks held in Britain were flown out at the end of January when the scale of the problem was identified.

We can also take pride from the work of our Meteorological Office, which has adapted its computer models to give the best possible predictions of the likely behaviour of the oil slick. It is also analysing the impact of the oil fires' smoke clouds. Will my hon. Friend the Minister and the Department find ways of assisting the Meterological Office with the practicalities to enable it to observe those filthy clouds? It needs to take measurements on this unprecedented phenomenon.

The Department of Trade and Industry should also be commended for the work that it has done. It has got its act together and produced an admirable publication "Restructuring Kuwait", which is subtitled:

"Proposed United Kingdom contribution to the reconstruction of Kuwait."

I was glad that one section of the publication is devoted to environmental protection and United Kingdom companies' experience and involvement in Kuwait and the Gulf.

The document states:

"UK companies have experience in toxic/flammable gases, clean-up of oil and chemical spills, assessing the stability of sites and structures, determination and monitoring of ecological damage, effluent and groundwater pollution problems, water system sterilisation and requirements for the general decontamination of the site and those parts of the installations that can be salvaged or retained. Effective product management and control are essential factors in the successful execution of these tasks. UK companies with specialists in these fields are ready to respond to Kuwait's needs."

The report gives details of the companies that can help, including the British Oil Spill Control Association, a trade organisation which represents a number of United Kingdom companies and deals with all aspects of marine and industrial pollution. Such organisations should be given every opportunity to get cracking with the job that needs to be done.

Another major problem involves the fires, too many of which still rage out of control. The oil industry is already getting to work on that problem. The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology has produced a useful briefing note on the subject, which states:

"the oil industry has had much experience in extinguishing fires at well heads using explosives to blow out the fire, after which the well head can be sealed."

It describes how, in more complex cases, the technology in the oil industry exists—through drilling, blocking and other means—to control those dreadful fires.

[Mr. Jacques Arnold]

The Gulf crisis produced some benefits. Out of that tragedy may well have come a new world order. For the first time ever, the five permanent members of the Security Council stood together, despite the stresses and strains of the crisis. No fewer than 30 nations sent armed forces contingents. They were sent from the United States, the old Commonwealth, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, west and east Europe, including Czechoslovakia and Hungary. They were sent from 11 Muslim countries and even from Latin America and black Africa. There were small but significant contingents from Argentina and Niger.

The United Nations has come into its own. It won the war and now it must win the peace—but with that peace, we must link the world environment. Signs are emerging that the same co-ordinated effort towards achieving that peace is not being achieved in coping with environmental tasks. I urge the Government to push for a co-ordinated initiative to be taken, perhaps through the United Nations, rather than to leave this serious problem to individual Gulf states, individual oil companies and individual under-resourced environmental organisations.

12.10 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): If, after the debate, the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) reads the United Nations charter, he may feel that that organisation's commitment to seeking to resolve disputes by negotiation, arbitration, peace and other methods could have been sorely damaged by what has taken place in the Gulf.

On the other hand, there are agencies operating under the aegis of the UN, such as UNICEF and the World Health Organisation which are doing valuable work. The position of the UN cannot easily be judged one way or the other by what has happened in the crisis, for sometimes its right hand is trying to undo what its left hand has achieved.

The oil fires alone in the Gulf represent a massive human catastrophe, despite what the hon. Member for Gravesham said to try to alleviate the nature of that catastrophe. The situation is undoubtedly far worse than the disaster at Chernobyl and it might even be judged to be worse than Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Disastrous though those happenings were in terms of numbers of people killed, we must consider the potential that is beginning to flow from the crisis in the Gulf in terms of climatic conditions and the lives of people in the third world. We must be very concerned indeed if we are facing something that disastrous.

Hon. Members will have received copies of *New Arabia*, which have been sent out by the Kuwaitis. It includes an article entitled "Fires worse than nightmares" which deals with some of the points referred to in the debate. The nightmare that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) predicted has probably, in the event, turned out to be even worse than that which he painted today. It is more disastrous and more oil fires are occurring, though perhaps my hon. Friend was deliberately being modest about such matters to give impact to the points that he made.

Mr. Dalyell: I admit freely that I was wrong on two points. There was talk of 346 deep mined oil wells. I thought that more than 20 would ignite—that number would have been bad enough—because of the absence of oxygen. I was profoundly wrong about that. Secondly, although we predicted the obliteration of Kuwait, we said that there would also be effects in Iraq, Iran, the Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain. It did not occur to us that the black acid rain would extend as far as Turkey.

Mr. Barnes: My hon. Friend makes a valuable intervention which reveals the extent of the danger. The best scientific predictions did not reveal the depth of the problem that was to emerge.

New Arabia contains a diagram illustrating many of the issues that hon. Members have raised. Rather than discuss the detail of the article, I will cite the headings to give a flavour of the depth of the problem. The article refers to dramatic falls in temperature that can occur because of the sun being blotted out for long periods; the loss of wildlife; the spread of smoke; the loss of marine life, disease through contamination; soil and water contamination; and massive air pollution. We must not be complacent about those problems.

There are other massive problems. For example, the activities of the tanks on both sides and the general movement of the armies has resulted in small stones and pebbles being dislodged from desert areas. Scientists are claiming that because of that movement, the sands of the desert are unlikely to be contained in winds as readily as they have been in the past. That puts villages, encampments, airstrips, townships and other places in danger, which may be minor when compared with other considerations, but could have serious effects in the future.

The task of dealing with the oil slick is immense. A whole host of problems about how it is to be tackled still remain. There might be the possibility of dropping incendiaries on certain slicks, though the experience of the Torrey Canyon suggests that that is not the most viable method. There are also possibilities of chemical dispersants, booms and skimmers. As the hon. Member for Gravesham said, they are vessels that can begin to take the oil away if the area can be contained. There is also the possibility of using bacteria to break down the oil slicks and to make them more easily tackled.

The problems of disease and refugees have already been stressed. Half the tonnage that was dropped in the European theatre during the second world war was dropped on Iraq in 39 nights of bombing. Although we are talking about a different technology, the consequences are horrendous. We do not yet know the depths of what occurred, but we do know that precision bombing went disastrously wrong at Al Ameriah. As has been said, a 60-mile column of conscripts and Kuwaitis were fleeing along the road from Basra.

We do not yet know all that much about what happened in Basra. We are used to having reports from Baghdad and know a great deal about the Rashid hotel and the area around it, which is not typical of Baghdad, although parts of Baghdad have been built up by Saddam Hussein into a prestige area, with similar complexes. Basra has suffered probably far more than anywhere else. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow described what occurred in Baghdad and Kuwait. Basra's power supply, water supply, health and emergency services and sewerage systems have been dramatically damaged, causing serious

problems, including typhoid, cholera, hepatitis and polio. Those diseases are occurring in Basra as well as in Baghdad.

Basra is a port. It has massive dock facilities, large marshalling yards, a railway complex, an airport and oil installations. It was hit hard. We have had various reports from Basra and some information about what the bombings sounded like from Iran. Basra was hit by B52 carpet bombs and by precision bombing, which may have saved lives in certain circumstances—where it did not go wrong—and which was resorted to in areas other than Basra. There were no journalists or television cameras present to tell us the depths of what happened in Basra.

In the Easter Adjournment debate yesterday, my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) made a moving speech about the situation in Iraq. My hon. Friend quoted two faxed communications that had been received from Iran and which originally emerged from Basra. One was an appeal from the people of Basra, and it stated:

"We are fighting for all Iraqis and for all humanity everywhere. We are in full control of Basra, but your families, children, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers from Basra —they are in great need for food and medicines."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1991; Vol. 187, c. 1140.]

Humanitarian relief in Basra is being initiated on a small scale under United Nations resolution 666, which is about the supply of foodstuffs and medical supplies, initially in connection with sanctions, but it has been reinforced by resolution 678, which was interpreted as being about war, but is also linked with the consequences of the war. That resolution should apply to Baghdad, Kuwait, Basra and other areas.

Mr. Dalyell: It is relevant to recall the moving reference of my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) to the situation in Coventry in the 1940s, and a meeting of the parliamentary Labour party in the 1940s, which my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) and I attended. Furthermore, it is relevant to recall the impression that was left by people such as Alderman George Hodgkinson of Coventry and what happened during the reconstruction of Coventry after the horror that it endured. I suspect that the horror in Basra was many times worse.

Mr. Barnes: We do not know the number of people who have been killed in Iraq. Reference has been made to 140,000 people, but some will say that a quarter of a million people were killed. Let us say that 180,000 people were killed. That figure represents 1 per cent. of the population of Iraq. Most hon. Members' constituencies contain about 100,000 people, so we are talking about 1,000 deaths, on average, within a constituency. Some areas were barely touched, but Basra must have suffered tremendously.

I have an interest in Basra. A long time ago, I undertook my national service there in 1955-56. Therefore, I have the greatest affinity not only with RAF forces there but with the people with whom I worked. People often worked in abysmal circumstances. It was not unusual to see people working in the marshalling area carrying on their backs goods which no human being should have been asked to carry. That was some time ago and technology there has not advanced much, but I suspect that Iraq has advanced considerably in certain matters to do with prestige, military power and the authority of the Baath party and Saddam Hussein. Masses of people still live in mud huts and reed huts, and in the best of times, there are limited electricity, water and sewerage facilities. People in such conditions may have been affected by the bombing.

It is important to learn lessons from the past. We must ensure that we get full information. In such a debate it is possible to seek common ground between those who supported the war and those, such as myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow, who strongly opposed it and now believe that subsequent events justified our opposition. Nevertheless the question of what we should do remains.

Earlier Tory Members mentioned what the British Government were doing and I, too, shall quote from the Conservative research department brief. It provides the key points to stress in showing what the British Government are doing. We need to consider whether its list of four points is adequate, given the nature of this disaster. The brief states:

"The British have responded quickly to the environmental problems caused by the Gulf War."

It then gives the four key points:

"Britain was the first country to respond to the International Marine Organisation's appeal for a £1 million donation.

The Department of the Environment has sent pollution control and ecological experts to help in the Gulf.

The Government has ordered 3 oil recovery skimmers worth £300,000 which will be sent to Bahrain.

90 tonnes of anti-pollution equipment—mostly booms—from industry stocks held in Britain were flown out to the Gulf on the 28th, 29th and 30th January."

All those items are welcome and I imagine that the list could be longer as those are given as the "Key Points". The Conservative research department has presented those points to save the Government from criticism during the debate, so that they can carry their corner. Those measures are inadequate to meet the scale of the tragedy. They are insignificant compared with the resources that went into the war effort. The consequences of the war are likely to be horrendous.

War is the greatest factor in social change, especially in this century of total war. The greatest changes to this country have not occurred under Thatcherism or even under the Attlee Government. They were set in motion by and occurred during the first and second world wars. They had tremendous consequences not only for this country, but for the world. This war will have the same effect on the Gulf area. The consequences will mainly be disastrous and many of them have already been mentioned.

We, in common with others, may see the need and may be able to take action to improve the position in the middle east. There are the strongest humanitarian reasons, as well as political reasons, for mass assistance. The political reasons include the need to make links with Arabs generally, so that they feel that the rest of the world is helping them overcome their problems. Many issues, such as the Palestinian question, can be considered, but that may go wide of the provisions in the motion.

Certainly there should be the fullest possible support for United Nations resolution 666. We bombed Saddam Hussein in an attempt to make him follow United Nations resolutions, yet resolution 666 provided that the United Nations and its members in certain circumstances should give him aid. The resolution had relatively little to do with Saddam Hussein. It had to do with us and the rest of our world in response to the situation. We should act as quickly as possible to provide the money and the resources

[Mr. Barnes]

that are needed, using the agencies of the World Health Organisation and UNICEF. They could also be provided directly or through links with Europe.

In order to play as full a role as possible in providing assistance, we need to understand the scale of the tragedy. We need as much information as possible from Iraq about what actually occurred, because a full and honest story must be presented and journalists and others must be given the opportunity to do that. The more that Saddam Hussein is allowed to maintain his authority over rebel Kurd and Shi'ite forces the less likely is it that we will be able to obtain information about what he is involved in.

People must fully realise what we were doing and what we were generally supporting. When that is quickly understood we can create pressures in society for humanitarian resources.

12.31 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on securing the debate. I gather that the Government Chief Whip described the hon. Gentleman's luck as black magic. The hon. Gentleman has extraordinary luck in securing Adjournment debates and debates such as this one, and he often does so at precisely the time that suits him. I make those points out of jealousy.

As usual, most of what the hon. Member for Linlithgow said was most impressive. I had the good fortune to serve until Thursday on the Committee examining the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill. In that Committee the hon. Gentleman displayed the enormous array of his interests, talents and expertise on environmental matters. He also gave us the benefit of his specific knowledge on Scottish matters, and in this debate he has shown the same flair in speaking about the Gulf and its wildlife and flora and fauna. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on that. My only criticism is of his rather endearing habit of reading out almost every letter that he receives to make sure that they get into the record. However, such a habit is valuable.

Mr. Dalyell: If I were to read out all the letters that I receive no hon. Member would get a chance to participate in the debate.

Mr. Hughes: I suppose that I should congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his restraint in reading only a few of the letters.

One general criticism is that the hon. Gentleman has got himself into the position of believing that he was the only one warning about these things at the time and that his warnings should have been a brake upon action by the allied powers. If we allowed the possibility of environmental pollution and destruction to be the paramount argument against military action, there would never be such action. So whatever Saddam Hussein decided he would do—whatever countries he decided that he wanted to invade, whatever control of the area's oil supply and economy, or of the world's economy, he wanted to take for himself—we should take no military action to stop him because of the possibility or likelihood of environmental damage. That is not a view that I can share.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that those who drew attention to what Saddam Hussein threatened and then said that we should not take military action to deal with him were, in effect, arguing that we should give in to blackmail? Saddam Hussein was proving that he was a psychopathic, evil and blackmailing character. If we had said that we would give way to him, it would have encouraged him to make even worse threats later and to invade other countries. It was right that we should put an end to a particularly evil man's attempts to blackmail civilisation.

Mr. Hughes: I genuinely respect the sincerity and consistency of the hon. Member for Linlithgow on these matters. I have tried to express my criticism in only one context in as mild a way as I can. I have other things to say about some of his hon. Friends.

Mr. Dalyell: I thank the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene on a matter of fact. The warnings did not appear in my own name. I was careful to go on and on asking whether there had been some response to the King of Jordan's figures, which came from Dr. Abdullah Toucan. They were produced not on the basis of work carried out at the Amman Scientific institute, although I believe that that institute is a serious place, but at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It was the MIT's findings that I thought deserved a response.

Mr. Hughes: I accept that. I recall the hon. Gentleman advancing that argument. One of the problems with the King of Jordan was that he caused himself to be boxed in to a position in which anything that he said was liable to be sidelined. I am not sure whether it was prudent or logical in the early days of the war for us to sideline King Hussein in the way that both the British Government and the Government of the United States did. The King of Jordan was making claims in many areas that were either irresponsible or unfounded and, therefore, that which he said that had some foundation was liable to be treated in the same way as those claims.

We have not yet explored the issue of war crimes. When we talk about war crimes, we talk normally about the use of unconventional weapons, grave breaches of the Geneva convention, wilful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, including biological experiments, or wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health. In those areas of grave breaches that are set out in the four Geneva conventions of 1949 there is reference to

"extensive destruction and appropriation of property not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly."

There is reference also to

"plunder of public or private property and wanton destruction of cities, towns and villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity."

Part of the war crimes for which Saddam Hussein was responsible was the destruction of the environment. Britain has not committed war crimes, but anyone who listened to some of the speeches of Labour Members who supported the hon. Member for Linlithgow would have thought that the allies, and especially the British Government, had committed such crimes. The war crimes were carried out deliberately by Saddam Hussein. One of the greatest and perhaps most enduring of those war crimes has been the destruction of the environment described today by the hon. Member for Linlithgow. We must not forget what Saddam Hussein has done.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow made the only speech from the Opposition Benches for which I have any time. The speeches of other Labour Members were contemptible. They tried to blame the destruction of the environment and loss of life on the coalition forces. I cannot accept that. To be fair, such a view would not be accepted on the Labour Front Bench.

Mr. Harry Barnes: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands what some of us have beeen arguing. Perhaps I can draw an analogy in the form of a madman or mad organisation conducting a hijack. We have to decide how to respond to the situation. Do we send in troops with hand grenades, or do we try to engage in a much more sophisticated response in an attempt to release the hostages? That is the difference between us in relation to the response. There was no support for the madman engaged in the activities that we have heard described today. He is an evil, totalitarian madman. What did we expect him to do when we responded as we did?

Mr. Hughes: That is not a good analogy. Other methods to stop what eventually happened were pursued. We tried sanctions and appeals to Saddam Hussein. Right hon. and hon. Members went to Bahdad to persuade Saddam Hussein to withdraw. I had the honour to be Parliamentary Private Secretary to my right hon. Friend the Member for Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) at the time and I know how hard he tried to persuade Saddam Hussein not to do what he did.

In the end, those methods did not work. Virtually the whole world, like both sides of this House, concluded that the only way to bring the matter to an end was through military force. To place any of the blame for what happened on the coalition countries that were carrying out the United Nations wishes is wrong. Before the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-West (Mr. Barnes) talks about the United Nations again, I wish that he would read the articles in the charter. He would then understand that what was done in the name of the United Nations was entirely proper.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that the events that have unfolded in Kuwait since the successful liberation of that country, the sights that we have seen and the reports of the horrors that took place during the Iraqi invasion and occupation, show that, if anything, it was not a question of our not being patient enough with Saddam Hussein? Rather, we were too patient. We gave him too long and he was able to do worse things than he could have done if we had acted earlier.

Mr. Hughes: I was about to make that point, and it was put very well by my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall). Had we delayed, more people would have been killed.

It is all very well to talk about the destruction of Baghdad and Basra and the effect on the Iraqi people. However, such comments should be coupled with reference to the enormous destruction in Kuwait, the effect on Kuwaiti people and the likely effect of further outrages on Kuwaiti people had the Iraqis been allowed to remain.

I want to consider the environmental consequences of what has happened. I want first to consider the oil. The Kuwait Oil Company's damage assessment shows that approximately 950 wells have been sabotaged, of which 550 are burning. The damage has been severe enough to destroy safety and flow limiting devices, and in some cases to allow the oil to flow around the casing, increasing it further still. The KOC estimates that between 5 million and 6 million barrels a day are burning.

In addition, oil refineries and storage facilities have been sabotaged, and that could mean the loss of up to 15 million barrels. The big question this raises is for how long the fires will burn. The fires at the oil refineries and storage facilities are mostly out, so the environmental threat comes mostly from the burning wells. Earlier estimates of the time taken to extinguish fires in those wells ranged from a few months to a year. Many regard that as optimistic because of the logistics involved in putting them out, especially the use of large quantities of water. If I were being generous, I would say that that is the one point on which I agreed with the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). The estimate is that the fires will take between three and five years to put out. To be any more certain than that would be difficult.

The environmental impact of the fires depends on the behaviour of the smoke. If the smoke stays at a low altitude, it will fall out or be washed out locally or regionally. If the smoke reaches an altitude of 10 km or more, it will remain in the atmosphere for much longer. That could have more widespread effects on the climate. Calculations have been made that smoke from individual oil well fires will rise only 1 km or so, although any large fires at refineries could result in smoke that rises much higher. Therefore, it is a little early to know what the long-term environmental impact of that will be.

Our Meteorological Office has been looking in some detail at the global effects of these fires. Carbon dioxide emissions could add about 3 per cent. to the global emissions from other activities in the first year and 1 per cent. in the second. The ozone layer is unlikely to be affected, provided that the majority view that the gases capable of destroying ozone are unlikely to reach the stratosphere in significant quantities is correct.

Earlier analyses examined the possibility that smoke could trigger the climate effects forecast in the nuclear winter, including failure of the Asian monsoon. This is an interesting analogy because of the many predictions made about the Asian monsoon, what has actually happened, and the detailed modelling that has been done. The work done by the Meteorological Office and others claims that the effect on the monsoon would be negligible, and probably much less than the year-to-year variability. Therefore, whatever might happen to the monsoon, that may have nothing to do with the oil fires, or their effect on the monsoon may be relatively small and not one that could be put down simply to that cause.

I shall deal now with sanctions, which have a bearing on the situation on the people inside Iraq. There has been much talk about sanctions on both sides of the House. One point has either not been appreciated or has not been fully explained. It is that sanctions have not at any time, and do not now, prohibit medicines from being taken into Iraq. If children have been denied medicines, it is entirely because the Iraqi Government refuse to allow them to come in. That has to be understood and appreciated.

Mr. Harry Barnes: The hon. Gentleman is wrong about sanctions on foodstuffs and medical supplies. The resolutions state that in certain circumstances, when there are serious problems in providing foodstuffs and medical supplies, action can be taken to supply them. A host of

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

sanctions on air and sea movement obviously affect the ability of people to send foodstuffs and medical supplies to Iraq. Special action must be taken to supply those goods.

Mr. Hughes: If the Iraqi Government had made it clear to the Red Cross that they needed medical supplies, they could have been taken in, and could still be taken in, despite sanctions. At any stage, essential medical supplies could have been taken to Iraq. The fact that the Iraqi people have been denied them is entirely down to the Iraqi Government, and that should not be forgotten.

One of the friends of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East who consistently voted with the hon. Gentleman against the Gulf war suggested on a platform that we shared that we were too soft and that we should not have allowed medical supplies or foodstuffs to go to Iraq. There are different views on this matter.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) spoke about the Palestinians, and some tributes have been paid to his speech. I do not join them. As usual, the hon. Gentleman spoke as though he were the only person who had ever had any experience of visiting Palestinian refugee camps. He implied that the problems of the Palestinians were caused by the war. That is a new twist on the old chestnut that the Palestinians' problems were caused by the Israelis. That historical and factual nonsense must be put down at once.

I visited one Palestinian refugee camp outside Tripoli in Lebanon three times within a week. On the second occasion, the camp was controlled by a different Palestinian faction from the one that controlled it the other times—there had been enormous battles between my visits. On each occasion, bodies lay around and enormous suffering was experienced by the people. Palestinians were causing immense suffering to fellow Palestinians. The suffering of the Palestinians and the fact that their problems have not been solved cannot again be laid at the door of the coalition or Israel; they must be laid at the door of the Arab people in general and the so-called Palestinian leadership.

If the Arab countries around Israel wanted seriously to do something about the appalling living conditions and suffering of the Palestinian people, they would read resolution 242, recognise Israel's borders and give guarantees about their security and ensure that they gave space, help and housing to the Palestinian refugees, even if only temporarily. None of those things has happened. To bring the Palestinians into the debate as the hon. Member for Hillhead did is to do no justice to their cause and is to hide behind the facts.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that one consequence of the invasion of Kuwait was that many thousands of Palestinians lost their jobs? Does he agree that many thousands of Palestinians had to leave Kuwait quickly because of the invasion? Does my hon. Friend remember meeting the mayor of Bethlehem, who said that 5,000 Palestinians from Bethlehem who had been working in Kuwait could no longer do so and that those who had been sending remittancee from Kuwait to Bethlehem suddenly found that, because of the equalisation of the Iraqi and the Kuwaiti dinar, their bank accounts were worthless and those remittances stopped? The Palestinian people were one of the main victims of the invasion of Kuwait and the folly of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in supporting Saddam Hussein has made peace in the middle east much more difficult.

Mr. Hughes: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He and I and some Opposition Members met the mayor of Bethlehem who expressed those worries. He said that he had a hospital paid for by the Kuwaitis. It was not yet finished, but in the parts that were open the doctors and nurses had been paid for by the Kuwaitis. He wondered who would fund the hospital now. The way in which the Palestinian people—and especially their leadership—welcomed the invasion of Kuwait and cheered when Scud missiles were launched against defenceless Israeli people has put back their cause. The Palestinian issue may be tangential to the debate, but as it has been introduced, it must be recognised that the person who has done most harm to the Palestinian cause is Saddam Hussein. He must bear a terrible responsibility for that.

The hon. Members for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), and for Derbyshire, North-East and others said that the Government have done too little. They said that the Government should have acted sooner and that people should have been sent to the Gulf to solve the environmental problems. However, there was a war on, and anyone who has been in an area where bullets, grenades and missiles are flying about knows that it is not easy to do one's job in such circumstances. It would have been impossible for the Government to act sooner. They were the first to give money to the International Maritime Organisation and have taken the problems seriously, which should be welcomed.

Mr. Dalyell: That is an extremely important point. Before anybody can start tackling the oil fires, something must be done about mines and booby traps.

Mr. Hughes: That is a fair point. The criticism was not made by the hon. Gentleman, who has been fair. Anyone who quotes from a Conservative research department document must be making a fair speech.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Well, I did then.

Mr. Hughes: There are exceptions to everything.

The Government should be congratulated on the speed and nature of their response and on the way in which expert help has been offered, not to take over, but to give aid to the people trying to tackle the problems. I congratulate the Government on what they have done. I shall finish where I started—by congratulating the hon. Member for Linlithgow on bringing these matters to our attention once again, and on giving us such a detailed insight into his knowledge. That has been valuable for the House, for the nation and for the region in question.

12.53 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I agree with the last comment made by the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes). We should all congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on what he described as his good fortune in having secured this debate. The hon. Member for Harrow, West said that it was possibly black magic. If my hon. Friend had not won the ballot for the debate, I am sure that his ingenuity, which knows no bounds, would have enabled him to find another suitable occasion to raise these issues at length. As

you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, his persistence is well known and well respected by many hon. Members, as the debate has proved.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend on his campaign to raise awareness of the difficulties and problems that have arisen as a result of the conflict in the Gulf. He said that he was not the only person to give warnings and advice about what might happen. I must say, however, that his extremely high profile on this issue has meant that a great deal of attention has been paid to the problems. We are grateful to him for choosing this subject for debate and for the information he has given to the House on other occasions.

We have had some interesting speeches from both sides of the House. I agreed with much of the measured and sensitive speech of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) who outlined the difficulties that have arisen. I also agreed with much of the speech of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). The speeches from other hon. Members have ranged somewhat wider than the narrow confines of the motion tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow. Although those hon. Members raised genuine concerns and issues relevant to the wider context, I want to keep my remarks to the issues raised by my hon. Friend.

There is no doubt that the ecological consequences of the Gulf war have been extremely serious. As with any environmental incident, the impact and consequences of what has happened in the Gulf will be felt for many years to come. In some respects some of the damage caused may never be reversed—damage to the local environment, certain species of wildlife and the potential damage to the health of many individuals and, possibly, future generations.

Today there has been some discussion of the scale of that damage and the problems that we face. Given the different types of damage, its total scale is unknown, but it is clear that it is enormous. In some respects it is difficult to comprehend fully the enormity of the problems that we now face. Experts and laymen alike are extremely worried about what has already happened and what will happen in the next months and years.

Several different types of damage have been caused, but I first want to discuss the oil slicks and the difficulties that have arisen since the end of January. We were all shocked, although some people may not have been surprised, at the deliberate release of oil from the Sea island oil terminal and the subsequent releases from elsewhere. At the time it was suggested that that slick might be due to the military activities of the allied forces. The scale of that original oil slick made that unlikely, however, and shortly after we had the statement from the Secretary of State for the Environment on 28 January, Saddam Hussein acknowledged that he had deliberately released oil into the Gulf.

The consequences of that slick have been severe and they have brought home to many people the horror and potential for environmental damage posed by such pollution. We have seen horrific sights in the past, for example, that caused by Exxon Valdez and other tankers. The consequences resulting from those slicks, however, have been far outweighed by the disaster that has hit the Gulf as a result of the deliberate release of oil in January.

We are aware from reports in yesterday's newspapers that the Exxon corporation has agreed to pay $900 million, about £500 million, to complete the clean-up in Alaska. That gives us some idea of the magnitude of the task that we shall face in the Gulf. We should not forget that the problems relating to the Gulf oil spillage are far worse than those encountered in Alsaka, because of the nature of the Gulf. The sea in that region is shallow—110ft on average—and it lies in an enclosed area. Although the coast of Alaska was devastated, at least the sea cleaned the shore every few days. It takes 200 years for the Gulf waters to be renewed, which shows just how serious the problems are and will remain for a long time to come.

Many species and habitats have been threatened by the consequences of the oil slick. The most endangered habitats are the sea grass beds, which cover 46 per cent. of the seabed in the shallow coastal waters and are home to a rich variety of marine vertebrates and invertebrates. They are nursery grounds for commercial shrimps and fish, which provide an important livelihood for local people and much of their available food.

The oil slick has endangered species and hit the food and employment potential of people in the region, as well as the oil industry and other local industry. Some people would say that the only other viable industry in the region, apart from oil, is the fishing industry.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow said, coral reef habitats have also been affected. They, too, are extremely valuable—especially to the fishing industry—and vulnerable, not least because the Gulf is the northern extremity of their range. Therefore, they can be easily damaged but will not recover easily from that damage. My hon. Friend and other hon. Members mentioned bird and marine life and the difficulties experienced by some species of cormorant. The impact on some mammals has, thankfully, been relatively light—there was a report of one dolphin and two green turtles being lost, so casualties at this stage are not thought to be fantastically high.

On the other hand, bird mortalities are significant. They are estimated at between 10,000 and 20,000. In recent days, many migratory species have been found oiled. They are early spring migrants, and as the migration increases so does their prospect of even greater damage.

Clearly, the west possesses significant expertise in dealing with such problems. Unfortunately, there have been many instances of oil slicks causing damage and we have had to learn quickly and take good advice about what action to take. I am sorry to say that the most recent report that I have seen on the oil slick in the Gulf from a group of experts from the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, made up of the World Conservation Unit, the United Nations Environmental Programme and the World Wide Fund for Nature. The centre has been providing significant briefings in the past few weeks on current events in the Gulf. Its most recent report, issued on 12 March, says:

> "Very little co-ordinated clean up is being done.
>
> Some 40 specialist companies are touting for clean-up work, but lack of available funds means that very little is actually happening".

When such a report is issued this week from people in the area, it is extremely worrying. I hope that the Minister will deal with that report and give us an update of events. More urgent action is needed because we have been discussing the problem for about six weeks and those in the Gulf still say that there is a lack of co-ordination and unified effort, so clearly, everything possible is not yet being done. May we have an update on the protection of the desalination plants, which are critical to the people in the region? There is scope for protecting the plants with

[Mrs. Ann Taylor]

booms, but the dangers that would arise were oil to enter the water treatment plants would be severe and the impact would last for many years. It is important to mention what has been happening in the Gulf, not just in the past few weeks, but over recent years. It is right that we should be desperately concerned about the impact of the present oil slicks caused by the conflict in the Gulf over recent weeks. But we should not ignore the significant long-term damage caused in the region even before the Gulf war started. From reports that I have seen, it is clear that much damage was being done to the environment by many of those involved in the oil industry in that region.

Pollution in the Gulf did not start in January 1991, but has been going on for many years due to leakages from oil terminals, tankers being washed out in the Gulf and a generally casual attitude by many of those responsible for the oil industry. If there is one other lesson to be learnt from the oil slick, it may be that the whole of the oil industry must be more cautious, careful and strict in its general attitude.

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): Does the hon. Lady agree that not just the oil industry, but some of the Governments in the Gulf should take responsibility for what has happened over recent years?

Mrs. Taylor: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is unfortunate that it has taken an incident of this sort and of such severity to bring home to people in the region, as well as outside it, the significant dangers of such a casual attitude towards pollution. Perhaps now, people in other districts will learn from this lesson before a crisis arises near them. If so, some good may come for other regions and lessons may be learnt.

Another problem that has been devastating the region, particularly Kuwait, in the past few weeks has been that of oil fires. That deliberate act by Saddam Hussein has created senseless damage. It was a vindictive act because it gave Saddam Hussein no military advantage during the conflict. The immediate impact on the people of Kuwait of setting fire to oil has been seen by all of us on our television screens, where there have been pictures of daylight scenes, with cars needing to have their headlights on full in the near darkness.

Estimates of the damage done by oil wells being deliberately set alight and the oil being ignited, and the amount of smoke generated, vary considerably. However, whatever estimates we make, none of the news is good. The estimates vary only in terms of just how desperate the position will be and how long it will remain a critical problem. From information that I have it seems that about 950 wells have been sabotaged, of which 550 are thought to be burning at present. The Kuwait Petroleum Company estimates that between 5 million and 6 million barrels per day of oil are burning at present. That estimate exceeds most of the worst case scenarios given before the incident took place. How long the fires will last is equally uncertain.

We have heard again about the problems of booby traps and the difficulties of getting equipment to the scene. In recent days we have been told that some fires were started and mines detonated in ways that were not predicted at earlier times in the crisis. In other words, those concerned are learning day by day about new developments and problems that must be taken on board.

It is estimated that those problems will be with Kuwait—and, I would add, with the whole of the world's environment—for between one and three years. Clearly, there is a global impact. Carbon dioxide emissions, I am told, could increase by 3 per cent. on a global basis in the first year and by 1 per cent. on the same basis in the second year.

It seems unlikely that the ozone layer will be affected, but significant climatic changes are taking place in the region. Black rain has been experienced in Kuwait, Iran, Iraq, and even in Turkey, over 600 miles away. We are learning of reductions in daytime temperatures and of increased rainfall acidity, which is now four times the normal rate. That makes the rates about as bad as those in the worst parts of Europe. We must not lose sight of the fact that certain parts of the world are living with these problems daily.

The combination of factors raises questions about the health of the people in the area, particularly in Kuwait, where families must fear for the long-term welfare of their children. That particularly applies to those susceptible to respiratory diseases, although it is known that some pollutants resulting from burning oil can be carcinogenic.

The third part of the motion deals with the health crisis that is being observed in Kuwait and Iraq. Conservative Members have mentioned that aspect during the debate, but have not gone into the detail of it. Indeed, the Secretary of State for the Environment, when speaking in Nottingham last night, mentioned oil slicks and burning oil wells, but did not deal with the problems facing the innocent civilian populations of Kuwait and Iraq.

Damage has been caused to water supplies and the sewerage infrastructure of both countries. There are problems from the contamination of fisheries and the possible long-term impact on agriculture. There is also the danger of sulphur from acid rain entering the food chain. The situation is critical and continued fighting in parts of Iraq is making the problem worse. Innocent civilians in both countries are suffering and are likely to suffer for a long time to come.

Agencies, such as the joint mission of the WHO and UNICEF which visited the area in recent days, have confirmed fears about immediate and potentially severe risks resulting from problems including water-related epidemics. The International Committee of the Red Cross and Oxfam have been active in attempting to repair water treatment systems and provide emergency supplies of chlorine for disinfecting water supplies.

I hope that, internationally, the Government are doing more to co-operate with the efforts of the various agencies. That must be the way forward if we are to bring immediate relief to the people of Kuwait and the innocent civilians of Iraq.

The World Health Organisation/UNICEF report states that there are many problems, including—I hope that the Minister will address this one particularly—the fact that

"The chemical plants which used to supply the main treatment elements, aluminium sulphate . . . and chlorine, have been destroyed by bombing".

That means that there is a basic incapacity to purify the water in the area, and that means that the problems will continue for some time. In many areas of Iraq, the water supply is extremely and seriously restricted. There is clearly an urgent need in both Kuwait and Iraq for water supply treatment chemicals, spare parts of the distribution network, and pumping stations and treatment facilities.

Will the Minister clarify the position on sanctions on those items? If we are saying that medical supplies should be allowed through because of the needs of innocent civilians, we must also address the question of the essential but otherwise harmless chemicals that are so clearly required to prevent epidemics spreading in the area.

I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us that he has had discussions with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and that the Government will do their utmost and maximise everyone's efforts to ensure that all the agencies involved are given the fullest possible help when combating the real, serious and life-threatening dangers that now exist for the people of the Gulf.

It is difficult to see how anything constructive or beneficial could come out of the Gulf conflict, but certain ideas that have been mentioned could be utilised to minimise the danger of such problems occurring in the future. There have been discussions of late about whether the Geneva convention should be strengthened to provide greater protection for the environment. Article 55 of the convention deals with the protection of the natural environment. However, in view of all that has happened in recent weeks, I believe that it is right to look at that article again to see whether that protection needs updating. I hope that the Minister will convey that message to his right hon. and hon. Friends.

We now need to direct our efforts towards the environmental construction of the whole of the Gulf area. We must use the knowledge, monitoring procedures and expertise of the west to ensure that everything possible is done to reconstruct the Gulf area environmentally and to protect that part of the environment and the eco-system that is so far surviving all the devastation that has taken place there. Western countries, including our own, should be taking a lead. We need integrated environmental monitoring. We need a new approach to the problem of water management in the Gulf area, as was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). The Tigris and the Euphrates are being over-abstracted. The potential for conflict will arise again if we do not have better management of such resources, which should be agreed internationally.

If we are to talk about planning the peace and about building more stability into the region, we must ensure that we tackle the problems of the area, such as water management, and seek some co-operation over the development of Gulf fisheries. We must also tackle the problems of irrigation, agriculture and of resources generally.

Mr. Dalyell: My hon. Friend has given much of her parliamentary time to water-related issues. May I emphasise once again that this is a hydraulic civilisation and quote the phrase of Senor Rojo, which was quoted by John Pilger? Water-borne diseases could be the silent assassin.

Mrs. Taylor: I agree with my hon. Friend. His point has already been made clear in reports from people in the Gulf. Water-borne diseases are already increasing. The incidence of water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea is four or five times what would normally be expected. There is a real danger of epidemics sweeping through parts of that area.

If we can do anything to prevent that, we should do it on humanitarian grounds through international agencies such as the World Health Organisation and the Red Cross, which have a positive role to play. I hope that the Minister will tell us that he and the Government will support the efforts of those international agencies. If there is to be lasting peace in the area, we must take all those factors into consideration. If we are to protect the environment in that area in future, we must build on that peace or not only the people but the environment in that area will be threatened even further.

1.25 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has done us a service by using his good fortune in winning the ballot to introduce a serious debate on the ecological consequences of the Gulf war. In the past few weeks we have witnessed an unprecedented sequence of environmental catastrophies as a consequence of the illegal occupation of Kuwait and the actions of Saddam Hussein. Let us be clear that the cause of the environmental disasters that we are concerned about have arisen from deliberate and culpable actions by Saddam Hussein to violate the environment. No one ever underestimated the risk of serious environmental terrorism by Saddam Hussein, and the fact that Saddam Hussein was capable of such environmental terrorism underlines how important it was to free Kuwait from his grasp.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), the former Prime Minister, said:

"if a tyrant is never to be fought in order that freedom and justice may be restored, tyranny will triumph with all its brutality and the environment of human rights, which we seek to extend, will have received a fatal blow."—[*Official Report*, 13 November 1990; Vol. 180, c. 446.]

On 21 January, the House debated and voted on the motion that hon. Members should express their

"full support for British forces in the Gulf and their contribution to the implementation of United Nations resolutions by the multinational forces, as authorised by United Nations Security Council Resolution 678."—[*Official Report*, 21 January 1991; vol. 184, c. 24.]

The House divided and voted: 563 hon. Members supported the action of British forces in the Gulf, and 34 were against. All Back-Bench Labour Members who have spoken today were among the 34 who voted against British action in support of the United Nations in the Gulf. It may be appropriate to recall the observations of the Leader of the Opposition in that debate. He said:

"there can be absolutely no doubt about the legitimacy of the military action against the Iraqi dictator.

Our forces are now engaged in fighting for the lawful purposes set out in the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council."

Mrs. Ann Taylor: The Minister quotes my right hon. Friend perfectly accurately, and we all stand by what my right hon. Friend said. However, I hope that the Minister will not be churlish in denigrating some of my hon. Friends' comments because some of them took a different attitude to the conduct of the war. Many of them made constructive and informed comments about the environment, about which they have every right to be concerned, regardless of their attitude to the war.

Mr. Baldry: I have no intention of being churlish. I intend to put on the record that every Labour Member who has spoken today was among the 34 who voted

[Mr. Baldry]

against the British action in the Gulf. It is right also to remind the House of the stand that the hon. Lady and the Leader of the Opposition took.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Baldry: In a moment.

The Leader of the Opposition said:

"We consider the fulfilment of those resolutions to be critical to the future authority of the United Nations, and British forces—along with others in the coalition—are being used for the precise purpose of maintaining international law and sustaining the authority of the United Nations . . . it must be said that, by withdrawing from Kuwait, Saddam could have prevented any possibility of war. Even now, he can stop the war immediately by withdrawing from Kuwait and laying down his arms. Whatever else may be said or thought about the Iraqi dictator, some things are obvious: he wilfully refused to follow a course that guaranteed no war; he does not as yet want peace, and he will not as yet allow peace."—[*Official Report*, 21 January 1991; Vol. 184, c. 31-33.]

I do not want there to be a shadow of a scintilla of a suggestion that anything that has happened in the Gulf has happened other than as a consequence of the actions of Saddam Hussein.

Today we have had some thoughtful and informed speeches. I hope that in my comments I can respond fully to the questions and concerns raised. My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) rightly castigated Saddam Hussein for what she described as unleashing this environmental catastrophy. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) asked for a co-ordinated and urgent international response. I can assure him that at all times our response has been prompt and positive and that it will continue to be so. We shall at all times seek to promote the best possible co-ordinated international response.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) rightly drew attention to the leading role that Britain has been taking in responding to requests from international agencies, such as the International Maritime Organisation. My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) sensibly observed that the two main challenges are the consequences of the oil slick and the consequences of the smoke plume over the Gulf region. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) underlined the scale of the challenge of the burning oil wells.

The first manifestation of Saddam Hussein's environmental terrorism was in the disastrous series of oil spills, of which the largest took place at Mina al-Ahmadi and was first identified on 24 January. There have been at least three major spills in the Gulf war.

The oil spills have been assessed at about 300,000 tonnes—somewhat less than the original estimate, but still the largest marine spills ever recorded and nearly 10 times the size of the Exxon Valdez spill of 38,000 tonnes. By reference to the costs of clearing up the Exxon Valdez spill, the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) made a telling point about the possible long-term costs of the spills. The oil has been carried by wind and tide south along the coast of Saudi Arabia, with considerable quantities coming ashore along the 200 km coastline between Khafji and the island of Abu Ali. Although some oil has evaporated, considerable quantities remain afloat and were recently estimated at 50,000 tonnes. Easterly winds have helped to pen this oil in the large bay to the west of Abu Ali, but changes in weather could bring it offshore with the potential to damage large areas to the south, including Bahrain and Qatar. I spoke this week to the co-ordination centre of the International Maritime Organisation and my latest information is that there is unlikely to be much movement of this oil in the next few days.

Smaller quantities of oil have been observed further offshore, probably from Mina al Bakr, and they are mostly patches of light oil or sheen with an estimated 2,000 tonnes remaining afloat. Meanwhile, damage in the war zone is generating several small continuing oil spills in the northern head of the Gulf, whose combined total has been estimated at 100 tonnes per day.

The impact on wildlife and ecological resources in the coastline affected has been extensive, affecting mangroves, seagrass beds and seabirds. On one 8 km stretch of coast it is reported that of 1,500 birds counted, some 80 per cent. were oiled. The shallow seas and seagrass beds of the western gulf are particularly important for biological productivity as nursery grounds for fish and shrimps. It is this area, which has been badly hit by the oil slick, that is particularly vulnerable to damage due to its shallow water and slow circulation. But the Gulf as a whole is particularly vulnerable ecologically due to such features as its semi-enclosed nature, in which the renewal of its waters from the open sea takes two and a half years.

We cannot know for certain how serious the long-term effects of the damage are likely to be until much more detailed assessments have been carried out, but it is already clear that major damage has been caused. Shortly after the slick occurred we were able to send to the Gulf states an assessment of the possible biological effects of the oil spill carried out by the Plymouth marine laboratory of the Natural Environment Research Council and this has proved very useful in monitoring the subsequent effects. I also pay tribute here to the work of the world conservation monitoring centre in Cambridge, whose regular assessments of the ecological resources of the Gulf states and how these disasters are likely to affect them have been of enormous value to all who are closely concerned with these issues.

The initial response action on oil pollution by the Gulf states has focused primarily on defending key industrial sites and desalination plants where blocking of water intakes would have serious consequences for drinking water, industry and many other activities. Some of this work has been carried out by the Saudi oil company, Aramco, while the protection of other areas, including ecological sites, has been tackled by the Saudi Meteorological and Environment Protection Agency. In addition to the oil-spill resources already available locally, Saudi Arabi was able to draw on the worldwide industry stockpile at Southampton, while a number of countries donated equipment such as defensive booms. However, that equipment has been more than fully deployed in protecting key sites such as desalination plants. Last week I saw some of the work that has been carried out to protect those plants using booms and other methods, and so far those measures appear to be effective. Meanwhile, the Saudi authorities have constructed barriers and trenches——

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I am glad to hear that the booms are proving effective. Can the Minister give us an update on the monitoring of water supplies? I understand that some

of the water treatment and desalination plants may not be equipped with facilities to monitor some of the dangers that could arise from oil pollution. Has he further information on that, or is he confident that the booms will prevent such problems?

Mr. Baldry: We have been responding positively to any request made to us by the Saudi Government, the Government of Bahrain or any other Government in the Gulf region, and we shall continue to do so. When I was in the region last weekend and speaking to Ministers and others, they seemed reasonably confident that the booms and protective measures for desalination plants would be effective. As I have made clear, much of the equipment has been deployed in protecting those key sites. If requests are made to us for monitoring equipment, we shall deal positively with them, as we have reacted to other requests that we have received from the area for equipment and expertise.

While the barriers and trenches have started to be constructed to deflect and contain oil—in a few locations recovery operations have begun—it is clear that there is an urgent need for large-scale recovery operations to begin if further damage is to be avoided in other ecologically sensitive areas. Although there are important practical problems to be overcome, such as hazards from mines and other war debris, it is clear that additional resources are and will be needed to deal effectively with a continuing threat, not least as oil is continuing to leak into the northern Gulf. This is where the international community must help.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow asked a specific question about the condition of Kuwait's coral islands. We are aware of Dr. Downing's representation. We were glad to have his assessment, and we have passed on his advice on protective measures to authorities in the Gulf. We are happy also to pass on to the Kuwaiti Government Dr. Downing's proposals for assessment. It is clear that a great deal of work must be carried out in assessing the ecological damage to the area. We are keen to see how British science can help. We need to bear in mind, however, that in this, as in everything, the Gulf states must be in the lead in responding to the problems. We need to take into account their assessment of needs and priorities in offering United Kingdom science expertise. None the less, we shall be making it clear to all the Gulf states that are affected what we can offer. Our approach throughout has been to seek to be prompt, positive and practical.

The primary responsibility for action rests with the Gulf states that are directly affected, but we have made it clear throughout that we shall react promptly to any request for assistance that we receive. We shall react positively, whether it be requests for financial aid, equipment or expertise. After the first major spill was reported, we immediately organised a military airlift of oil pollution response equipment from Southampton. We sent out experts from the marine pollution control unit, which deals with oil spills in our own waters. We commissioned science assessments for Gulf states on the biological effects of slicks on the modelling of slick movements, which were carried out by the Natural Environment Research Council. We assisted an RSPCA team to train local volunteers in the cleaning of oiled birds in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar. Since that first phase, it has become clear that more needs to be done.

Last week, as I have told the House, I visited Bahrain in response to a request from the Government of Bahrain for assistance with pollution control equipment, and to see for myself the progress of counter-pollution operations. I presented to the Bahrain Government from the United Kingdom the first of a consignment of six oil recovery skimmers at a total cost of £300,000. Although the oil slick still has a potential to reach and damage Bahrain, the Government there made it clear to me that they would hope to use that equipment in the meantime further north to assist the Saudi counter-pollution operations. The Government of Bahrain are very appreciative of the actions taken by Her Majesty's Government. They recognise that there are environmental challenges that will require regional co-ordination and an international response.

It is increasingly clear that an effective response to those crises requires a global international response co-ordinated by the international agencies. The first task is to extend and intensify oil recovery and clean-up operations. For that purpose, Britain was the first nation to make a donation to the special fund established by the International Maritime Organisation to assist the Gulf states' counter-pollution operations and to act quickly where the need was greatest. The secretary general of the IMO is very grateful for the positive lead that the United Kingdom has taken in that matter. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has written to colleagues in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to enlist and encourage their support for the IMO initiative.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury referred to a lack of co-ordination and funds in the clean-up operation. That is precisely why we are supporting the IMO. It is clearly the responsibility of lead international United Nations organisations to co-ordinate such activities and that is why we were the first nation to provide funds for the special fund set up specifically to assist that purpose. We want to ensure that the IMO has adequate resources for the clean-up operations that it must undertake. We hope that other countries will follow our lead.

It may be useful at this point if I briefly summarise for hon. Members what the international organisations are doing and how we are supporting their efforts. The International Maritime Organisation is the specialised agency of the United Nations concerned with shipping and oil pollution at sea. After the first spill, the IMO was asked by the Gulf states to co-ordinate offers of assistance from Governments of equipment and expertise. It has had a team of experts from member states co-ordinating information here in its London headquarters and in the Gulf and, in the light of their reports, it launched its special fund, to which I have already referred, on 5 March.

Another United Nations organisation, the United Nations Environmental Programme, which has the principal responsibility for co-ordinating the response to the consequences of the conflict, has subsequently given expert assistance to the regional forum of the Gulf states which met on 27 February in Bahrain—the regional organisation for protection of the marine environment. This week at the informal Environment Ministers' conference in Nairobi, my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside has called for UNEP to be recognised as the international body best able to co-ordinate the international effort on environmental emergencies. He called on UNEP to maintain standing

[Mr. Baldry]

registers of environment science and international expertise for disaster response and for member states to assist with that by developing and keeping up to date their own registers.

The European Community has also contributed to the teams of experts advising the Gulf states, including a coastal ecologist from the United Kingdom's oil pollution research centre. In the Gulf, the Community has liaised between member states, and I believe that it can continue to play a valuable part in co-ordinating the scientific assistance that we might offer. One example would be to build on the work of the EC team already in the Gulf which has prepared a plan for detailed assessment of the ecological damage to coastal habitats caused by the oil slick.

I want now to consider the problems generated by the burning of Kuwaiti oil wells and the smoke plume. Here again, we are dealing with an appalling act of economic and environmental sabotage. Several hundred oil well fires —possibly as many as 700—were started, in most cases long after they could have served any conceivable military purpose. That was a dreadful act by Saddam Hussein. Nor was that the work of ignorant men. Those who destroyed the well-heads seem to have known exactly what they were about. In their own perverse terms, they did a very effective job. While we are a very long way yet from certainty, there are indications that the damage, and the quantity of oil being burnt, may be well above even our worst earlier fears. A week ago, standing in Bahrain and looking south, I could see sunny blue skies. Looking north to Kuwait, I could see grey skies, overcast like the skies of an October afternoon.

Estimates of the rate of oil burn, how quickly this might be reduced, and the time that it will take to extinguish the fires must still be highly uncertain. However, we know that the Kuwaiti Petroleum Company believes that the current rate of burn is about 5 million to 6 million barrels a day, compared with our previous worst case assumption of 1·5 million barrels a day. If so, that would be serious news. The impact would be more severe and more widespread even than we had previously feared. On present information, it seems unlikely to be different in its nature. According to the best scientific evidence, there is no reason to think that stratospheric ozone concentrations will be significantly affected.

Throughout all this, we have relied on the best scientific advice available to us, whether that advice be from the Meteorological Office or the World Meteorological Organisation. There has been no suggestion of playing down any environmental consequences of what might have occurred in the Gulf. I make it clear that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did not dismiss the risk of oil fires. He made available the advice that he had received on the environmental implications of such fires, which has since been followed by the Meterological Office study.

Mr. Dalyell: This is a direct question: was the paper that I went through at some length in my opening speech the paper that Dr. Keith Browing submitted?

Mr. Baldry: I had intended to deal with that point later, but I am glad to tell the hon. Gentleman that it was the paper that Dr. Keith Browning presented. I make it clear that, throughout all this, Ministers and officials within the Department of the Environment want to rely on best science. Ministers and officials do not believe that they are possessors of all the knowledge on this wide area of environmental challenges. For that reason, we always search out the best scientific advice that can be made available to us by the best possible agencies. Sometimes, they will be our own agencies, such as the Meteorological Office, and on other occasions they will be international agencies, frequently United Nations agencies.

The problems caused by burning oil wells are unprecedented. The valuation of the possible effects remains difficult. However, notwithstanding the much-increased estimates of oil burn over the past few days, the best scientific advice is that the plume is thought to be unlikely to have reached the stratosphere in significant amounts, save occasionally as the result of thunderstorms. Most of the smoke will stay within a few kilometres of the atmosphere. When one is flying around the Gulf, one flies above the worst of the smoke plume. Our view remains that we are not facing a serious threat to the global climate.

The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology has just published a study on oil fires in Kuwait and provided a commentary for hon. Members. It emphasises that the effects are likely to be local. It says:

"The reason that regional climatic impacts are not predicted is that much of the pollution falls out or is washed out of the atmosphere in a relatively short time. It is precisely this behaviour which will seriously affect the local environment. Models predict that the worst fallout will be within 2000 km—i.e. primarily over Kuwait, the Gulf, Iraq, Iran, eastern Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. But irregular fallout could occur as far away as Pakistan and northern India to the east and Greece, the Balkans and northeast Africa (e.g. Ethiopia) to the west. Fallout of soot is already widespread locally, and the large amounts of sulpher (and nitrogen) oxides cause rain to be highly acidic. 'Black rain' has been reported in Iran, Iraq and Kuwait, and given recent weather patterns, 'black' snow in the mountains of Iraq and Iran may have fallen. Smoke has reduced daytime temperatures through shading, but will also reduce nightime cooling through its blanketing effect."

Mr. Dalyell: It is a bit of a distortion of the English language to use the word "local" about effects felt as far away as Turkey, the Balkans, north Africa and Pakistan. Pakistan and the Balkans are not exactly, by any stretch of the English language, local to Kuwait.

Mr. Baldry: I think that the hon. Gentleman misunderstood my point. There has been understandable worry about whether the impact of the smoke plume will have an effect on the global atmosphere and global temperatures. My point is reinforced by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology. The best advice that we have to date is that the smoke plume is unlikely to have a global impact, although no one denies that it will have an impact on the region.

Our view remains that we are not facing a serious threat to the global climate. We expect, however, acid rain and photochemical smog episodes, comparable with the worst encountered around major industrial areas, over possibly as much as 2,000 km downwind of the source; "black rain" and "black snow" over a similar distance from the source, leaving layers of soot; and, under the plume, daylight almost obliterated and daytime temperatures reduced by between 10 and 20 deg C possibly up to 100 km from the source. To respond to the point made by the hon. Member

for Linlithgow, let me say that those facts speak for themselves. I hope that the hon. Gentleman understands my point.

Immediate impacts of this sort clearly constitute unimaginably grim news for the people of the Gulf and neighbouring areas. There must, too, be real concerns about the health effects, particularly on the old, the very young and those with breathing difficulties, and about damage to crops. Serious long-lasting environmental damage, however, seems rather less likely. The familiar effects of acid rain on sensitive ecosystems in parts of Europe, for example, are the result of cumulative exposure over many years and of geology very different from the norm for the Gulf region. Our hope must be—at this early stage, it can be little more than hope—that the impact of the oil fires, horrifying though it will undoubtedly be, will be relatively short lived. Throughout, we shall always rely on the best scientific advice available to us and act promptly on it.

It was suggested last week in *The Sunday Times* that the plume from the Gulf oil fires could reach Europe. Satellite photographs clearly reveal the location of the smoke plume, which currently extends over Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iran. It is unlikely that the plume could reach Europe, although, with extremely sensitive analytical equipment, some remnants of the fires may be detectable outside the Gulf region.

As to effects on health, as with everything else, our assessment of the potential health impacts of the smoke can be only tentative at present. Clearly the situation has much in common with the notorious London smogs of the 1950s—heavy concentrations of sulphur dioxide and carbon particles—but there are important differences, too. There will be less tar and ash than in the London smogs and the climate is completely different. We should not therefore assume too readily that the toll on health will be comparable.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the Minister monitoring the hydrogen sulphide?

Mr. Baldry: It may be for the convenience of the House if, when I draw near the end of my speech, I turn to the hon. Gentleman and ensure that, as far as possible, I have answered all his questions. Almost everything that the hon. Gentleman has asked me will be dealt with, and it may be more convenient for the House if I tell him what we are going to do.

Traces of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons are also likely to be present, on the carbon particles. Some of them have carcinogenic properties. Again, however, amounts are likely to be less than in London's old coal-related smogs, and I am advised that any increased risk of cancer should be low. Dioxins are less likely to be involved, as crude oil does not normally contain halogens in any quantity. This, however, still needs to be confirmed on the ground.

Clearly, in periods of heavy smoke pollution, the best thing for people to do is to stay indoors as much as possible. That is particularly important for babies, young children and people with respiratory disorders. Anyone exposed to a serious smoke episode will need careful watching.

There is no obvious cure for the pollution arising from the fires. It follows that the absolute priority must be to tackle the fires. Hon. Members rightly drew attention to the huge and unprecedented scale of the problem, which is seriously complicated by the destruction of so much of the Kuwaiti infrastructure, by the difficulty of getting water to the well-heads, and by the presence of mines and booby-traps. Western Governments are not unaware of these problems. The question is how we may be best able to help.

We must recognise that the Kuwaiti Petroleum Company already has under contract the world's leading international oil well fire-fighting companies, including that of Red Adair. There is no question of the fire-fighting efforts being hampered by failure to bring the best available expertise to bear on the problem and the international community—including the United Kingdom—is determined to bring that expertise to bear. A formidable amount of equipment will no doubt be required. However, the company is still in the process of assessing just what is needed. That is not merely a matter of extinguishing the fires. It is also crucial that the well-head must be adequately controlled to prevent oil from spreading on the ground. When that assessment is complete, it will be easier to see what sorts of help may be most appropriate. Meanwhile, the Offshore Supplies Office of the Department of Energy is already trying hard to ensure that Britain makes the best contribution that it can. The United Kingdom office of Bechtel is expected to have a key role in the first phase of managing the damage assessment, repair and reconstruction.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will visit the Gulf next month further to assess the environmental effects of the war and the way in which they are being dealt with. He has made it clear that we are anxious to make available to the Gulf states bilaterally or through international organisations—or both—any and all United Kingdom scientific expertise that would be genuinely helpful to them in assessing the current and potential impact of the fires and in devising follow-up action.

I would not, however, claim for a moment either that Britain has a monopoly of wisdom in this area or that the Gulf states do not have highly qualified experts of their own. We shall be anxious rather to identify any particular areas of expertise that the Gulf Goverments feel that they lack, or in which their own experts are overwhelmed by the amount of work to be done.

The Secretary of State, however, announced yesterday three specific offers of help. We will send the Gulf states very shortly the best assessment that we can compile, from United Kingdom knowledge and expertise, of the nature and extent of the plumes, their likely evolution and their possible impact on the environment and on human health. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham urged, we shall supply the Gulf states on a regular basis with interpreted satellite data. We shall arrange for a Meteorological Office research aircraft to study the composition and behaviour of the smoke plumes. Information from these flights will be made available to states in the region to help them to evaluate the likely impact of the smoke. If we are asked for any further monitoring or research assistance that we feel we have the expertise to give, I have no doubt that we shall try to respond positively.

In all this we shall rely in particular, although not exclusively, on the outstanding expertise of the Met Office. I was sorry that the hon. Member for Linlithgow criticised the brief assessment of the situation produced by that

[Mr. Baldry]

office, which was placed in the Library on 17 January. Obviously, it was a preliminary report undertaken at a stage when little firm information was to hand. It was, none the less, a useful paper, particularly because it was so concise.

I make it clear to the hon. Member for Linlithgow that the Met Office report—indeed every Met Office report—is its report. There is no suggestion of its being "doctored" in Whitehall. That report, in common with all reports produced by that office, reflects the genuine concerns and uncertainties of Dr. Keith Browning and his colleagues. They consulted widely among the United Kingdom scientific community before they wrote their report. That report may contain some uncertainties, but they reflect the best estimates and the best scientific appraisals of the best scientific brains available to give advice at that time.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury asked about our attitude towards helping the suffering people in Kuwait and Iraq. There is now a United Nations mission in Iraq to assess humanitarian needs. We fully support humanitarian assistance to Iraq channelled through the International Committee of the Red Cross—CRC—provided it is given in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Britain has committed $1 million to UNDRO—the United Nations disaster relief co-ordinator—for the Gulf region and £2·5 million to the ICRC appeal for the Gulf. In addition, European Community assistance—of course we contribute to that budget—to the Red Cross Gulf appeal for specific sanitation and water purification work, much of it in Iraq, amounts to 3 million ecu. A large proportion of those funds will, of course, go to Iraq.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West mentioned a current mission to Iraq by representatives of Oxfam and Save the Children Fund. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will give careful consideration to any suggestions that they may make to her in due course.

As for Palestinians in Kuwait, we have repeatedly made it clear to the Kuwaiti Government, at a senior level, that alleged collaborators should be dealt with under the rule of law. The Prime Minister repeated that message a short time ago when he met the Crown Prince of Kuwait.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: The Minister talked about humanitarian aid and the need for it to get through as required. Can he specifically clarify whether that humanitarian aid will cover the chemicals required for water purification, such as chlorine and aluminium sulphate, which were produced by the plants that have been bombed? The hon. Gentleman has spoken about the need to do something about the problems in the region. Can he confirm that such items will not be blocked by any sanctions?

Mr. Baldry: I have no doubt that the international community will wish to do everything possible to bring the necessary humanitarian aid to Iraq and the rest of the region. However, the extent of such humanitarian aid needs to be assessed.

Several hon. Members, including the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), made the telling point that we know little about what has taken place in some parts of Iraq because it has been difficult for people to go there. I assure the hon. Member for Dewsbury that the United Nations and the international community will not want to cavil over which line various matters fall. Once an assessment is made, the United Nations relief organisations and others will want to see how best to respond to those needs. Clearly, it is in the interests of the whole of the international community that humanitarian needs be met as speedily as possible and by the best means.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow mentioned birds. We welcome the work of the International Council for Bird Preservation, which has sent two experts for a short visit to the Gulf in the past 10 days to assess the effects of the oil spill on bird life. The region is an important staging post for spring migration and is home to some endangered species, such as the socotra cormorant. Further study in the region will be beneficial. Reports by ICBP experts give a mixed picture. They say that some offshore islands have escaped the oil and, in some areas, comparatively few badly oiled birds have escaped. In one case, in a flock of 3,000 birds, about 1,000 were estimated to be oiled to some degree, while about 250 were heavily oiled.

In the ICBP's view, the slow clean-up and lack of local monitoring information available strongly support the case for a study of species, movement, feeding patterns and oil damage. The ICBP is the recognised international federation of bird preservation groups and, in the United Kingdom, is strongly supported by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. It is funded by private and other donations and sponsorship. Details of its new proposal were faxed to my Department only yesterday, so we must consider its request for support. As with every other request that we have received, we shall consider it carefully.

I hope that I have responded comprehensively to the issues that have been raised. The bull point of my remarks is that, in all of these matters, we must rely on the best scientific information. Environmental science and the international community face an unprecedented challenge in responding to those problems and we must act quickly if we are to prevent an enduring legacy of ecological ruin in the areas most affected. One way that we can assist is by targeting United Kingdom science on those problems and offering our expertise to the Gulf states.

As I said, science can help directly in monitoring the scale of the damage from smoke plumes, oil slicks and hazardous material, in using computer models to predict how it will spread and in advising on its likely consequences for human health, agriculture and all aspects of the environment. We need science to advise on the best way of disposing of the vast quantities of war debris, much of which will be contaminated with hazardous chemicals. We also need to be ready to assist the Gulf states to develop further their own environmental protection agencies.

On my visit to Bahrain last weekend I discussed with the Government of Bahrain, at their request, the possible assistance we can offer in building up environmental protection machinery and expertise and we are preparing to send out a United Kingdom team to assist in this field.

All hon. Members will agree that the terrible environmental problems generated in the Gulf and caused by the actions of Saddam Hussein remain considerable and can be tackled only by a collective international effort to assist the Gulf states. The United Kingdom has led the way by responding promptly and positively to calls for assistance, and we shall continue to consider how we can

contribute to the long-term recovery of that fragile but highly distinctive environment which is important to so many millions of people. We have been prompt and positive in our actions, and shall continue to tackle the ecological challenges in the Gulf region.

2.16 pm

Mr. Dalyell: Although the proposer has a right of reply, in the knowledge that the hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) has been waiting, in the belief that those who are drawn second in the ballot should have an opportunity to introduce their motion, and in the hope that the Seitz Crutzen proposals will be looked at, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Materials Recycling

2.17 pm

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): I beg to move,

That this House welcomes the Government's commitment to recycling of materials which reduces waste and conserves energy and raw materials; notes the important steps which this Government is taking towards reaching its target of recycling 50 per cent. of all reusable household waste by the year 2000 and that the £40 million being made available over the next three years will help boost recycling projects recognises the need for the Government to encourage research into greater use of recycling and for initiatives to encourage industry, commerce and the general public in the use of recycling; further recognises that recycling helps to reduce litter and generally improve the environment and that the Tidy Britain Group's National Spring Clean campaign will be a helpful contribution to public participation; and believes that the Environmental Protection Act 1990 will encourage recycling by introducing recycling credits and by forcing local authorities to publish recycling plans.

May I first thank the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for his courtesy in giving me quarter of an hour for my motion. I congratulate him on the manner in which he moved his motion and on his diligent research to provide the facts that he presented to the House. Regardless of whether we agree with every point he makes, we can always be sure that whatever motion he proposes, it will have been thoroughly research, will be informative to the House and will justify the case that he puts with great expertise.

My motion is designed to bring to the attention of the House the importance of the recycling of materials. In the United Kingdom today we are aware of the importance to the environment of many different aspects of what have, in the past, been accepted as processes that are merely part of our daily lives, with no real impact on us. We have become more and more conscious of the need to deal properly with the waste that we produce, both in our homes and in industry. We have also become aware of how it affects our daily lives if we do not treat it properly. Some of the tips and other means of disposal show us how dangerous waste disposal can be to our health.

Recycling has distinct advantages because it not only protects the raw material resources, but gives an important economic boost to industry allowing it to reduce the price of products. It also encourages all of us to keep our environment in a better state.

Energy—about which we talked in the previous debate, particularly oil—is something we greatly need to conserve and of which we should reduce our intake. Through the use of resources and through recycling, particularly of aluminium, we can produce great savings in energy. We can save on the cost of transporting new raw materials if we can reuse materials, particularly in their own localities. In so doing, we also save disposal costs. If we can properly dispose of and recycle some of those materials we reduce the risk of pollution as we prevent them from being destroyed or being released into the atmosphere and soil. We also reduce the demand for landfill space. In constituencies such as mine there is no shortage of holes in which to put waste, though the decision in which holes to put the waste is not always popular.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Does my hon. Friend agree that protection is required for our rivers? As a patron of the Thames clean-up campaign, I assure my hon. Friend that all too often we find that items that could be recycled

[Mr. John Bowis]

are dumped in the Thames, creating a messy and dangerous environment that is unpleasant for humans, swans, fish and associated life in and around our rivers.

Mr. Stevens: I agree with my hon. Friend. There is in my constituency a small river which, although it could not compete with the Thames, is the recipient of rubbish, even supermarket trolleys, creating an unsightly and dangerous area. I recall that when, 30 years ago, I worked in London, the state of the Thames was decidedly worse. There is much less floating debris now.

It would be wrong to imply that a great deal of British industry does not recycle waste. Indeed, in many ways our record is good. The latest figures that I have, though they are somewhat out of date, show that in 1986, British industry recovered 27 million tonnes of reusable material worth over £2 billion, including exports worth £700 million. With ferrous metals, copper and lead there has traditionally been much recycling and some of the amounts processed—82 per cent. of ferrous metals and 74 per cent. of copper—are high.

That has been done as a matter of economic necessity. In other areas, where the same economic necessity does not exist, the percentages are lower. In some cases reclamation is not economical. There is a temptation to think that all household and industrial waste can be recycled at reasonable cost. That is not so.

The Government are to be congratulated on financing research into ways of recycling materials, in particular materials that are difficult to get rid of without the possibility of toxins and other by-products being created. The Government devoted £10 million in 1990-91 into researching the recycling of waste products.

Recycling was not considered an important aspect of life 10 or 15 years ago. Mostly it was left to the rag and bone man, with newspapers and other waste paper being given to the boy scouts and others as a semi-charitable enterprise. We now recognise that recycling has an important part to play in the use and conservation of materials and for the good of the environment.

Much needs to be done to make the public aware of the importance of recycling. Bottle banks are common and "recycling cities" such as Sheffield have done much, with the help of the Department of the Environment. It is important to create such initiatives and people should be given the opportunity to separate and dispose of various waste materials that can be recycled.

There is still reluctance among the public which needs to be addressed. Trying to locate bottle banks is not always the easiest thing in the world, desirable as they are. It seems all right for them to be located in the car park of a large supermarket, but that can mean people travelling quite large distances. If one suggests that the bottle banks should be located in more residential areas, one finds that there is not the same welcome for or acceptance of those receptacles. That is also true of metal disposal——

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend agree that if the bottle bank is too far away, the owner of the bottles may spend more money in petrol and emit greater pollution into the atmosphere when getting to the bottle bank than the amount that is saved by preserving the glass?

Mr. Stevens: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. That is also true of collecting waste paper and newspapers for various charities. By the time people have got all the paper together, with all the money that that may entail, they could have given a bigger donation to the organisation concerned than the amount that the organisation can get from the waste paper.

The difficulty is to find the best form of recycling provision. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, local authorities will consider responsibility for organising recycling plans and for deciding on the methods of waste disposal in their area. However, if the public do not have ready access to the recycling receptacles, we will not move on from the situation with which we have all grown too familiar. I refer to our hedgerows and any piece of ground being littered with various things, which are costly to get rid of. Clearing waste from such areas is far more expensive than picking up refuse from one site. In many cities and towns, however, the disposal sites, such as the local tips, are not readily accessible. As my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) pointed out, people have to travel considerable distances and there is therefore the temptation not to recycle, but to put the rubbish in a dustbin or to get rid of it in some other way.

As I have said, we need to carry out research into the best ways of disposing of waste and of separating one type of waste from another. We must also consider the best and most economic way of recycling our waste.

Plastics have proved particularly difficult to get rid of. We are now talking about biodegradable plastics which, if they can be developed to the right extent, will mean that we do not have to face the worry of something that will not break down for many years. The incineration of plastics also causes great difficulties, unless it can be carried out at high temperatures. Plastic that is not destructible causes a general mess.

Litter is another important issue. It is important that we solve the problems caused by packaging. We are better off not producing the waste and the litter in the first place than having to recycle it. We need to design our products so that unnecessary waste does not automatically accompany them. That would mean that we could start to reduce not only the initial product cost, but the cost of reclamation and disposal. Although a lot of work has been carried out on packaging, even today it is still possible to buy many things that come with plastic or even small amounts of metal packaging which could be reduced. The packaging could be replaced with a biodegradable material or with paper that could be reused.

We have moved a long way in our acceptance of and approach to the importance of recycling and I congratulate the Government on the initiatives they have taken. As the motion states, there is still a need

"to encourage research into greater use of recycling and for initiatives to encourage industry, commerce and the general public in the use of recycling".

We must do all that we can to encourage people to be aware of the need for recycling.

The Tidy Britain Group has a part to play, and I hope that its national spring clean campaign will make the public aware of the importance of getting rid of litter and of the importance of recycling, encourage public participation in improving our environment and make products cheaper through encouraging recycling.

It being half past Two o'clock. MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings.*

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Bills

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for consideration, as amended (in the Standing Committee), read.

To be considered on Friday 22 March.

DOMESTIC LETTINGS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Bill not printed. Second Reading what day? No day named.

PRESCRIPTION CHARGES (EXEMPT MEDICAL CONDITIONS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 17 May.

OFFSHORE INSTALLATIONS (GENERAL PROVISIONS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

DEAF PERSONS (ACCESS TO FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

HARE COURSING BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I heard no objection.

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): I objected.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 April.

PUBLIC SAFETY INFORMATION BILL

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question —[8 February]—*That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 22 March.

COURTS (RESEARCH) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Monday 18th March, the Motions in the name of Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection, relating to changes in the membership of Select Committees, may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and half hours after the first of them has been entered upon; and, if proceedings thereon have not been disposed of at that hour, Mr. Speaker shall then put successively the Questions necessary to dispose of them, including the Questions on any Amendments to the said Motions which he may have selected; and, notwithstanding the practice of the House, the Motion relating to Environment shall be regarded as a single Motion. —*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Dental Services

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

2.32 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for Health for coming to the House for this brief debate on dental services. I am well aware that the Department of Health is one of the most demanding Departments, and its workload is even greater at present because of the reforms that are taking place in hospital services

Going to the dentist these days, Madam Deputy Speaker, which I hope you have not experienced recently, seems to be so expensive that many people must think that the fees that we pay cover all dental costs and that the taxpayer's contribution must be limited. The maximum charge for a course is now £200, and that must appear to be substantial in relation to the costs of the service. However, the truth is about a mile away.

In 1989, payments made to dentists in England were recorded in table 5.1 of the practitioner committee service publication as being about £927 million, of which the patient paid £361 million, and public funds contributed £565 million. The reason for that huge gap is simply that 41 per cent. of the population are wholly exempt from charges, and the remaining 59 per cent. pay three quarters of fees paid to dentists for care and treatment. To those who would understandably complain about the level of dental charges we must point out that the money they pay covers a lot less than half of that excellent service.

In other aspects of social services we are always conscious of the poor take-up of benefits, but, on the basis of simple statistics and of my own observations of dental clinics, dental staff go out of their way to ensure that those entitled to exemption actually receive it. A considerable part of dental work relates to the provision of synthetic dentures. Since being appointed adviser to the Association of Denture Prosthesis—that interest is recorded in the Register of Members' Interests—I have acquired a multitude of facts, figures and arguments to support a view that I have held for a long time, which is that the patients, the service and the taxpayer could benefit if the public were able to go directly to fully trained and qualified denturists for the fitting and manufacture of dentures. As a patient, I have always felt that there is something rather strange in a dentist examining the mouth, taking impressions, and trying and adjusting models constructed by dental technicians, when the technicians are often working in a laboratory far removed from the surgery, knowing little or nothing about the patient for whom the dentures are intended. A more meaningful relationship could be established between the patient and the technician if there were direct contact and if the technician could be readily available to patients for any adjustments or special needs. There could be considerable savings to the patient and the taxpayer if the work were undertaken directly and if there were at least an element of competition in service and costs.

After making contact with the association, I was heartened to find that this view was not just an unusual idea, but that a host of nations, aware of high medical and dental standards, had taken steps in law to ensure that dentures could be supplied to patients without the involvement of a dentist. Holland, New Zealand, Spain, Portugal, Canada, Finland and Australia have that practice and a host of states in the United States have taken similar steps. It appears to work well and effectively in the patients' interests. My first request to the Minister is that she makes inquiries in those countries to find out whether the arrangement is working well.

My next request is that the Minister makes specific inquiries to establish whether it is true that considerable savings can accrue to the public purse by adopting direct access to dental technicians. There is considerable evidence available from the United Kingdom, because I understand that, sadly, a considerable amount of direct work is being done, although it would appear to be conducted illegally. I have no idea of the savings that could accrue, but, according to careful estimates by the association, on the assumption that 60 per cent. of national health service dentures are supplied direct, the savings to the state could be more than £11 million. That is a great deal of money which could be used in other areas of medical or dental work. The figures are based on fittings supplied to dentists in the 1988-89 financial year.

Would such a change in practice shock the public? Strange to say, it appears that the public is way ahead of us. A MORI poll taken in November last year showed that no fewer than 60 per cent. of denture wearers would prefer to obtain them direct from a denturist. There appears to be support in, of all places, the so-called European Parliament. I would not wish to place any undue emphasis on that, but, as its public health committee has unanimously recommended that denturists should be introduced in every member state, the Minister might just wake up some morning to find that Jacques Delors has been to work and that a reform has been imposed on Britain by majority vote. Therefore, it would be wise to get down to work now, so that this can be properly planned and considered.

Would it cost a fortune to pay for the training and education of denturists? I doubt whether there is a real problem, because the training would be on a fee-paying basis. Again the Minister may inquire.

Would we be creating an entirely new principle in medicine? I cannot see how that would be the case. For the fitting of artificial limbs, eyes and hearing aids, there is no question of the profession having a monopoly. The one obvious worry that the public may have is whether when, having dentures fitted, there may be a medical problem. Might a qualified denturist not see or identify serious medical problems that a fully trained dentist could identify? The issue worries me, but countries that have studied this carefully do not appear to come to that conclusion. The general view appears to be that if a denturist is trained to identify conditions of the mouth, his professional duty will be to refer the patient to another professional for a proper diagnosis. Again, I hope that the Minister will consider that matter. What has happened in other countries? Have serious problems arisen? Or can the problem be overcome with proper training on the identification of mouth and gum problems?

The time has come for proper and serious inquiries to be made. We are not talking about a minor problem, affecting a small minority. Believe it or not, Madam Deputy Speaker, more than 1 million synthetic dentures are supplied yearly to our population of more than 50 million. If we could provide savings for patients and for the public purse, and ensure a more direct relationship

between the patient and the person supplying and manufacturing dentures, we could initiate real and meaningful inquiries about future legislative reform.

I thank the Minister for coming here on a Friday afternoon after she has had such a busy week. I hope that she can give me some assurances.

2.39 pm

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on raising this subject on behalf of denturists who, through the Association of Denture Prosthesis, have for some time been seeking a change in legislation to enable them to provide dentures directly to the public.

My hon. Friend said that the denturists' campaign has been such that in a few countries legislation has been amended to allow individuals with limited, but clearly defined, clinical training to undertake certain types of prosthetic treatment. The scope of the treatment that they can provide varies widely from one country to another.

It is perhaps more relevant, although perhaps somewhat invidious of my hon. Friend, to compare the United Kingdom position with that of other countries in the European Community. My hon. Friend will know that the Department has already sought to obtain information about practices in other member states. I am happy to reassure my hon. Friend that our inquiries about those countries in which denturists are permitted to practice will be extended to determine how those arrangements are working.

My hon. Friend raised a number of important points about which further information will help to inform our policy. We need to ask ourselves whether any relaxation in the Dentists Act 1984 to allow denturists to deal directly with patients would improve the quality of service to the public. Patients should quite rightly be able to expect to obtain dentures which are comfortable and functional. They should also be able to obtain dentures at reasonable cost under the NHS.

My hon. Friend referred to the increase to £200 of the maximum charge for dental treatment which I announced to the House earlier this week. He is quite right to say that some 41 per cent. of the population pay no charges at all. We estimate that very few people will be affected by the increase in the maximum charge For those adults who pay charges, the average amount paid for a course of treatment in 1989-90 was £25. That is nowhere near the present maximum or the new maximum from 1 April. We estimate that under 1 per cent. of all courses of treatment will be affected by this change.

My hon. Friend, who rightly seeks savings for the health service where they are possible, argued that considerable savings could accrue to the public purse if denturists were allowed to provide dentures directly to patients, thus cutting out the dentist middleman.

My hon. Friend will be fully aware that the Association of Denture Prosthesis made a complaint to the Office of Fair Trading in 1985 on the ground that dentists were abusing their monopoly through high prices and profits from the supply of private dentures. Following his investigation of the complaint, the Director General of Fair Trading concluded that the NHS provided a competitive alternative to private treatment, and saw little justification for the introduction of denturism on economic grounds.

I should explain how fees to dentists are calculated. Fees paid to dentists for NHS treatment, including those for the provision and fitting of dentures where laboratory work is involved, are set by the dental rates study group. This is a non-departmental public body comprising representatives of the health departments and the dental profession under an independent chairman.

The laboratory components of these fees are based on an average cost calculated separately for each item using a representative sample of current trade catalogues. There are no arrangements to ensure that dental laboratories actually receive the calculated average amount. The relationship between dentists and the laboratories whose services they employ is one of free-market economics.

The fees that dentists receive include an allowance sufficient to ensure that they can use the services of reputable laboratories and so purchase services of the required quality. Clearly, where expenses are reimbursed on an average basis through the fee scale, all dentists have a powerful incentive to shop around laboratories for the best price while, of course, maintaining professional and quality standards. This incentive to search out value for money helps the Government to contain the costs of the general dental service. Dentists must decide for themselves which laboratories they use and the Government would certainly not wish to interfere in what is an entirely private transaction between dentists and dental laboratories, but dentists must not lose sight of the fact that under their terms of service with the NHS they are made personally responsible for ensuring products supplied by the laboratory and fitted in their patients' mouths are of a quality fit for the purpose for which they are used.

Dental service committees of family health services authorities may investigate complaints about alleged use of substandard materials in the same way as any other complaint that a dentist has not provided the proper standard of care.

Fees set for any particular item of treatment partly reflect the laboratory and material costs involved in that particular item of treatment, but also serve as a means of helping to deliver the target average net income, as recommended by the Doctors and Dentists Remuneration Review Body, and practice expenses due to the average dentist.

At a time when the number of dentures provided is declining—in 1988-89, for example, 461,950 complete dentures were provided in England and Wales, whereas only a year later only 369,370 were provided, and dentists' work load is shifting more towards preventive treatment and continuing care—it does not follow that a further reduction in denture work would necessarily lead to a proportionate reduction in their practice expenses or justify under the present arrangements a significant reduction in their net income target. Some of their standing costs might simply have to be redistributed to other fees.

It is in that context that the effect on dental remuneration as a whole of any reduction in denture work undertaken by dentists would need to be considered. It is not at all certain that the Doctors' and Dentists Remuneration Review Body would reduce the target average net income were dentists not to do this work. In those circumstances, as my hon. Friend will readily

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

appreciate, there would be no reduction of costs; on the contrary, any payments to denturists for providing dentures would be an additional cost. Essentially the changes that my hon. Friend is advocating would have substantial implications for the way in which dental services would be financed.

I mentioned that patients have a right to expect that their dentures should be functional and comfortable, and my hon. Friend has suggested that an opinion poll last year indicated that many denture wearers would prefer to obtain them direct from a denturist. Until now there has been little quantifiable evidence to enable us to measure patient satisfaction. We saw, in 1987, a report from the National Consumer Council which showed that patients did not generally complain about the cost of dentures, but, rather, they were more likely to be dissatisfied over the quality and final fit. At the same time Age Concern, which my hon. Friend will know is particularly interested in problems of the elderly, was unequivocal that the responsibility for fitting dentures should remain with dentists and should not be passed to dental technicians.

In that same year, the then president of the General Dental Council conceded that the council continued to receive

"a steady flow of complaints from patients about unsatisfactory dentures".

We have recently received the final draft of a study carried out by the dental practice board into the provision of complete dentures in the general dental services. Patient satisfaction was the major area of interest in the study and three different aspects were addressed. These were the level of satisfaction with the course of treatment, whether the new dentures met the patient's expectations and whether the dentures were being used and found satisfactory for the purposes for which they had been provided. The study suggests areas where improvements are necessary. In the meantime, the Department is already preparing a training package that is directed at improving the dentist-dental technician interface. We hope that that in turn will lead to an improved service for the patient. Clearly it is the relative contribution of the dentist and the technician that is of great importance in achieving a quality service for the patient.

A further important argument concerns the availability of the service. Dental auxiliaries are, in general, of great use where demand for dental treatment is high and manpower is insufficient to meet the needs. The General Dental Council may, by statutory instrument, make regulations for the establishment of classes of dental auxiliaries who may undertake dental work.

The number of dentists has been increasing substantially. In 1979, there were 13,993 dentists providing general dental services. However, that figure had risen substantially by 1990 to 18,011. Some have tried quite irresponsibly to argue that because of the new dental contract introduced on 1 October, dentists might withdraw from the NHS. I hope that my hon. Friend and others concerned about the matter will be aware that that is not the case. Soon after the new dental contract was introduced, the British Dental Association conducted a survey of dentists which showed that 96 per cent. were still treating child patients, 90 per cent. were still treating adult patients and 85 per cent. were also accepting new adult patients for continuing care. Altogether more than 12 million patients have signed on under the new arrangements which, as my hon. Friend will be well aware, place the emphasis on prevention and continuing care instead of on the old drill-and-fill ethos.

I have mentioned the supply of dentists; we should also not lose sight of the possible demand for treatment—particularly dentures—in the future. My hon. Friend will be aware of the survey of adult dental health carried out in 1988 by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, the results of which were published on 12 February 1991. This clearly illustrates a continuing trend of improving dental health.

One of the most encouraging features of the report is the confirmation that more and more people can look forward to keeping their natural teeth. The 1988 survey showed that only 21 per cent. of the adult population was edentulous compared with 30 per cent. in 1978. It is confidently predicted that the number of complete denture wearers will continue to fall until by the year 2028 only 6 per cent. of the population will be wearing complete dentures. There is hope for us all! Those will be the more elderly of the population whose treatment is likely to require considerable skill and experience, perhaps requiring treatment by restorative consultants in hospitals.

Against that background we must consider very carefully before deciding that there should be any diminution of the work undertaken by dentists. I should add that the Department is undertaking a survey of dental manpower later this year and we shall have a clearer picture of future manpower needs when it is completed.

However, the Dentists Act 1984 specifically prohibits dental auxiliaries of any class from fitting, inserting or fixing dentures or artificial teeth for a good reason. It protects the public by restricting dental practice to those who are properly trained and qualified. The provision of dentures cannot be considered in isolation from the total oral and general health care of patients. The insertion of a denture significantly changes the oral environment and this may have harmful effects on any remaining teeth, the gums and oral mucous membranes or the whole of the masticatory apparatus.

In the Department of Health, we are convinced that a patient's oral health will be better served if, when dentures are required, that function is carried out by a person who is trained to prescribe and fit dentures; can recognise pathological conditions which may be caused or exacerbated by dentures; and can at the same time advise the patient—particularly where partial dentures are being fitted—of any other dental treatment which should be carried out.

I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that about 2,000 new cases of oral cancer are reported each year, most in the 50 to 70 age group. It is vital that early diagnosis is made and any precancerous conditions recognised, and dental surgeons are uniquely placed and qualified to undertake that work. There are many other conditions in the mouth that are markers of systemic disease, such as diabetes, anaemias and malabsorption syndrome, as well as numerous mucosal conditions which require treatment before dentures are constructed—indeed it is estimated that approximately half of all persons with dentures show evidence of some form of oral pathological condition.

My hon. Friend will appreciate that while we welcome the contributions made by dental technicians, we believe

that they should work with dental practitioners as part of a team to ensure that patients receive a quality service that protects their oral health and general well-being.

I thank my hon. Friend for this debate, which has provided me with the opportunity to give an overview of the way that we see dental technicians and denturists working in the provision of dentures, ensuring that we all have the services that we require. My hon. Friend has identified a number of areas that will benefit from further examination. I have given an undertaking to secure further information. I appreciate his contribution in ensuring that, as we carry forward our policies of evaluating the way in which our dental surgeries are provided, the role and contribution of denturists is thoroughly and properly examined. We want the benefit of their contribution as well as that of other practitioners in this sector.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 4 March 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mortgage Repossessions

Mr. Battle: To ask the Attorney-General how many court actions relating to mortgage repossessions there were in the Leeds county court in each year since 1982.

The Attorney-General: The number of mortgage actions for possession in Leeds county court were:

	Number
1982	803
1983	508
1984	558
1985	800
1986	773
1987	492
1988	807
1989	903
1990	1,068

Maintenance Enforcement

Miss Lestor: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration he is giving to the relationship between access and maintenance in the new legislation on maintenance enforcement to ensure that failure to pay does not result in the child being forbidden to see a parent.

The Attorney-General: The Child Support Bill and the Maintenance Enforcement Bill are concerned only with the assessment and payment of maintenance. The difficulties surrounding the denial of access to an absent parent are being considered as part of the Government's review of the family justice system. There is no proposal that failure to pay maintenance will result in the child's being forbidden to see the parent who has failed to pay.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Attorney-General whether there are any proposals when the private child support agency is established to track down and collect maintenance from errant fathers to ensure that shared access is enforced.

The Attorney-General: The Child Support Agency, which will be a "next steps" agency accountable to the Secretary of State for Social Security, will be concerned only with issues relating to the assessment and payment of maintenance for children. It will have no involvement with issues of access, which will remain with the courts. As the White Paper "Children Come First" made clear, although absent parents sometimes see the payment of maintenance as connected to the question of their access to the children concerned, the two are separate issues which are decided on the basis of different criteria. Nonetheless, the Government are aware that there are difficulties surrounding the enforcement of access where an order has been made. This is one of the areas which is being considered as part of the Government's review of the family justice system in England and Wales.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics, Leeds

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the levels of redundancies, by industry, in Leeds West for the period 1981 to 1991, classified by men, women, young persons and ethnic minorities.

Mr. Jackson: The available information is given in the tables. The figures relate to the numbers of redundancies confirmed as having occurred following receipt of notification under the 1975 Employment Protection Act, in the years 1983 to 1990 in the jobcentre areas covering the Leeds metropolitan district, analysed by the 1968 and 1980 standard industrial classifications.

The comparisons are affected by the changes to the redundancy fund in 1986.

Confirmed redundancies—Leeds metropolitan district area

SIC 1968 group	*Year* 1981	1982	1983
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Mining and quarrying	[1]—	100	159
Food, drink and tobacco	83	218	219
Coal, petroleum and chemical products	161	[1]—	88
Metal manufacture	750	441	542
Engineering and allied trades	2,450	1,905	1,358
Textiles, leather and clothing	2,252	1,410	695
Other manufacturing	823	942	656
Construction	346	178	99
Gas, electricity and water	[1]—	69	129
Transport and communication	336	66	74
Distributive trades	612	462	474
Financial, professional and miscellaneous services	306	582	475
Public administration and defence	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—

[1]— 50 or less.

Confirmed redundancies—Leeds metropolitan district area

SIC 1980 division	*Year* 1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	[2]1990
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Energy and water supply industries	206	235	[1]—	[1]—	150	[1]—	[1]—
Extraction of minerals and ores other than fuels; manufacture of metals, mineral products and chemicals	226	224	91	69	81	[1]—	122
Metal goods, engineering and vehicle industries	1,531	478	1,031	801	518	207	612
Other manufacturing industries	940	670	467	658	623	521	950
Construction	120	215	95	[1]—	[1]—	62	69
Distribution, hotels and catering; repairs	374	487	400	1,028	362	226	135
Transport and communication	190	149	64	[1]—	54	245	93

SIC 1980 division	Year						
	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	[2]1990
Banking, finance, insurance, business services and leasing	[1]—	82	68	122	[1]—	184	76
Other services	96	324	122	149	129	137	94

[1]— 50 or less.
[2] Provisional.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the percentage of total employment by industry and what was the percentage change in employment by industry; for the period 1981 to 1991, for Leeds, West, classified by men, women, young persons and ethnic minorities.

Mr. Jackson: Employment statistics for local areas are compiled only when censuses of employment are taken. They cover employees in employment only and exclude the self-employed and members of Her Majesty's forces.

The available information for Leeds, West from censuses of employment taken in 1984 and 1987 is given in the table. Separate data for young persons and ethnic minorities are not available. Comparable data from the 1981 census of employment could be obtained only at disproportionate cost; data from the 1987 census are the latest currently available.

Employees in employment: Leeds, West parliamentary constituency

Percentage

Industries and services (division of SIC 1980)	Proportion of all employees, by industry				Change in employment by industry 1984 to 1987	
	September 1984		September 1987			
	males	females	males	females	males	females
1-5 production and construction industries	31·9	9·0	31·3	8·6	+1·7	−1·5
2-4 manufacturing industries	26·3	8·4	26·3	8·1	+2·7	−0·7
6-7 distribution, hotels and catering; repairs; transport and communication	14·4	15·6	14·4	13·3	+3·5	−11·8
8 banking, finance, business services and leasing	2·6	1·6	3·1	1·9	+25·2	+23·0
9 other services	9·7	15·3	10·6	16·8	+13·0	+13·3

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons in the Leeds metropolitan district there were in *(a)* full-time employment, *(b)* part-time employment and *(c)* temporary employment for each year from 1979 (i) by gender and (ii) as a percentage of all employees in *(x)* manufacturing industry and *(y)* the service sector industry.

Mr. Jackson: Information for employees in employment by district is only available from the censuses of employment for 1981, 1984 and 1987. This can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the House of Commons Library. It is not possible to identify how many were in temporary employment.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Jackson: Senior grades are recruited by the Civil Service Commission. The commission has taken various steps to aid recruitment of members of the ethnic minorities. The ED group will shortly be implementing equal opportunities action programmes focusing on the need to increase the represention of ethnic minorities and women and people with disabilities, in the higher grades. These programmes will reflect the programme of action on race issued by the office of the Minister for the Civil Service.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of officers in each grade 1 to 7 and overall in the Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Jackson: The numbers and percentages of women and ethnic minority officers in grades 1 to 7 and overall in the Department at 1 January 1991 are set out in the tables.

Table 1
Women in the employment department group
(grades 1-7)
at 1 January 1991

Grade	Number	Percentage
1	0	0·0
2	0	0·0
3	3	10·3
4	0	0·0
5	27	15·7
6	35	12·3
7	139	12·6

The Department employs 35,142 women who comprise 65·7 per cent. of the total staff.

Table 2
Ethnic minority staff in the employment department group
(grades 1-7)
at 1 January 1991

Grade	Number	Percentage
1	0	0·0
2	0	0·0
3	0	0·0
4	1	7·1

Grade	Number	Percentage
5	1	0·6
6	0	0·0
7	9	0·8

The Department employes 2,556 staff from the ethnic minorities who comprise 4·8 per cent. of the total staff.

Redundancy Payments

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the reason for the delay by his Department's redundancy payments service at Birmingham in sending the sums owed to Mr. Peter Turner of 67 St. John's court, Warwick, following representations by the hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington.

Mr. Forth: I refer my hon. Friend to my letter of 20 November 1990. A duplicate claim has now been processed and the money owed was sent to the Official Receiver on 7 February 1991. I understand the payment to Mr. Peter Turner was made on 27 February.

Homeworkers

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he intends to take to improve the pay and employment rights of homeworkers.

Mr. Forth: Employees who are homeworkers have the same employment rights as other employees. Pay is best determined by the parties concerned in the light of their particular circumstances. Homeworkers in wages council industries must be paid at least the statutory minimum wage rates set by the councils.

Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the average costs per *(a)* employment training place and *(b)* youth training trainee place negotiated in the past year between (i) TECs and providers and (ii) regional offices and TECs.

Mr. Jackson: Financial arrangements agreed between training and enterprise councils—TECs—and providers of training for the delivery of employment training—ET—and youth training—YT—are matters for the parties involved. The details of costs per trainee week and per output agreed between my Department and individual TECs are commercially confidential.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of underspending on youth training and employment training measuring anticipated actual expenditure on 31 March against planned expenditure for 1990-91.

Mr. Jackson: Forecast outturn expenditure on youth training and employment training in comparison to 1990-91 cash limits is shown in the table.

	Published cash limit £ million	Forecast outturn £ million
Youth training	840	833
Employment training	1,075	1,062

Claimants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many claimants in each of the years 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90 from Great Britain have changed their status from long-term unemployed to fresh claimant as a result of participating in programmes provided by the employment service;

(2) if he will list each of the programmes provided by the employment service which result in the long-term unemployed returning to the unemployment register as new claimants.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibi lity of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred these questions for reply.

Pay Rates

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the maximum and minimum basic rates of pay recorded in the Leeds office of the employment service from advertised posts in *(a)* the manufacturing sector and *(b)* the service sector for (i) full-time and (ii) part-time work and showing figures for (1) men and (2) women.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibi lity of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many men *(a)* over the age of 60 years and *(b)* between the ages of 60 and 65 years, are in full employment; and what proportion of the employment market *(b)* constitutes.

Mr. Jackson: It is estimated from the labour force survey that there were 695,000 men aged 60 and over and 604,000 men aged 60 to 64 in full-time employment in Great Britain in spring 1989. The latter group formed 4·4 per cent. of all men aged 16 and over then in full-time employment.

Training (Special Needs)

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average cost per employment training special needs place negotiated in *(a)* the year 1989-90 between regional offices and providers and *(b)* in the past year between regional office and TECs and *(c)* in the past year between TECs and providers.

Mr. Jackson: Information on costs of special needs places on the employment training programme is not available.

South Glamorgan TEC

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 26 February, *Official Report*, column *480*, what part his Department will take in the re-tendering process for the construction of the new South Glamorgan TEC headquarters.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 1 March 1991]:* This is a matter for the TEC.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answers of 12 February, *Official Report*, column *461-62* and 26 February, what was the subject of discussion between his director of field operations and the chairman of South Glamorgan TEC on 7 and 9 December 1990.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 1 March 1991]:* Various matters were discussed including the contract for the refurbishment of premises at Dumballs road for South Glamorgan TEC.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to finalise the amount of his financial contribution towards the cost of constructing the new South Glamorgan TEC headquarters.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 1 March 1991]:* This will depend on a number of factors, including the dates on which the TEC makes decisions about its premises.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Jobs Report

33. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will make a statement of implementation of the Ibbs report.

Mr. Beith: Following the generally supportive debate in the House on Thursday 17 January, the Commission is now proceeding with the first phase of the implementation of the proposals in Sir Robin Ibbs's report on House of Commons services. The recruitment of a new Director of Finance and Administration is now well advanced, and an appointment is likely to be made by Mr. Speaker before Easter. It is hoped that the procedures for appointing the new Director of Works—who will be responsible to the authorities of both Houses—will be completed before the Whitsun recess. The implementation of the other main proposals in the report will proceed as expeditiously as possible thereafter. The House will wish to know that the Offices Committee in the other place has also welcomed the general thrust of the Ibbs report and is taking steps to apply the recommendations where appropriate to its own administration.

TRANSPORT

School Buses (Seat Belts)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *309*, if he will indicate the EC legislation which currently prevents Her Majesty's Government from introducing national proposals on the wearing of seat belts on school buses; and if he will further indicate which part of which EC directorate he is pressing to enable such measures to be brought forward.

Mr. Chope: The relevant EC directives are 76/155/EEC and 77/541/EEC together with their subsequent amendments, including most recently 90/629/EEC and 90/628/EEC. Any seat belts and anchorages that are fitted to new vehicles must conform to the standards laid down in these directives. In the case of coaches, no manufacturer can be obliged to fit seat belts or anchorages other than to front or exposed seats, and member states are not free to override this.

We have pressed directorate general III in the European Commission to bring forward proposals as soon as possible which would require seat belts to be fitted on all seats in coaches and minibuses. This concern has now been reflected in the recitals to directive 90/628/EEC, which state that everything should be done in order to prevent passenger ejection in accidents. We hope the Commission will respond to this by putting forward proposals within that time scale requiring the fitting of seat belts on each seat. In the meantime, we are considering what further steps can be taken to encourage the more widespread fitting of seat belts on passenger seats.

British Rail Work (King's Cross)

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has taken to safeguard the land required for British Rail's proposed works at King's Cross.

Mr. Freeman: Safeguarding directions under the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 have been made. They came into force today 4 March. These are initial directions and can be amended if details of the works at King's Cross are altered at any stage.

Canning Town Flyover

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to open public consultation concerning the widening of the Canning Town flyover A13, and any associated changes in traffic circulation affecting pedestrians and local traffic.

Mr. Chope: We intend to hold full public consultations, which I hope will begin towards the end of this summer.

Central Line

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report of the investigation by London Underground Ltd. into the delays and hazards experienced by passengers on the Central line on Tuesday 19 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that London Underground Ltd. hopes to complete its report very shortly. This will be discussed with the Health and Safety Executive's railways inspectorate, and the Health and Safety Commission will consider and advise on whether further action may be necessary.

M20

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when the contract for the M20, junctions 5 to 8, improvement will be awarded;

(2) when he expects the M20, junctions 5 to 8, improvement to be completed;

(3) when tenders will be invited for the M20, junctions 5 to 8, improvement.

Mr. Chope: Tenders for the construction of the M20, junctions 5 to 8, improvement, were invited on 1 March. We aim to award the contract by mid-summer this year for completion of the work by mid-summer 1993.

Road Signs

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to achieve the harmonisation of international road sign standards.

Mr. Chope: The United Kingdom plays a full and active part in promoting necessary international harmonisation of road sign standards. The Department of Transport is represented on United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and European conference of Ministers of Transport committees dealing with road sign harmonisation.

Work on constructional standards for traffic signs is being carried out under the auspices of Comité Européen de Normalisation—CEN. The Department is represented at CEN and plays a full part in the development of the new European standards which are planned for publication by the end of 1993.

Road Building and Renewal

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to institute rolling programmes of road building and renewal.

Mr. Chope: These are already in place. Road construction schemes are kept under review, and schemes are added to the programme from time to time. A total of £400 million will be spent on major maintenance of motorways, trunk roads and bridges this financial year as part of a continuing programme.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the United Kingdom Government have ratified *(a)* the 1968 Vienna convention on road traffic, signs and signals and *(b)* the 1954 New York convention on the temporary importation of private road motor vehicles and for tourism.

Mr. Chope: The United Kingdom is a signatory to and hopes soon to ratify the 1968 Vienna conventions on road traffic and road signs and signals. The 1954 conventions on the temporary importation of private road vehicles and facilities for touring were both ratified by the United Kingdom in 1956.

Road Signals

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to encourage the standardisation of the position and operation of controls, lights and indicators for roads and road vehicles.

Mr. Chope: The detailed requirements for and the legal significance of light signals for the control of vehicular traffic are prescribed in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 1981 and comply with the provisions of the European convention and agreement on road signs and signals. Detailed legal requirements for the fitting and control of lights on vehicles, including direction indicators are covered by the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989. These regulations follow closely agreed European standards for the installation and performance of lighting and light-signalling devices on motor vehicles and trailers.

Carbon Monoxide Emissions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a list of car manufacturers' specifications for carbon monoxide emissions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: This information is already available from vehicle manufacturers and published by other organisations such as tuning equipment manufacturers. Reputable service agents should also have the information.

Cars (Fuel-injection Systems)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the proportion of new cars available for purchase in the United Kingdom with fuel-injection systems which are fitted with an inertial safety switch.

Mr. Chope: It is estimated that in excess of 90 per cent. of fuel-injected vehicles manufactured in the United Kingdom are fitted with a device, not necessarily inertial, that will automatically shut off the fuel delivery in the event of a substantial impact. Proportions of imported fuel injected vehicles fitted with such devices are not known, although most importers will have been issued with guidelines recommending their use.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Broadcasting

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the statutory provisions that relate to the accountability of broadcasting authorities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The constitution and responsibilities of the Independent Television Commission, Radio Authority and S4C are set out in the Broadcasting Act 1990, while the BBC is governed by the terms of its charter and accompanying licence and agreement.

Asylum Requests

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the average length of time spent in processing requests for asylum into the United Kingdom in each year since 1980.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is given in the table.

Average length of time (in months) between the receipt of an application and the decision, 1983-90[1]

Year in which decision made	*Applications for refugee status or asylum*
1983	6
1984	8½
1985	12½
1986	14
1987	14
1988	17
1989	12
[2]1990	12

[1] Excludes south-east Asian refugees given settlement on arrival.
[2] Provisional.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individuals currently seeking asylum have had to wait for two years or more before a decision is made on their cases.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At 31 December 1990 some 4,000 asylum applicants, including associated dependants, are recorded as awaiting a decision in the United Kingdom for two years or more. However, this figure overstates the position because of under-recording of decisions made earlier.

Women Offenders

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the most common category of crime for women offenders during the last 10 years; and what is the average sentence for these crimes.

Mr. John Patten: The most common indictable offence committed by women is shoplifting. The table shows the number of women found guilty or cautioned for this offence over the past 10 years and the average sentence lengths imposed by the courts.

Female offenders found guilty at all courts or cautioned for shoplifting offences 1980 to 1989 England and Wales

	Number found guilty or cautioned for shoplifting offences	*Percentage found guilty or cautioned of shoplifting over all indictable offences*	*Number given custody for shoplifting offences*	*Average sentence length for shoplifting (months)*	
				Magistrates' court	*Crown court*
1980	52,797	55	659	3	4
1981	52,577	56	669	3	4
1982	56,904	58	750	2	4
1983	53,402	56	735	2	5
1984	50,919	55	751	2	5
1985	58,239	58	808	2	5
1986	49,807	56	657	2	6
1987	45,822	53	635	2	6
1988	37,787	47	535	3	6
1989	35,371	46	465	2	5

Charity Commission

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the Charity Commission's income is provided by Government grant.

Mr. John Patten: The Charity Commission is non-ministerial Government Department and, as such, its total expenditure, which is subject to a cash limit, is voted by Parliament.

Leicestershire Police Force

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will reimburse the Leicestershire police force in respect of unforeseeable expenditures which have led to budgetary overspending.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Home Office will continue to meet 51 per cent. of Leicestershire police authority's expenditure on revenue costs through specific grant, regardless of whether the expenditure was foreseen or not.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much funding the Leicestershire police force has received from central Government in each of the past five financial years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Specific police grant paid to Leicestershire county council in respect of the financial years 1985-86 to 1989-90 was as follows:

	£
1985-86	18,093,241
1986-87	20,700,339
1987-88	22,488,908
1988-89	24,563,482
1989-90	28,578,769

In addition, rate support grant paid to Leicestershire county council in each of these years included support for that part of police expenditure not covered by police grant.

"Cautioning of Offenders"

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the provisions of Home Office circular 59/1990 "Cautioning of Offenders", as it relates to the discretion now being extended to the police.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The purpose of the circular is to establish national standards for cautioning based on consistent general principles in which the courts and public may have full confidence. It does not give the police any new discretion, but emphasises the principle that cautioning can be suitable for all age groups, not just juveniles. Generally, cautioning is recognised as an increasingly important way of keeping offenders out of the courts and, in many circumstances, reducing the risk that they will re-offend.

Crime Concern

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the work of Crime Concern.

Mr. John Patten: In the two years for which it has been fully operational, Crime Concern has undertaken a wide range of valuable work, notably in establishing area crime reduction schemes, forging a fruitful relationship with the private sector and encouraging the development of youth crime prevention projects. I look forward to the organisation's continuing contribution to preventing crime.

Hospital Strip Cells

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were put into hospital strip cells in each of the years from 1986 to 1990.

Mrs. Rumbold: I regret that the information is not available in statistical form and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Women's Prisons

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the overcrowding and lack of integral sanitation at Bullwood Hall and Styall women's prisons; and if he will give figures for the certified normal accommodation and the actual numbers for the last 12 months at these establishments.

Mrs. Rumbold: Some cells in Bullwood Hall are being shared because of the temporary withdrawal of 23 cells so that access to night sanitation can be provided by means of an electronic unlocking system. All the main areas of accommodation in the prison will have integral sanitation by February 1992 leaving only the hospital and segregation unit, and work will be carried out in these areas in 1992-93. There is no overcrowding in Styal prison and integral sanitation is currently being installed. Work on one house is complete and the two remaining houses will have integral sanitation by September 1991. All other areas of the prison have open access and therefore integral sanitation is not required.

The figure for the certified normal accommodation of Bullwood Hall is 119. The figure for Styal is normally 258, but has been reduced to 208 while refurbishment is carried out. The actual numbers of prisoners on the last Friday of the month for each of the previous 12 months were as follows:

	Bullwood Hall	*Styal*
1990		
30 March	123	221
27 April	124	214
25 May	119	204
29 June	112	185
27 July	113	196
31 August	115	200
28 September	112	202
26 October	115	204
30 November	115	205
28 December	116	206
1991		
25 January	105	197
22 February	105	200

Television Programme Listings

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what representations he has received on the publication of television programme listings; and what evaluation he has made of the effects of charges on local newspapers;

(2) if he will again review the implications of the Broadcasting Act for television listings in local newspapers; and what steps he will take to monitor referrals of charges for listings to the copyright tribunal.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have received a number of representations about the proposed scale of charges for the publication of television listings. The Broadcasting Act 1990, however, makes provision for the independent Copyright tribunal to adjudicate in any case in which a publisher considers that the charge imposed for publishing television listings is unreasonable. I see no need to monitor referrals to the tribunal. It is premature to consider the effects of charges on local newspapers until the procedure set out in the Act has been concluded.

Estate Rifles

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue guidelines to chief police officers following the consideration of the firearms consultancy committee of section 16 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 on visitors' use of estate rifles; and whether he intends to legislate on the purchase of ammunition by users of estate rifles.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We shall consider the need for this most carefully in the light of any advice which the Firearms Consultative Committee may make in due course. We have no plans, at present, to legislate for further controls on the purchase of ammunition permitted under section 16.

Detainees

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the guidelines decided by his advisory panel on those detained on the grounds of national security under the Immigration Act 1971 in relation to *(a)* the number of witnesses allowed, *(b)* the legal or other advisers who may be present at hearings and *(c)* other matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The arrangements are those set out in the then Home Secretary's statement to the House on 15 June 1971 at columns 375-77. Other issues affecting the conduct of proceedings are a matter for the chairman of the panel.

WALES

Air Pollution

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the air pollution monitoring sites based in Wales for *(a)* ozone, *(b)* carbon monoxide, *(c)* nitrogen oxides, *(d)* acid deposition, *(e)* atmospheric hydrocarbon, *(f)* trace germs, *(g)* atmospheric chemistry, *(h)* smoke and sulphur dioxide directive, *(i)* other sulphur dioxide sites, *(j)* lead sites and *(k)* multi-element sites including lead.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The sites operated in Wales on behalf of the United Kingdom Government are:

(a) Ozone—Aston Hill.
(b) Acid deposition sites—Beddgelert; Tycanol Wood; Llyn Brianne; Plinlimmon.
(c) Smoke and sulphur dioxide, including directive sites —Cardiff; Cresselly (Pembs); Marshfield, near Cardiff; Newport, Gwent; Neyland; Pontypool; Port Talbot; Waunfawr; Welshpool; Wrexham; Cwmgwrach, Neath; Glynneath—installed but not yet operational.
(d) Lead sites—Cardiff.

There are no air pollution monitoring sites operated in Wales on behalf of the United Kingdom Government in

respect of carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, atmospheric hydrocarbon, trace germs, atmospheric chemistry and multi-elements.

However, other monitoring is carried out under the aegis of various independent organisations.

Welsh Water

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what target has been set for Welsh Water plc to achieve in terms of reducing water loss between reservoir and consumer as part of the efficiency component in price setting.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: In the prospectus of the water share offers in November 1989, Dwr Cymru stated that it intended to reduce the proportion of water lost through leakages and otherwise unaccounted for to 25 per cent. by 2012. As part of its "K" investment programme the company is to spend £550 million, at November 1989 prices, on its distribution system by 31 March 2000. The company also set out in the prospectus its objectives in relation to the replacement and relining of its mains.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what reports have been made by Welsh Water on progress made in reducing the proportion of water between reservoir and consumer since privatisation.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This is a matter for the Director General of Water Services.

CIVIL SERVICE

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask Minister for the Civil Service when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The last survey was conducted in 1986. There are no plans to repeat it, but the enthnic origins of all entrants to the department are monitored on a continuous basis.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Peru (Cholera)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what specific medical resource is available to help the people of Peru combat the outbreak of cholera.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government of Peru, with assistance from the World Health Organisation, has identified the medical requirements and requested external assistance. The international community, including Britain, has responded positively to this request.

ENERGY

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Wakeham: Recruitment to senior grades is carried out by the Civil Service Commission on behalf of my Department. The commission has taken a number of steps to encourage applications from the ethnic minorities and to ensure that selection procedures are non-discriminatory. These include publicity in the ethnic minority press, increasing representation of ethnic minority members on selection panels, training in equal opportunities issues and validation of selection procedures to ensure that they are non-discriminatory.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1 to 7) and overall in the Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Wakeham: As at 1 January 1991 there were no women in grades 1 to 4; at grade 5 there were five, or 12·5 per cent., at grade 6 there was one, or 4·5 per cent., and at grade 7 there were 14 or 10 per cent. The information supplied voluntarily in the most recent ethnic origin survey shows one person, or 0·5 per cent., of grades 1 to 7 is from the ethnic minorities.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: The last survey was conducted in the spring of 1990, and a top-up survey is currently in progress. Further surveys will be carried out as the need arises, initially on an annual basis.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he or any of his Ministers or officials have been in touch with regional electricity companies about their proposed price increases for domestic electricity consumers.

Mr. Wakeham: I and my Ministers and officials are in regular contact with the regional electricity companies on a range of electricity matters.

Pollution Tax

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what studies he has made of the effect of a pollution tax on *(a)* fossil fuels and *(b)* fossil fuels used to supplement electricity generation under the non-fossil fuel obligations.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government's policy on the use of economic instruments for environmental protection is set out in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance". In the long term, action to control emissions will inevitably have to include increases, achieved by taxation or other means, in the relative price of energy. However, the White Paper made clear the Government's intention not to introduce any such measures in the next few years outside the transport sector. Analytical work continues in support of this policy.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *345*, how

much of the 3·5 tonnes of plutonium sent abroad, or the 0·5 tonnes of plutonium held on behalf of foreign customers at Sellafield, was reprocessed and stored or exported by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. before the tripartite safeguards agreement between the United Kingdom and Euratom/IAEA was agreed.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Some 40 per cent. of the plutonium referred to by the hon. Member was sent abroad or stored by British Nuclear Fuels plc before the United Kingdom/Euratom/IAEA safeguards agreement —Infcirc-263—came into force in 1978. All plutonium arising from reprocessing spent fuel at Sellafield on behalf of overseas customers has been subject to Euratom safeguards since 1973 and to the terms of that tripartite agreement.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *345*, what proportion of the 3·5 tonnes of foreign origin plutonium to which he refers arose from contracts for reprocessing nuclear fuel from abroad signed prior to the end of 1975.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Specific details of the Company's contracts are a commercial matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Radioactive Wastes

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy for what time periods the low, intermediate and high level radioactive wastes respectively, arising from the reprocessing of foreign spent oxide nuclear fuel at the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield, may be stored at the site before being repatriated.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Contracts containing provisions for the return of waste from reprocessing during the first 10 years of operation of British Nuclear Fuel's thermal oxide reprocessing plant allow a period of up to 25 years following the year of reprocessing for the return of conditioned waste. Contracts signed in 1990 for reprocessing in the second 10 years of THORP operations provide that conditioned waste will normally be returned within five years.

It is planned to return high-level waste, which contains 98 per cent. of the activity of all wastes, as soon as practicable after vitrification. The detailed negotiation of this programme is a matter for BNFL and its customers who must complete facilities for the receipt and storage of the vitrified waste before it can be returned. It is expected that even for the initial baseload contracts the return will begin within five to 10 years of the fuel being reprocessed.

Oil and Gas (GDP)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the proportion of the gross domestic product of each of the countries of the European Community and Norway and Sweden which is derived from oil and gas production; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: In 1990 extraction of mineral oil and natural gas accounted for about 2 per cent. of United Kingdom gross domestic product at current factor cost. The corresponding percentage is zero for Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden. Comparable figures for Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Spain and Norway are not readily available.

PRIME MINISTER

IRA Terrorism

Mr. Latham: To ask the Prime Minister whether he will make a statement on the Government's programme to combat IRA terrorism in Northern Ireland and mainland Britain.

The Prime Minister: The Government remain totally committed to defeating terrorism, whether it emanates from the Provisional IRA, or from other Northern Irish terrorist groups.

In Northern Ireland, we will continue with the security policy described by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in his statement of 8 November 1990.

In order to ensure that anti-terrorist legislation is appropriate to the current security threat, the Government have laid before Parliament the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill. In addition to re-enacting virtually all the provisions of the existing emergency law this Bill would provide the police and armed forces with the legal means to protect the community effectively, and at the same time provide appropriate safeguards for individuals. The specific proposals before Parliament include new powers to examine documents; a new criminal offence of possession of items intended for terrorist purposes; new powers in relation to closed crossings on the Anglo-Irish land border; a new offence of directing the activities of an organisation concerned in terrorism; new powers to enable the Secretary of State to make statutory codes of practice in connection with the exercise of emergency powers; and new powers to facilitate the investigation of terrorist financing and to confiscate the assets of those who have gained personally from their involvement in this.

In Great Britain, responsibility for protecting the public from the threat of attack from the Provisional IRA rests primarily with the police. The Government welcomed the appointment last year by the Association of Chief Police Officers of the head of the Metropolitan police anti-terrorist branch as national co-ordinator of PIRA investigations. The Government will seek to ensure that the police have the right structure for combating terrorism; that they have sufficient resources; and that they have sufficient powers. To this end it is in the Government's view essential that the House should approve the continuation of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989. The Act contains special provisions for the proscription of Irish terrorist organisations; for the exclusion of suspected terrorists from Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom as a whole; for the restraint and confiscation of terrorist funds; for the arrest and detention without charge of suspected terrorists for a maximum period of seven days on the authority of the Secretary of State; and for the system of police controls at ports and airports throughout the United Kingdom.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Prime Minister how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1-7) and overall in the Cabinet Office are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

The Prime Minister: The number of women and ethnic minorities in each grade (1-7) and overall serving in the Cabinet Office is:

Grade	Women	Percentage	Members of ethnic minorities[1]	Percentage
1	0	0	0	0
2	1	6	0	0
3	2	11	0	0
4	0	0	0	0
5	9	18	1	2
6	15	35	0	0
7	36	21	0	0
Overall in the Cabinet Office	839	56	51	3·5

[1]These figures are based on a voluntary questionnaire.

The Gulf

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister when Her Majesty's Government first learned of the announcement made on Baghdad radio on 25 February that Iraqi forces were withdrawing from Kuwait; at what time an authoritative English translation of the announcement was made; and whether he made any contact with allied partners in Operation Granby as a result of the radio statement.

The Prime Minister: The substance of the Baghdad radio broadcast, made at 2230 hours GMT on 25 February, became known to us at 2245 hours GMT. A full English translation became available to us at 2324 hours GMT. We are in constant touch with our coalition partners over many aspects of the Gulf crisis.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment was made of the applicability of Geneva convention article 23 before allied airforces in Operation Granby were given orders to bomb convoys of Iraqi military forces withdrawing from Kuwait.

The Prime Minister: Article 23 of the regulations attached to Hague convention IV of 1907 states that it is especially forbidden to kill or wound an enemy who, having laid down his arms, or having no longer means of defence, has surrendered at discretion. The coalition made it clear that it would not attack unarmed Iraqi soldiers, but that retreating formed combat units continued to pose a threat and would therefore be treated as hostile.

International Agreements

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will now make it his policy for Ministers of Her Majesty's Government to answer questions from Members that seek clarification of Her Majesty's Government's interpretation of international treaties, agreements and United Nations resolutions to which the United Kingdom is a party and affect policy decisions of the Government.

The Prime Minister: It has always been our policy to answer hon. Members' questions as well as we can.

THE ARTS

Crafts Council

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has any plans to increase the level of Government funding to the Crafts Council.

Mr. Renton: The Government's current level of funding to the Crafts Council is £2·52 million. Under the latest settlement, this funding will increase to £2·815 million in both 1991-92 and 1992-93, and increase further in 1993-94 to £2·885 million. The figures for 1991-92 include an exceptional additional allocation of £65,000 for incentive funding to use in connection with the move to new premises.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the level of funding granted to the Crafts Council in each year from 1979 onwards; and what are the estimated grants for the Crafts Council up until 1992-93.

Mr. Renton: Details of the level of funding granted to the Crafts Council in each year from 1979 onwards are set out in the table. Under the latest settlement, the estimated grant for the Crafts Council is £2,815 million for each year of 1991-92 and 1992-93.

	£ million
1979-80	1·148
1980-81	1·260
1981-82	1·525
1982-83	1·600
1983-84	1·665
1984-85	1·777
1985-86	1·880
1986-87	1·925
1987-88	2·022
1988-89	2·250
1989-90	2·350
1990-91	2·520

Welsh Arts Council

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many separate grants and other payments have been made by the Welsh Arts Council during the last three years; and how many grants issued were of amounts less than 5,000.

Mr. Renton: The information requested is as follows:

1989-90—409 grants and subsidies (263 less than £5,000);

1988-89—440 grants and subsidies (308 less than £5,000);
1987-88—369 grants and subsidies (260 less than £5,000).

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has, pursuant to his oral answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column 12, relating to the Kuwait museum of islamic antiquities, the museums and shrines of Najaf and Kerbaka, Babylon and Ur of the Chaldees, and the museum in Baghdad housing Sumerian antiquities.

Mr. Renton: The Office of Arts and Libraries has no responsibility for museums or religious and cultural sites in Iraq or Kuwait.

My answer of 18 February referred to the removal by Iraq of the contents of the Kuwait museum of Islamic antiquities. I have no information relating to the museums and shrines of Najaf and Kerbaka, Babylon and Ur of the Chaldes and the museum in Baghdad housing Sumerian antiquities. Newspaper reports have speculated about the possibility of damage being caused to cultural and religious sites in Iraq and Kuwait, but I have no means of substantiating these reports.

Departmental Policies (Environmental Implications)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister for the Arts what actions have been taken since the appointment of a Minister in his Department to consider the environmental implications of his Department's policies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 1 March 1991]:* The environmental implications of the Department's policies are my responsibility. Consideration is given to them as appropriate in consultation with arts bodies, but particularly with the institutions which my Office sponsors. Arts organisations contribute considerably to the enhancement of the environment through conservation activity, assistance towards inner city regeneration, ecological and other research programmes.

HEALTH

Incontinence Services

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the existing project on incontinence drawing on evidence from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys surveys started; when he expects it to finish; who is carrying out the project; and how the results will be used in developing the incontinence services.

Mr. Dorrell: The project, undertaken by the social policy research unit, university of York, commenced in September 1990 and is scheduled for completion in April 1991. The purpose is to relate the OPCS data to previous United Kingdom research on incontinence and incontinence services so as to establish a starting point for measuring outcomes.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the meeting between the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 15 January with representatives from the Spinal Injuries Association, Age Concern England and the Association of Continence Advisers on the incontinence services; what were the views expressed by those organisations; and what was his response.

Mr. Dorrell: It was agreed that, across the country, there were wide variations in the level of services to people with incontinence. The Department is looking at how best to tackle this problem. In the meantime the NHS management executive has written to all district health authorities drawing their attention to existing policy guidelines on continence services, and reminding them of the need not to expose vulnerable patients or clients to anxiety as a result of any proposed changes in arrangements for the supply of incontinence pads.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who will carry out the project on the role of continence advisers due to start in April 1991; with whom they will consult and work; within what financial parameter they will look at the future roles of continence advisers; and when he expects the project to finish.

Mr. Dorrell: The project will be conducted by the social policy research unit, university of York, and is expected to take two years. The researchers aim to make contact with all existing continence advisers, a representative sample of health and social service managers, and other interested parties. The researchers are free to make whatever recommendations they think appropriate.

Elderly People

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the population was over the age of 65 years in 1961, 1970, 1980, and 1990; and if he will give estimates for the years 2000, 2010, 2020 and 2030.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimated and projected percentages of the population of England and Wales aged 65 and over are as follows:

	Per cent.
Mid-year estimate:	
1961	11·9
1970	13·2
1980	15·1
[1]1989	15·8
Projections (1989-based):	
1990	15·8
2000	15·7
2010	16·1
2020	18·0
[2]2029	20·0

[1] Latest available estimate.
[2] Last available projection.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the Government's current policy towards the elderly; if he will comment on funding arrangements of organisations connected with the elderly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government's policy for elderly people comprises two main aims: the first is to provide services which enable people to maintain their independence for as long as possible and, after any period of hospital care, to return to their homes or to homely settings in the community as soon as possible; the second is to provide care and treatment appropriate to the

individual patient—this may involve community nursing at home, domiciliary social services, acute hospital care, rehabilitation or long-stay medical or nursing care.

It is for each health and local authority to determine the type and level of provision they provide in the light of local circumstances and priorities. In drawing up their community care plans we expect the statutory agencies to work together to ensure that they are compatible and comprehensive taking account of provision in the independent sector and of the individual needs and wishes of the elderly people themselves and their carers.

Under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968, the Department of Health funds a number of voluntary organisations who work with and for elderly people.

Expenditure

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the level of health expenditure in Scotland, England and Wales for each of the last 10 years at constant prices.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is given in the table.

Gross NHS expenditure at 1990-91 prices

£ million

	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*
1981-82	18,909	2,555	1,177
1982-83	19,250	2,587	1,212
1983-84	19,533	2,641	1,230
1984-85	19,989	2,695	1,266
1985-86	20,061	2,707	1,281
1986-87	20,875	2,786	1,332
1987-88	21,768	2,870	1,399
1988-89	22,524	2,977	1,459
1989-90	22,830	3,046	1,486
1990-91	23,718	3,102	1,554

GDP

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the proportion of the gross domestic product in each of the countries of the European Community and Norway and Sweden which is spent on health; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The information required is in the table:

Total Expenditure on Health as a propottion of GDP (1987): EC Countries, Norway and Sweden

	Per cent.
Belgium	7·2
Denmark	6·0
France	8·5
Germany	8·1
Greece	5·3
Ireland	7·4
Italy	7·2
Luxembourg	7·5
Netherlands	8·5
Norway	7·5
Portugal	6·4
Spain	6·0
Sweden	9·2
United Kingdom	6·0

The proportion of GDP spent on health care is indicative neither of the efficiency with which resources are used, nor of health outcomes.

Baby Milk Powder

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take action to ban any advertising of baby milk powders that suggests that those products are as good as or better than the baby's mother's milk.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government are committed to the protection and promotion of breastfeeding as the best means of nurturing infants. Our policies and programmes are based on unequivocal expert advice from the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA) and on the principles of the World Health Organisation's "International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes". The latter includes recommendations on the restriction of general advertising of baby milk powders, formally known as infant formulae.

In the United Kingdom the marketing of infant formulae is closely controlled under voluntary self-regulating arrangements which the United Kingdom manufacturers drew up in consultation with the Government in the early 1980s. It is under these arrangements that we have acted on the WHO recommendations. Details of the arrangements are set out in the publication "Code of Practice for the Marketing of Infant Formulae in the United Kingdom and Schedule for a Code Monitoring Committee". The code of practice specifically states that

"no advertising should imply that infant formulae are equivalent or superior to the milk of a healthy mother"

and restricts such advertising to publications aimed at health care professionals.

Copies of the WHO and United Kingdom codes of practice are in the Library.

Food Poisoning

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of cases notified to him in 1990, for 1990 by region, for *(a)* food poisoning in general, *(b)* salmonella *(c)* salmonella enteritidis, *(d)* salmonella enteritidis P4, *(e)* salmonella typhimurium, *(f)* campylobacter and *(g)* listeriosis.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* The information requested has been placed in the Library.

The data show notifications of food poisoning to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and laboratory reports of specific organisms to the Public Health Laboratory Service's communicable disease surveillance centre.

DEFENCE

Antares

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to publish the results of the inquiry into the sinking of the vessel Antares from Carradale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Departmental consideration of the board of inquiry report has not yet been completed. I will, however, make a summary of its findings available to the House in due course. I am at present unable to say when this will be.

Air Publications and Forms Store

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects the air publications and forms store to be moved from the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Current planning for the move of the air publications and forms store from Woolwich to Llangennech allows for a phased transfer over the period April 1991 to December 1992.

Iraqi Nationals

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central of 19 February, *Official Report*, column *137*, how many Iraqi nationals detained at Rollestone remain there; and how many have been released.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A total of 32 Iraqi nationals are detained as prisoners of war at Rollestone; three others have been released.

1st Armoured Division

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those units under the command of 1st Armoured division.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The main units under the command of the 1st (British) Armoured Division are as follows:

HQ 1 Armoured Division
HQ 4 Armoured Brigade
HQ 7 Armoured Brigade
The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards (Carabiniers and Greys)
Queens Royal Irish Hussars
14th/20th Kings Hussars
16th/5th The Queens Royal Lancers
Queens Dragoon Guards
2 Field Regiment Royal Artillery
12 Air Defence Regiment Royal Artillery
26 Field Regiment Royal Artillery
32 Heavy Regiment Royal Artillery
39 Heavy Regiment Royal Artillery
40 Field Regiment Royal Artillery
46 Air Defence Battery Royal Artillery
10 Air Defence Battery Royal Artillery
21 Engineer Regiment
23 Engineer Regiment
32 Armoured Engineer Regiment
39 Engineer Regiment
3 Field Squadron Royal Engineers
15 Field Support Squadron Royal Engineers
37 Field Squadron Royal Engineers
45 Field Squadron Royal Engineers
45 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron Royal Engineers
14 Topographic Squadron Royal Engineers
1 Armoured Division Signal Regiment
30 Signal Regiment
204 Signal Squadron
207 Signal Squadron
2 Squadron 14 Signal Regiment (Electronic Warfare)
Elements of 1st Battalion Scots Guards
1st Battalion Coldstream Guards
1st Battalion Royal Scots
3rd Battalion Royal Regiment of Fusiliers
1st Battalion Royal Highland Fusiliers
1st Battalion Kings Own Scottish Borderers
1st Battalion The Staffordshire Regiment
Elements of 1st Battalion Queens Own Highlanders
4 Regiment Army Air Corps
1 Armoured Divison Transport Regiment Royal Corps of Transport
4 Armoured Division Transport Regiment Royal Corps of Transport
7 Tank Transporter Regiment Royal Corps of Transport
10 Regiment Royal Corps of Transport
27 Regiment Royal Corps of Transport
28 Ambulance Squadron Gurkha Transport Regiment
52 Port Squadron Royal Corps of Transport
1 Armoured Field Ambulance
5 Armoured Field Ambulance
22 Field Hospital
24 Airmobile Field Ambulance
32 Field Hospital
33 General Hospital
205 General Hospital
3 Ordnance Battalion Royal Army Ordnance Corps
6 Ordnance Battalion
6 Armoured Workshop Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
7 Armoured Workshop Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
11 Armoured Workshop Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
71 Aircraft Workshop Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
174 Provost Company Royal Military Police
203 Provost Company Royal Military Police
27 Group Royal Pioneer Corps
187 Company Royal Pioneer Corps
598 Company Royal Pioneer Corps

The Gulf

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what guidance was given to British pilots in the allied forces involved in Operation Granby to assess whether the Iraqi troop carriers, withdrawing from Kuwait, contained any Kuwaiti citizens kidnapped by Iraqis, before bombing of the convoys in southern Iraq took place.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Allied forces had instructions to attack retreating Iraqi units which could continue to pose a threat.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Treasury last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: A survey of members of staff for whom no ethnic origins information was held was undertaken in December 1990. As a result, the total proportion of Treasury staff for whom ethnic origin data are held now stands at 84 per cent.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at the Treasury.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Recruitment to senior grades of the civil service is undertaken by the Civil Service Commission. The commission has taken a number of steps to aid recruitment of members of the ethnic minorities including increasing representation of ethnic minorities in its liaison and selection panels; ensuring that its recruitment brochures reflect a multi-racial work force; and organising training which highlights equal opportunity issues concerning ethnic minorities.

Male Earnings

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the change in the take home pay of a married man on average pay with two children since 1 April 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The real net income of a family with two children aged under 11 years, in which the husband has average earnings, rose by 32 per cent. in real terms between 1974-75 and 1990-91; all but 1 per cent. of this rise took place after 1978-79.

Foreign Travel

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the percentage of the gross domestic product in the United Kingdom which has been spent on foreign travel by British citizens travelling abroad in 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1990.

Mr. Maples: The percentage of gross domestic product which has been spent on foreign travel by British citizens travelling abroad is as follows:

	Percentage
1960	0·72
1970	0·74
1980	1·18
1989	1·84
1990	[1]—

[1] Data not yet available.

These figures have been derived from gross domestic product data and travel data which are found on the CSO database, which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library.

GDP

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the gross domestic product of each of the countries of the European Community and Norway and Sweden; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples: Figures of gross domestic product analysed by country are shown in the monthly OECD publication "Main Economic Indicators", of which copies are available in the Library of the House.

National Insurance

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the points on the income scale for a single man with the standard allowance at which the combined national insurance and marginal rates alter; and if he will list those rates.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* Information for 1990-91 is given in the table.

Levels of income at which the marginal rate of income tax and national insurance contributions of a single person[1] changes, 1990-91

Weekly income	*Marginal rate of income tax and national insurance contributions[2]*
£	*Per cent.*
46·00	9
57·79	34
350·00	25
455·87	40

[1] Assumed to be non-aged with no reliefs or allowances other than the single personal allowance.

[2] Class 1 national insurance contributions for an employee contracted into the state earnings-related pension scheme (SERPS).

Income Tax

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost in a full tax year of returning to schedule D those income tax payers in the theatrical, writing, television and allied industries who have recently been transferred to schedule E; and if he will also estimate the cost of continuing to tax these categories as schedule E but restoring all new expenses previously allowed under schedule D.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the £30,000 limit could be raised to give a revenue neutral change if mortgage tax relief were restricted to the basic rate.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* To about £37,000 on the basis of 1990-91 figures. The estimate excludes behavioural effects.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was *(a)* the total amount invested in the business expansion scheme, *(b)* the amount invested in private rented housing, *(c)* the total cost of tax relief and *(d)* the amount of tax relief in respect of investment in private rented housing, for each year from 1987-88 to 1989-90;

(2) for each of the years of the existence of the business expansion scheme, what were the percentages and amounts of BES money invested in residential and assured tenancy schemes and the associated revenue foregone by the Exchequer.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* The business expansion scheme was extended to include investment in private rented housing in 1988-89. The latest estimates are shown in the table.

	Amounts invested			Cost of income tax relief	
	Total	Of which investment in private rented housing		Total	Of which in respect of investment in private rented housing
	(£ million)	Amount (£ million)	Percentage	(£ million)	(£ million)
1987-88	200	—	—	120	—
[1]1988-89	415	365	88	150	130
[1]1989-90	225	165	75	75	55

[1] Provisional estimates.
Information is not yet available for 1990-91.

Profit-related Pay

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people are currently in profit-related pay schemes; how many were in, in each of the years since it was introduced; how many registered schemes have existed in each year; and what is the distribution of schemes by number of people in them.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* The information is shown in the table. There were about 290,000 employees participating in PRP schemes at the end of January 1991.

	Live registered schemes as at December			
	1987	1988	1989	1990
Number of participants				
1-50	244	517	650	711
51-100	64	114	149	165
101-500	88	156	245	268
501-1,000	23	28	37	49
Above 1,000	11	15	31	40
Total schemes	430	830	1,112	1,233
Participating employees	72,000	122,000	226,000	263,000

Payroll Giving

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people participated in the payroll giving scheme in each year of the scheme's existence; what total sums were given to charities as a result of the scheme in each year; and what was the cost to the Exchequer in each year.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* Estimates are as follows:

	Payroll giving scheme		
Year	Donors (thousands)	Donations (£ million)	Cost of tax relief (£ million)
1987-88	55	1·0	0·3
1988-89	120	3·5	1·0
[1]1989-90	190	7·0	2·0
[1]1990-91	250	10·0	3·0

[1] Provisional.

Private Medical Insurance

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many of those benefiting from tax relief on private medical insurance are pensioners; and what is the income distribution of those people who gain.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* It is estimated that tax relief on private medical insurance for the over-60s will benefit some 600,000 individuals with 330,000 policies in 1990-91. The further details requested are not available.

Company Cars

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the yield from increasing the company car scale charges in 1991-92 by (i) 10 per cent., (ii) 20 per cent. and (iii) 30 per cent.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 26 February 1991]:* The yield in a full year from increasing the company car scale charges in 1991-92 by 10 per cent., 20 per cent., and 30 per cent. is provisionally estimated at £120 million, £240 million and £360 million, respectively.

The Gulf

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each country making a contribution to the United Kingdom's costs in the Gulf conflict *(a)* the amount promised, *(b)* the amount received so far and *(c)* the dates which he expects payments to be made; and what are the totals of such contributions (i) promised, (ii) received and (iii) expected in each quarter.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 26 February 1991]:* In addition to the information given in my right hon. Friend's reply of 26 February, column *443*, to my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), we have learnt that the Danish payment of DKr90 million, or about £8 million, was made on 26 February. The first of three tranches of $167 million, or about £85 million, was received from the United Arab Emirates on 28 February. As of noon on Friday, 1 March, we had also been promised £15 million by the Belgian Government. At this stage, the timing of future payments is not known.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his current estimate of the total cost of Government spending in 1990-91 and 1991-92 of the Gulf war; and what is his estimate of the effects on the British economy.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 26 February 1991]:* In 1990-91 provision has been made for additional defence spending as a result of the Gulf crisis of £780 million, of which £40 million was absorbed within the existing defence budget. An extra £9·5 million has been provided for health, additional provision totalling a further £9·5 million made on FCO votes and there are also smaller costs, which have been absorbed, on some other public expenditure programmes. About £160 million worth of claims has been paid by ECGD to exporters against defaults by Iraq.

The effect on Government spending in 1991-92 cannot yet be estimated. The Government are committed to

substantial additional costs for defence, but these will be spread over some years and are very uncertain. The indications at this stage are that eventual defence costs may be up to the £3 billion mark. This figure does not take account of contributions pledged by other countries towards the United Kingdom's costs. The balance of claims against ECGD are likely to be paid over the next 5 to 6 years.

The impact of the Gulf war on the United Kingdom and world economies is uncertain and difficult to separate from other factors. A revised economic forecast will be published at Budget time.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current total subsidy to mortgage tax relief *(a)* for higher rate taxpayers, *(b)* for lower rate taxpayers and *(c)* for those lower rate taxpayers buying their first home.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 28 February 1991]:* The estimated cost of mortgage interest relief in 1990-91 can be analysed as follows:

	Cost £ billion
Higher rate taxpayers	1·1
Basic rate taxpayers	6·3
Non-taxpayers	0·4
Total	7·8

Information on mortgage interest relief for first-time buyers is not separately available.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Statutory Instruments (Prayers)

40. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Lord President of the Council how many prayers against statutory instruments have been debated in the current parliamentary Session; and how many prayers have been tabled.

Mr. MacGregor: Up to and including 25 February, 43 motions for an address for the annulment of statutory instruments have been tabled this Session. Of these, one has been debated on the Floor of the House. In addition, seven instruments subject to negative resolution have been referred to Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, and four have so far been considered.

Space Audit

41. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement about the results of the space audit of the Palace of Westminster and its associated buildings.

Mr. MacGregor: The space audit is being undertaken by the Parliamentary Works Office to provide an authoritative record of the use of all the accommodation on the parliamentary estate, and a qualitative assessment, particularly of the areas used as offices. The consultants' recommendations, together with advice on space standards, are now being evaluated by the New Building Sub-Committee before it takes decisions on the accommodation needs to be included in the brief for the next phase of the new parliamentary building.

Office Accommodation

42. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he has any plans to bid for rental accommodation now available in close proximity of the House to enable Members to have more office accommodation; what constraints there are on his doing so; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: A number of properties are under consideration by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to provide additional space for the House.

Parliamentary Procedures

43. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he has any further statements to make regarding new parliamentary procedures and hours of work.

Mr. MacGregor: No.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he will review arrangements for the internal collection and delivery of hon. Members' correspondence to and from constituents.

Mr. MacGregor: The Members' Post Office receives and sorts Members' incoming mail for collection or redirection daily; outgoing mail is collected at set times, by Post Office staff, from boxes in the Palace and outbuildings for onward transmission by the Post Office. I have no plans to review the arrangements at present but I know that the Serjeant-at-Arms will wish to try to meet any particular problems which the hon. Member may wish to draw to his attention.

Parliamentary Statistics

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council since 1979, how many *(a)* Bills, *(b)* orders, *(c)* schemes, *(d)* regulations, *(e)* affirmative resolutions and *(f)* negative resolutions have been passed; and if he will make a statement on the trends.

Mr. MacGregor: The following information is available:

(a) Since the beginning of the 1979-80 Session, 748 Public and Provisional Order Bills and 290 Private Bills have received Royal Assent:

Session	*Public Bills*	*Private Bills*	*Total*
1979-80	102	40	142
1980-81	78	25	103
1981-82	59	25	84
1982-83	56	5	61
1983-84	76	37	113
1984-85	87	18	105
1985-86	77	38	115
1986-87	55	19	74
1987-88	62	33	95
1988-89	46	20	66
1989-90	45	28	73
[1]1990-91	5	2	7
Total	748	290	1,038

[1] Up to and including February 1991.

In Sessions 1979-80 to 1989-90 inclusive, 11 Public Bills were passed by the Commons but did not receive Royal Assent.

(b), (c) and *(d).* Orders, schemes and regulations, along with rules and directions, are types of Statutory Instruments. Figures for the numbers of each type considered by the House and made are not maintained. The following numbers of Statutory Instruments have been made each calendar year from 1979:

Year	*Number*
1979	1,770
1980	2,051
1981	1,892
1982	1,900
1983	1,965
1984	2,072
1985	2,080
1986	2,344
1987	2,278
1988	2,311
1989	2,503
1990	2,663
Total	25,829

(e) Figures for the numbers of Statutory Instruments and other statutory papers (reports, codes of practice etc.) which are subject to affirmative resolution and have been so approved by the House are not readily available. The Joint and Select Committees on Statutory Instruments have considered the following numbers of Statutory Instruments subject to affirmative resolution procedure since 1979:

Session	*Number*
1979-80	235
1980-81	130
1981-82	121
1982-83	99
1983-84	180
1984-85	158
1985-86	158
1986-87	117
1987-88	246
1988-89	160
1989-90	164
Total	1,768

(f) Since 1979, one motion for an Address to be presented to Her Majesty, praying that a statutory instrument be annulled (a "prayer") has been agreed to (on 31 October 1979). One motion to disapprove a statement of changes in immigration rules has been agreed to (on 15 December 1982). Figures for the numbers of statutory instruments and other papers laid pursuant to statute which are subject to negative resolution are not readily available. The Joint and Select Committees on Statutory Instruments have considered the following numbers of Statutory Instruments subject to negative resolution procedure since 1979:

Session	*Number*
1979-80	1,010·00
1980-81	755·00
1981-82	686·00
1982-83	455·00
1983-84	863·00
1984-85	637·00
1985-86	815·00
1986-87	462·00
1987-88	1,179·00
1988-89	854·00
1989-90	916·00
Total	8,632·00

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to so so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A full survey of the ethnic origins of Foreign and Commonwealth Office staff was conducted in 1986-87. It is kept up to date with information on new staff and leavers. Non-respondents in the diplomatic wing are to be re-surveyed in the next few weeks. The aid wing conducts periodic resurveys of non-respondents. The FCO attaches importance to its departmental programme for action on race as a means of ensuring that it recruits, develops and retains the best qualified people regardless of ethnic origin.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at the Foreign Office.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Recruitment to the most senior entry grade is conducted for us by the Civil Service Commission, which has taken various steps to improve ethnic minority recruitment. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has produced its own recruitment materials which reflect a multi-racial work force, and often places features and advertises vacancies in ethnic minority media.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1-7) and overall in his Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information available is as follows:

Diplomatic wing

(a) The figures at 28 February 1991 for the diplomatic wing, including both home civil service grades 1 to 7 and the diplomatic service equivalents, are as follows:

	Total women in grade	*Women as percentage of total in grade*
HCS1	0	0
HCS2	0	0
HCS3	6	5·36
[1]HCS4	0	0
HCS5	7	2·37
[1]HCS6	0	0
HCS7	43	8·66

[1] no equivalent DS grade.

Overall there are 3,312 women in the diplomatic wing, equivalent to 46·8 per cent. of staff.

(b) According to the diplomatic wing's ethnic survey 96 staff, or 1·4 per cent. of the payroll, have declared themselves to be of ethnic minority origin. The survey is, of course, voluntary.

I regret that I am unable to provide a breakdown of the figures by grade.

Aid wing

(a) In January 1990 there were 35 women at HCS grades 1 to 7, representing 10·9 per cent of the total at those grades. A more detailed breakdown is not available. Overall there were 662 women in the aid wing, or 43·4 per cent. of staff.

(b) According to the aid wing's ethnic survey 1·5 per cent. of HCS grades 1 to 7 are of ethnic minority origin. Overall, 3·79 per cent. of the total payroll of 1,525 staff have declared themselves to be of ethnic minority origin. The survey is voluntary. A breakdown of figures by grade is not available.

BBC World Service

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further steps are being taken to improve the reception of the BBC World Service for British forces.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In addition to the substantial measures already taken to improve reception in the Gulf since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, by increasing the number of frequencies and extending the hours of broadcasting, arrangements for high quality local rebroadcasting of the World Service are in hand. The arrangements made through the Services Sound and Vision Corporation to bring BBC World Service programmes to troops in the Gulf over special channels are a matter for the Secretary of State for Defence. British forces, as well as the wider public, in other parts of the world are benefiting from a 10-year programme of investment in audibility which is now almost complete.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further steps he is taking to improve the reception of the BBC World Service to the Gulf area generally.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Substantial improvements have already been made, following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The BBC has increased the number of shortwave frequencies serving the Gulf and the time that they are available. High-power medium wave transmissions have been added to provide additional coverage throughout the night hours. In addition, arrangements for high-quality local rebroadcasting of the BBC World Service are in hand.

Sri Lanka

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will urge the Sri Lankan Government to establish an immediate ceasefire with the Tamil Tigers and use the good offices of the Australian Prime Minister or those of the Commonwealth to mediate in the conflict between the two sides.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Before urging the Sri Lankan Government to arrange a further ceasefire with the LTTE, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, with or without international mediation, Her Majesty's Government would need to be convinced that conditions existed for meaningful negotiations to take place thereafter based on recognition of the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka and of the need to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of all its citizens through preservation of its multi-ethnic and multi-lingual character.

Bulgaria

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the practical results of the recent visit of President Zhelev of Bulgaria to this country.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told President Zhelev that we would extend the know-how fund to Bulgaria. Cultural and a cultural centres agreements were signed. President Zhelev also accepted a gift of pharmaceuticals from Her Majesty's Government. There will be a further announcement shortly.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between the United Kingdom and Bulgaria.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: United Kingdom-Bulgarian relations have been raised to a new level by President Zhelev's highly successful visit. We were pleased to be able to show our support for reform in Bulgaria.

Hong Kong

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the number of Hong Kong Chinese who have sought to enter the United Kingdom under the British Government proposals, as of the 25 February.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the number of applications for United Kingdom passports lodged by Hong Kong residents on the final date for application.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will seek a report from the governor of Hong Kong on the number of applications received for United Kingdom passports under the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many applications were received for United Kingdom passports under the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990, as at 28 February;

(3) what were the reasons for the number of applications for United Kingdom passports under the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990 being substantially less than anticipated by the governor of Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The number of applications received is substantially less than the total number of people in Hong Kong who were eligible to apply. Because the scheme is objective and transparent, potential applicants were able to assess accurately their prospects of success. It seems likely that many people who believed that they would not succeed did not apply.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications had been received in Hong Kong for British passports at the end of the deadline date of 28 February.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The number of applications received up to midnight Hong Kong time on 28 February was 57,862. This is not, however, the final figure. Registered mail applications posted up to 28 February will also be accepted.

Lebanon

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken to secure the removal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We believe that the full implementation of the 1989 Taif accord is the best means to achieve Lebanon's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. We reiterated our support for the accord in the unanimous vote to renew the UNIFIL masdate on 30 January and in the EC declaration on the Gulf of 19 February.

Baltic States

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what input he has had with regard to the advice offered to United Kingdom business men who wish to exploit business opportunities in the Baltic states.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We keep in touch with the Department of Trade and Industry and the British embassy in Moscow over commercial opportunities in the Baltic states.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to set up honorary consular facilities in the Baltic republics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no such plans at present.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there are any representatives of the British Government who are based in the Baltic republics and who have the remit to exploit trade and commercial opportunities on behalf of British industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The British embassy in Moscow has responsibility for assisting export promotion in the Baltic states. Members of the embassy visit the region and assess opportunities there.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the name and address of the nearest United Kingdom consular representative to each of the Baltic states.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Her Majesty's consul in Moscow, Mr. Paul Massey, is responsible for consular matters in the Baltic states. The address of the consulate is Naberezhnaya Morisa Toreza 14, Moscow 72.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the names of those countries which maintain consular offices and personnel in the Baltic states.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: According to the information available to us, the following countries maintain consular offices and personnel in the Baltic republics:

Latvia (Riga)
Sweden: branch of Leningrad—Consulate-General
Estonia (Tallinn)
Sweden: branch of Leningrad—Consulate-General
Finland: branch of Leningrad—Consulate-General
Lithuania (Vilnius)
Poland: Consul *ad hoc* of the Polish republic in residence in Vilnius.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1-7) and overall in the department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Eggar: The number and percentage of women in each grade requested and the overall number in the Department are as follows:

	Number	*Per cent.*
Grade 1-3	0	0
Grade 4	2	25
Grade 5	26	21
Grade 6	114	27
Grade 7	46	25
Overall	1,525	54

We do not hold information on the ethnic origin of all our staff, but of those who have responded to the ethnic monitoring survey (98 per cent.) carried out last year, those from ethnic minorities were:

	Number	*Per cent.*
Grade 1-4	0	0
Grade 5-6	4	1
Grade 7	5	3
Overall	184	6·4

The survey was conducted on the understanding that anonymity would be preserved. Any further breakdown of the figures could identify individuals and cannot therefore be provided.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Eggar: Recruitment of grades above administrative officer is carried out by the Civil Service Commission which has taken steps to aid recruitment of members of the ethnic minorities. For the grades of administrative officer and below, where the Department recruits direct, we are trying to widen our recruitment field, particularly to those from ethnic minorities, by using centrally devised tests as an alternative to formal qualifications.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: A survey of the ethnic origins of staff was carried out last summer and the database is now

continually updated as now staff join the Department. This Department launched its own programme of action to achieve equality of opportunity for people of ethnic minority origin in June last year. We have already achieved the objective to establish ethnic origin data on 98 per cent. of our staff.

Health Education and Physical Education

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the position of health education and physical education in the core curriculum and on how they relate to each other.

Mr. Atkins: Health education is a cross-curricular theme within the curriculum as a whole, including physical education. The terms of reference of the national curriculum working group on physical education asked it to consider the contribution which physical education can make to health education. The interim report of the group, published in February 1991, identified ways in which this contribution can be made. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library.

Licensed Teachers

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those local education authorities who are currently employing licensed teachers indicating (i) the numbers employed by each authority, (ii) how many are graduates and (iii) how many are non-graduates who met the necessary criteria.

Mr. Fallon: On 28 February 439 licensed teachers were employed by local education authorities in England and Wales and, of these, 290 were graduates. The number of licensed teachers employed by individual local education authorities is as follows:

	Number
Avon	2
Barking and Dagenham	2
Barnet	28
Bedfordshire	14
Berkshire	9
Bexley	16
Brent	22
Bromley	1
Buckinghamshire	2
Calderdale	4
Cambridgeshire	4
City of London	1
Cleveland	3
Coventry	4
Cumbria	1
Essex	18
Gloucestershire	2
Hackney	24
Hammersmith and Fulham	17
Hampshire	8
Havering	15
Hereford and Worcester	4
Hertfordshire	49
Hillingdon	12
Hounslow	6
Islington	46
Kent	15
Kingston upon Thames	9
Lincolnshire	5
Newham	17
Northamptonshire	14
Redbridge	9
Shropshire	2
Staffordshire	1
Stockport	1
Suffolk	3
Surrey	6
Sutton	8
Tower Hamlets	8
Waltham Forest	2
Wandsworth	9
West Sussex	4
Westminster	10
Wiltshire	2

Secondary Schools, Torquay

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to reply to the letter dated 28 July 1990 concerning secondary school placement in Torquay from Mr. I. W. Morton of Kingshurst, Paignton road, Stoke Gabriel, Totnes, Devon TQ9 6SJ.

Mr. Fallon: Mr. Morton's letter, and those of seven other parents on the same subject, raised difficult questions about the Sex Discrimination Act and have required detailed consultation with the local education authority. Two letters have been sent to Mr. Morton advising him of the problem and apologising for the unavoidable delay. We will reply fully to Mr. Morton's inquiries as soon as we are in a position to do so.

National Association of Governors and Managers

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will undertake a review of the decision by his Department to grant funds to the National Association of Governors and Managers; and if he will make a statement.

(2) if he will suspend further payments to the National Association of Governors and Managers.

Mr. Fallon: A grant of up to £40,000 has been agreed for 1991-92. My right hon. and learned Friend is now considering a further application for funds.

Student Loans

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current rate of student take-up of loans from the Student Loans Company; and what number of loans he estimates will have been taken out by the end of the 1990-91 academic year and 1991-92.

Mr. Alan Howarth: As at 28 February 1991, over 109,000 students have applied for a loan from the Student Loans Company. It is too early to say what the take-up rate will be for the current academic year or, of course, for the academic year 1991-92.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what number and percentage of applications the Student Loans Company has rejected to date.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Student Loans Company does not reject any valid applications from students whose institutions have correctly certified them as eligible.

Where the application form is invalid—because it has not been completed correctly—the company may need, in

certain circumstance, to invite the student to reapply. I am asking the managing director of the company, which is responsible for the administration of the scheme, to write direct to the hon. Member, giving the number of cases where this has happened.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what costs he expects the Student Loans Company to face in collecting due loans, separating out *(a)* collection costs per loan for each year from 1990 to 2027, *(b)* annual collection costs for each year from 1990 to 2027 and *(c)* annual loss from loans deemed uncollectable, for the same period.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Information is not available in the form requested. The Student Loans Company expects to collect significant numbers of repayments from April 1992. The company does not yet have an approved budget for the financial year 1992-93. However, the Government have consistently forecast annual operational costs for the next few years within the range of £10 to 20 million.

The company will not regard any loans as uncollectable. Where a borrower is granted deferment, he need not make any repayments, although his outstanding loan will continue to be indexed in line with inflation. Where a borrower qualifies for cancellation, the student loans legislation provides for the debt to be cancelled: there is, therefore, nothing to collect. Where a borrower defaults on his repayments, the company will seek recovery of the full sum owed, if necessary by taking him to court.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the latest available figure for the number of student loans outstanding; and how much is owed.

Mr. Alan Howarth: As at 28 February 1991, the Student Loans Company had made 82,176 loans, to a total value of £31·095 million.

Chief Inspector of Schools (Annual Report)

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the latest annual report of Her Majesty's senior chief inspector of schools was *(a)* made available to the press, and *(b)* placed before Parliament; and in what manner.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Copies of the report were made available to the press at 12.00 on 13 February, the day of publication. Copies were dispatched to the Vote Office by first-class post on the day before publication. Opposition spokesmen were sent copies and further copies were placed in the Library on the day of publication.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make copies of the latest annual report of Her Majesty's senior chief inspector of schools available to hon. and Right hon. Members through the Vote Office.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On 12 February 200 copies were sent to the Vote Office.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what date he first saw a draft of the latest annual report of Her Majesty's senior chief inspector of schools, and whether any amendments to the draft were made at the suggestion of Ministers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The senior chief inspector submitted his annual report to me on 4 February and it was published on 13 February.

Ministers made no suggestions of any changes to the report which was published in the form in which it was submitted.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out in detail the procedures for the forthcoming appointment of a new holder of the office of Her Majesty's senior chief inspector of schools, including the nature of the involvement of Ministers in the appointment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Civil Service Commission is organising an open competition which is being advertised widely in terms which I approved. Selection will be on merit and those selected for interview will appear before a board, chaired by the first civil service commissioner, on which my Department will be represented by senior officials and which will include a distinguished outside member. The board's recommendation will be made to me in the usual way. Her Majesty's inspectors of schools are appointed by Her Majesty the Queen, on the recommendation of the holder of my office, as required by section 77(2) of the Education Act 1944.

Wavertree Church of England School

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what capital works required at Wavertree Church of England school be authorised at the time of its establishment; when they will be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: Statutory proposals approved on 22 June 1990 provided for the site and buildings of Wavertree Church of England voluntary controlled school to be upgraded and extended as necessary in order to accommodate about 210 pupils, including pupils displaced by the closure of St. Mary's and St. Bridget's CE voluntary controlled primary schools.

In setting Liverpool's annual capital guideline (ACG) for 1991-92 we have taken full account of the authority's plans for this project. It is, however, for local education authorities to decide what capital projects to undertake, and when, taking account of their obligation to implement approved statutory proposals.

Barkestone Church of England School

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the future of the premises and property of Barkestone Church of England school, Leicestershire.

Mr. Fallon: The future of the premises and property of Barkestone Church of England school will be determined strictly in accordance with the provisions of the proposed Diocese of Leicester (Educational Endowments) Order 1991. The order authorises the Leicester diocesan board of education to sell any of the property of the schools comprised in the order and, until sale, to let or otherwise manage such properties according to the general law applicable to the management of property held on trust for charitable purposes. In the case of Barkestone Church of England school, the diocesan board of education has indicated that it will not sell the former school premises

but make them available for local community purposes under a lease. The diocesan board has indicated also that the teacher's house will not be sold for the time being, although there are plans to sell the agricultural land which comprises part of the trust property.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Low-energy Light Bulbs

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to encourage the use of low-energy light bulbs in his Department's offices and other buildings.

Dr. Mawhinney: The use of low-energy lighting is being promoted as part of a major Government effort to increase energy efficiency, with the target of a 15 per cent. reduction in overall energy consumption in Government buildings by 1995. A recent consultative paper on energy efficiency issued by the Department of Economic Development highlighted a wide range of energy conservation measures, including low-energy lighting. Departments have been asked to identify areas where energy efficiency can be improved. Moreover, where necessary, the cost of worthwhile projects will be taken into account when financial allocations are being made.

Royal Mail

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what discussions he has had with the chairman of the Post Office on the reorganisation of the royal mail service in Northern Ireland;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect of the reorganisation of the royal mail service in Northern Ireland on unemployment in the constituency of South Down.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Railway Crossings

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the enabling legislation authorising Northern Ireland Railways to install automatic half barriers to selected open crossings is to be tabled; and if he will name the crossings concerned.

Mr. Needham: Orders in relation to the conversion of 13 automatic open crossings to automatic half-barrier level crossings are in preparation and are scheduled to come into operation as follows:

Crossing	*Operation date*
Slaght	2 September 1991
Killagan	16 September 1991
Galgorm	30 September 1991
Broughdone	14 October 1991
Glarryford	28 October 1991
Dunloy	11 November 1991
Caldanagh	25 November 1991
Ballyboyland	9 December 1991
Barmouth	6 January 1992
Umbra	20 January 1992
Magilligan	3 February 1992
Bellarena	17 February 1992
Cromore	2 March 1992

Residential Homes

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish tables, broken down by area health and social service board showing, for each of the last three years where figures are available, (i) social security expenditure on income support for residents of private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes, broken down by age and client group, and (ii) expenditure on board residential care and other services for elderly people.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 28 February 1991]:* The only readily available information about expenditure on income support relates to the position at 1 October 1990 and is as follows:

Weekly expenditure on income support at 1 October 1990

	Up to 59 years	*60 years or over*
	£	£
Homes for persons in need		
Age and infirmity	3,059	104,824
Elderly and blind or elderly and entitled to the higher rate of attendance allowance	—	26,060
Mental disorder	5,313	10,210
Drug or alcohol dependence	950	918
Mental handicap	19,541	4,198
Physical disablement under pensionable age	6,372	5,095
Physical disablement over pensionable age	—	4,891
Nursing homes		
Mental disorder	1,180	13,165
Mental handicap	6,967	4,419
Drug or alcohol dependence	776	959
Physical disablement under pensionable age	29,654	49,988
Physical disablement over pensionable age	—	29,401
Terminal illness	8,374	338,671
Others	693	71,064
Totals	82,919	663,863
Grand totals	746,782	

Expenditure by each health and social services board for the last three years available on residential accommodation for the elderly was:

Board	*Year ended 31 March 1988 £ million*	*1989 £ million*	*1990 £million*
Northern	7·0	7·2	7·3
Southern	4·2	4·5	4·6
Eastern	11·4	11·8	12·6
Western	4·1	4·2	4·6
Total	26·7	27·7	29·1

However, for facilities such as day centres and services such as home help and meals it is not possible to separate expenditure on a specific client group such as the elderly and this expenditure has not been included in the above figures.

ENVIRONMENT

Fire Services

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment following the decision to transfer funding for the Fire Service College to local fire brigades, what amount has been added to the RSG in respect of this commitment; where information is available as to the sums allocated to each authority; who may inspect this information; what account was taken of these changes indetermining the standard spending assessments for metropolitan fire and civil defence authorities; and where this information is available.

Mr. Key: In 1990-91 the Fire Service College will receive £7,595,000 as its share of the revenue support grant total for England. In 1991-92 it will receive £5,630,734. Additionally, for 1991-92 the total standard spending assessment for the fire and civil defence block takes account of the new arrangements whereby the college recovers part of its costs through charges. This is reflected in the standard spending assessments of individual authorities. However, grant is distributed on the basis of authorities' total SSAs and it is therefore not possible to say what proportion of their grant entitlements relates to any specific task or function.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider extending the grounds for exemption from the poll tax to include severe physical handicap as well as severe mental impairment.

Mr. Key: Our review of local government finance is considering all aspects of the community charge. Under the present arrangements people with disabilities may be helped by the community charge benefit disability and severe disability premiums.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make it his policy to exempt from the poll tax wives whose husbands were sole earners and have either absconded or been jailed.

Mr. Key: Our review of local government finance is considering all aspects of the community charge.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many ex-service men who receive a war pension are exempted from paying *(a)* all and *(b)* 80 per cent. of the poll tax; and in how many cases the war pension payable to ex-service men is taken into account in calculating the liability of the pensioner's partner for the poll tax.

Mr. Key: This information is not available. Although entitlement to a war pension does not confer exemption from the personal community charge, local authorities must disregard the first £10 of and have the discretion to disregard the whole or part of the rest of a person's war disablement pension when calculating community charge benefit. If a partner is in prison, the decision whether a community charge benefit claim should be assessed on a joint basis will depend on whether, in the opinion of the local authority, the partners are still members of the same household.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the actual current expenditure of each London borough per poll tax payer.

Mr. Key: The available information is as follows:

Net revenue expenditure per head of relevant population

	Budget Estimate 1990-91 £
City of London	26,186
Camden	1,392
Greenwich	1,428
Hackney	1,802
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,460
Islington	1,563
Kensington and Chelsea	1,420
Lewisham	1,212
Southwark	1,400
Tower Hamlets	1,883
Wandsworth	1,176
Westminster	1,286
Barking and Dagenham	914
Barnet	751
Bexley	757
Brent	1,230
Bromley	648
Croydon	799
Ealing	1,067
Enfield	871
Harrow	841
Havering	753
Hillingdon	885
Hounslow	1,037
Kingston-upon-Thames	818
Merton	896
Newham	1,340
Redbridge	771
Richmond-upon-Thames	733
Sutton	819
Waltham Forest	1,147

Lambeth and Haringey have not supplied figures which enable the calculation to be made.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the standard spending assessment for each London borough expressed in terms of spending per poll tax payer.

Mr. Key: The standard spending assessments for each London borough for 1991-92 in pounds per charge payer are listed in the table:

	1991-92 SSA (£/adult)
City of London	11,762
Camden	1,403
Greenwich	1,191
Hackney	1,920
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,335
Islington	1,551
Kensington and Chelsea	1,178
Lambeth	1,718
Lewisham	1,295
Southwark	1,455
Tower Hamlets	1,872
Wandsworth	1,262
Westminster	1,548
Barking and Dagenham	976
Barnet	882
Bexley	847
Brent	1,339
Bromley	754

	1991-92 SSA (£/adult)
Croydon	950
Ealing	1,187
Enfield	966
Haringey	1,345
Harrow	906
Havering	795
Hillingdon	881
Hounslow	1,011
Kingston upon Thames	885
Merton	865
Newham	1,519
Redbridge	914
Richmond upon Thames	740
Sutton	846
Waltham Forest	1,210

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many students were estimated to be in Cambridge for the purposes of calculating the community charge; what factors have led to the increase in charge levels for 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The number of students notified to the Department of the Environment by Cambridge city council and used for the purposes of calculating revenue support grant was 15,020. The community charge set by each district council is a matter for it to decide.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much assistance a couple living in a property of *(a)* half and *(b)* three quarters average rateable value in Rugby and Kenilworth will receive under the community charge reduction scheme in 1991-92.

Mr. Key: If Rugby borough council sets its community charge next year at or above £332, a couple who have not moved since 31 March 1990 living in a property of half average rateable value could look forward to a reduction of £272 between them and for a couple living in a property of threequarters average rateable value, £128 between them. If Warwick council sets its community charge next year at or above £344, the reduction for a couple living in that area who have not moved since 31 March 1990 would be *(a)* £248 between them and *(b)* £80 between them.

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in Hackney were in receipt of transitional protection in 1990-91.

Mr. Key: No information is available on the numbers of households in each authority area in receipt of transitional relief. Relief grant claim forms from the local authority indicate that 19,000 charge payers in Hackney have benefited from transitional relief this financial year.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will set out in tabular form details of the exact effects on community charge payers in *(a)* Charnwood borough, *(b)* Melton borough and *(c)* Rutland district councils of the community charge reduction scheme; and how many charge payers are likely to benefit in each case.

Mr. Key: No information is yet available on the numbers of people in each charging authority area who will benefit from a reduction. The figures in the table show the benefit of the community charge reduction scheme in Charnwood, Melton and Rutland for couples who have not moved since 31 March 1990 living in properties of *(a)* three quarters average rateable value and *(b)* half average rateable value for the area if the authorities concerned set a community charge in 1991-92 which is at or above their scheme charge.

Benefit for couples from 1991-92 community charge reduction scheme

	Scheme charge	(a)	(b)
	£	£	£
Charnwood borough	342	202	328
Melton borough	339	220	338
Rutland district	340	173	307

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list the district councils within Leicestershire which have increased their levels of community charge in 1991-92 by more than the benefit which their charge-payers have received from central funding of the safety net; to what factors he attributes these increases; and how they will be affected by the community charge reduction scheme.

Mr. Key: As far as I am aware, no district council in Leicestershire has yet decided upon its community charge for 1991-92.

A list of the authorities in Leicestershire which are contributing to the safety net, together with the amount of their contributions, is given in the table. Contributions will not be required in 1991-92.

	£
Blaby	881,265
Charnwood	3,208,998
Harborough	1,444,158
Hinckley and Bosworth	505,101
Oakby and Wigston	502,287
Rutland	684,308

Entitlement to reductions under the community charge reduction scheme will be based on the scheme listed in the Community Charge Reduction Scheme Report (England), laid before Parliament on 18 February, or the local authority's set charge in 1991-92, whichever is the lower.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his estimate of the number of local authorities who will receive special grant payments for income forgone because of exempting Gulf personnel from the poll tax;

(2) if he intends to publish any further details on the operation of the scheme to compensate local authorities for income forgone due to exempting Gulf personnel from the poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The number of authorities which will benefit from the scheme is not yet known. Further details of the operation of the scheme will be issued shortly, following discussions between my Department and the local authority associations.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the information available, including forecasts, from the capital monitoring returns from local authorities on the likely level of *(a)* housing capital receipts, *(b)* non-housing capital receipts and *(c)*

all capital receipts generated in 1990-91 in (i) England and (ii) in each class of authority; and what is the amount that will have to be set aside as provision for credit liabilities.

Mr. Portillo: The quarterly capital payments return (CPR2) submitted by local authorities covers outturn data for April to September 1990-91 and provides a forecast for the whole of 1990-91. The returns made by local authorities together with estimates for non-response suggest the likely level of all capital receipts generated in 1990-91 to be as follows:

	£ million
County councils	284
Metropolitan districts	697
London boroughs	873
Non-Metropolitan districts	1,558
Other authorities	218
All England	3,629

Local authorities report that of the £3,629 million they expect to receive in 1990-91, £1,195 million will be usable capital receipts, hence the reserved part will be £2,434 million which must be set aside as provision for credit liabilities.

Local authorities are not required to provide separate forecasts for housing and non-housing capital receipts.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish details of the information sent to local authorities during February on the treatment of service men in the Gulf regarding poll tax liability.

Mr. Portillo: My Department has not issued any such advice to local authorities during February. On 19 February my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley explained to the House that it was the Government's intention that soldiers and associated civilians posted to the Gulf should not pay the charge for the duration of their posting. In the light of the recent High Court judgment in the case of Bradford MBC *v.* Anderton we are currently considering what steps need to be taken to realise this objective.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much assistance a couple living in a property of half average rateable value in Sevenoaks will receive under the community charge reduction scheme in 1992.

Mr. Key: If Sevenoaks council sets its community charge next year at or above £281, a couple who have not moved since 31 March 1990 living in a property of half average rateable value could look forward to a reduction of £221 between them.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for *(a)* each local authority, *(b)* each class of authority and *(c)* England as a whole the capital receipts accumulated by 31 March 1990 and his best estimates of the amount set aside as provision for credit liabilities in 1990-91 from (i) housing capital receipts, (ii) non-housing capital receipts and (iii) all capital receipts.

Mr. Portillo: I have today arranged for the available information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cost of implementing and administering the community charge in each of the 32 London boroughs and in the City of London (i) during 1989-90 and (ii) during 1990-91, *(a)* funded by the Government and *(b)* in fact incurred; and what is the estimate of the cost of the same activity for each of the same local authorities for the financial year 1991-92.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 1 March 1991]:* I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cost to his Department of *(a)* implementing and *(b)* monitoring the community charge in England in the financial years (i) 1989-90 and (ii) 1990-91; and what is his estimate of the cost for 1991-92.

Mr. Key *[holding answer, 1 March 1991]:* The information is not available in the form requested. The outturn costs for 1989-90 and 1990-91 and estimated costs for 1991-92, excluding accommodation, publicity and publications, of the local government finance policy directorate in my department, which deal with all aspects of local government finance, including the community charge, are as follows:

£ 000s	Total
1989-90	2,591
1990-91	2,705
1991-92	2,983

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for every year since 1975 the total spent by local authorities in cash and real terms, and the proportions of funds from Government, from business and from households or individuals with an estimate for 1990-91.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 26 February 1991]:* The available information is as follows:

Local authority net expenditure financed from relevant grants, rates and balances

	Cash		At 1990-91 prices	
	England and Wales £ million	England £ million	England and Wales £ million	England £ million
[1]1975-76	10,102	—	36,534	—
1976-77	11,293	—	35,972	—
1977-78	12,195	—	34,169	—
1978-79	13,631	—	34,445	—
1979-80	15,956	—	34,556	—
1980-81	19,307	—	35,336	—
1981-82	21,314	20,106	35,574	33,558
1982-83	—	21,952	—	34,209
1983-84	—	23,263	—	34,650
1984-85	—	24,119	—	34,188
[2]1985-86	—	24,284	—	32,644
1986-87	—	26,629	—	34,614
1987-88	—	28,943	—	35,678
1988-89	—	31,334	—	35,998
[3]1989-90	—	33,403	—	36,075
[4]1990-91	—	36,434	—	36,434

[1] Figures for 1975-76 are estimates
[2] London Regional Transport excluded from 1985-86
[3] Polytechnics excluded from 1989-90
[4] Revenue expenditure to compare with TSS

Proportions met by relevant grants and rates

	Government grants[1] as percentage of local authority expenditure	Non-domestic rates[2] as percentage of local authority expenditure	Domestic rates/ community charges[3] as percentage of local authority expenditure
[4]1975-76	67	23	14
[4]1976-77	66	22	14
[4]1977-78	63	23	17
[4]1978-79	61	22	16
[4]1979-80	60	22	17
[4]1980-81	59	23	17
1981-82	56	25	20
1982-83	53	26	21
1983-84	54	26	19
1984-85	54	26	20
1985-86	54	28	21
1986-87	50	28	22
1987-88	49	28	23
1988-89	46	28	24
1989-90	44	28	25
1990-91	42	29	28

[1] For the years 1975-76 to 1989-90 Government grants comprise aggregate Exchequer grant and rate rebate grants. For 1990-91 Government grants are made up of revenue support grant, special grants, specific grants, aggregate external finance, community charge benefits and transitional relief grants.

[2] Net of rate rebates.

[3] Net of rate rebates for the years 1979-80 to 1989-90. Net of community charge benefits and transitional relief in 1990-91.

[4] England and Wales.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the proportion of local government income, and the amount, which comes from charges or fees payable by users of local authority services; what are the average figures for local authorities; and what is the range of such figures.

Mr. Key: The latest year for which information is available on the levels of fees and charges is 1988-89. The total amount of income met from fees and charges, excluding rents, over all accounts in 1988-89 for the English local authorities was £3,584 million. This represented 8 per cent. of total revenue income for that year.

The average income from fees and charges for all the English local authorities, including the passenger transport authorities, waste regulation and disposal authorities etc., was £7,239,000. The range spanned a minimum of less than £1,000 to a maximum of £90,211,000 for ILEA.

Mr. Cabora: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of local authority income was provided or will be provided for each year from 1979-80 to 1991-92 by *(a)* rate or revenue support grant, *(b)* domestic rates or poll tax, and *(c)* non-domestic rates or receipts from the non-domestic rate pool, for (i) the York city council area and (ii) England as a whole.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 19 February 1991]:* Under the old system of local government finance rate support grant was not paid in respect of local authority areas. It is not possible to estimate the proportion of rate support grant paid to North Yorkshire county council which relates to the area of York city council. The estimated amounts of rate income for the area are shown in the table:

York City Council

	£ million	
	Domestic rate income	Non-domestic rate income
1983-84	6·6	9·4
1984-85	7·2	10·2
1985-86	7·9	10·9
1986-87	9·3	12·7
1987-88	10·7	14·4
1988-89	12·1	16·5
1989-90	13·6	18·3

No figures are available for rate income for York city council before 1983-84.

Street Naming

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to transfer responsibilities for street naming to town, community, and parish councils; and what representations he has received on the subject.

Mr. Key: No, and none; but the topic could be relevant to the current review of local government.

Action for Cities

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the results to date of the campaign Action for Cities, launched in March 1988.

Mr. Key: Good progress has been made in regenerating our inner cities under the Action for Cities initiative, with Government expenditure input of over £10 billion since 1988. In partnership with the private sector, substantial investment has taken place in new factories, shopping centres, roads and other infrastructure and in treating derelict land, thus improving the quality of life for people in our inner cities and creating important new employment and training opportunities. Long-term unemployment in the inner cities has nearly halved since March 1988.

The Government, through the city action teams and inner city task forces, are continuing to work with local government, the private and voluntary sectors and with local people to build on that success.

Land Reclamation

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans his Department has to promote the use of sewage sludge in land reclamation schemes.

Mr. Baldry: Full-scale experimental reclamation proposals have been carried out in recent years by several water companies in England and Wales. In addition the water research centre, in consultation with the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, has in hand the preparation of an advisory code of practice on the use of sewage sludge in land restoration.

Air Pollution

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans regularly to publish figures of the costs and benefits of measures to reduce air pollution.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has a substantial research programme on the effects of air pollution and the costs and benefits of possible approaches to the abatement of these. Results of research projects are published whenever appropriate.

British Waterways Board

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the reasons for the British Waterways Board's decision no longer to set targets for revenue from leisure, freight and estates for years after 1990-91 in his Department's annual report.

Mr. Baldry: Ministers set annual targets for a range of performance indicators agreed with the British Waterways Board (BWB). The previous set of performance indicators are being reviewed in the light of the board's move to regional management and the Government's endorsement of the integrated business strategy in February 1990. Income from leisure, freight and estates is incorporated in the figures for internally generated income in the table at figure 16 in the Department's 1991 annual report.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has received of income to British Waterways from the disposal of estates for the next four years.

Mr. Baldry: Estimates of income from all sources for the next four financial years will be provided in the British Waterways Board's (BWB) 1991 corporate plan. The plan is not published, but the Government's decisions about the Exchequer grant and borrowing limits for BWB in 1992-93 onwards, which will be announced in the autumn, will be based on its assessment of the board's projected income and expenditure. Income from disposal of assets is shown in the board's annual report and accounts.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent he took the state of the property market into account when determining revenue grant to British Waterways.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 1 March 1991]:* British Waterways Board grant settlements take account of all relevant factors.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all sites of special scientific interest associated with waterways administered by British Waterways.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 28 February 1991]:* This information is not available centrally, but the Nature Conservancy Council's memorandum to the Environment Select Committee in February 1989 gave details of some 110 km of 19 British Waterways Board waterways notified as sites of special scientific interest (the Fifth Report from the Environment Committee—Session 1988-89, Appendix 16 (HC 237)).

Sewage

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the locations of sea sewage outfalls in Cornwall; what are the quantities of treated and untreated sewage discharged at each location; and at what distance from the high water mark.

Mr. Baldry: Details of these discharges are available from the south-west regional office of the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those viruses which are not destroyed by primary treatment at a sewage treatment works; and the proportion of total viruses which are not destroyed by primary treatment.

Mr. Baldry: The report by Consultants in Environmental Sciences Ltd. into coastal sewage discharges indicates that primary treatment removes up to 50 per cent. of viruses. The report, which was commissioned by my Department, has been placed in the Library. Further discussion on this subject is contained in the Environment Select Committee's fourth report on pollution of beaches.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria are used by the Property Services Agency in selecting new office accommodation; and what factors influenced their decision to select accommodation in Newton Abbot rather than Torquay.

Mr. Yeo: The Property Services Agency now acts only as the agent of the Department which commission new office accommodation. In the case of a jointly occupied building, this will normally be the Department of the Environment, through its property holdings directorate.

The location of new office accommodation depends on the requirements of the occupying Departments. The proposed new building in Newton Abbott is intended to house three Departments, which each have a specific requirment to serve the Newton Abbott area.

Boat Owners

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement of the level of protection for residential boat owners.

Mr. Yeo: Residential boat owners are protected by the terms of their contracts, if any, with the owner of the mooring at which their boat is kept. Their protection may also be subject to local Acts and byelaws.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many residential boat owners, both licensed and unlicensed, moor their craft on waterways administered by the British Waterways Board.

Mr. Baldry: The British Waterways Board licensed 173 houseboats in 1989-90. No figures are available for unlicensed houseboats.

British Waterways Bill

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the British Waterways Bill.

Mr. Baldry: Since this Private Bill was deposited on 27 November last year, 56 letters have been received, most of which are of a circular nature. The representations largely concern the proposals for dealing with the control

of moorings and craft construction standards. Since the Bill's provisions are matters for the British Waterways Board, correspondents have been advised to pursue their concerns directly with them or through the appropriate Private Bill Office.

Benzene

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has on the levels of airborne benzene at various locations within the United Kingdom;

(2) what information he has on airborne benzene levels in countries other than the United Kingdom.

Mr. Baldry: The averages of hourly concentrations of benzene in air, measured in the Department's air quality research programme in 1982-83 were: 1·6 parts per billion (ppb) at a rural site, 2·7 ppb at a site by a busy motorway and 9·3 ppb by a major road in a city centre. The maximum hourly means measured at the three sites were 6 ppb, 12·7 ppb and 26·4 ppb respectively.

The levels found in the United Kingdom are consistent with measurements reported elsewhere. The United States Environmental Protection Agency report mean concentrations of 2·8 ppb in urban areas, 1·8 ppb in suburban areas and 0·16 ppb in remote rural areas. A mean concentration of 2·6 ppb has been reported for Sydney, Australia.

Petrol Pumps

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation to make vapour recovery petrol pumps mandatory at filling stations.

Mr. Baldry: Pollution from petrol vapour will be much reduced by the proposed EC car standards directive to come into force in 1992. The Government's White Paper on the Environment "This Common Inheritance" commits the Government to working with the vehicle and fuel industries to achieve further improvements. The European Commission is expected soon to bring forward proposals for reducing petrol vapour emissions along the marketing chain and we propose to review what further action is necessary in the United Kingdom in the light of these proposals.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning appeals there have been in each of the last five years; and what has been the cost of their administration.

Mr. Yeo: The information requested is set out in the table. The administrative costs column relates only to costs incurred in the planning inspectorate. Other costs are incurred elsewhere in the Department and planning authorities. Information on these is not readily available.

Year	*Appeals received*	*Appeals withdrawn*	*Appeals decided*	*Administrative costs £ million*
1985-86	17,839	2,143	14,130	5·405
1986-87	19,856	2,533	15,613	6·109
1987-88	22,482	3,173	18,474	6·981
1988-89	28,659	4,257	21,061	10·274
1989-90	32,281	4,627	26,481	11·414

Vacant Land

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses he has had to the consultation paper "Encouraging The Use of Vacant Public Sector Land"; and what steps have been taken to analyse the information received.

Mr. Yeo: We have received 111 responses and are being analysed in the context of our current consideration of policy options. I am arranging for a list of respondents to be placed in the Library shortly.

Planning Controls

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider strengthening planning controls and regulations on developers to include environmental concerns.

Mr. Yeo: Environmental concerns must already be taken into account by local planning authorities when determining any planning application in so far as they are material to that application. The Government's planning policy guidance emphasises the importance of such concerns, and identifies some of the matters which must, where relevant, be taken into account. The Government will continue to review that guidance, as promised in the Environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance" (Cm 1200).

The Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 require environmental assessment as part of the planning process for many development proposals which are likely to have significant environmental effects. These regulations implement directive 85/337/EEC for this purpose.

Environmental Impact Assessments

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to put environmental impact assessment on a statutory basis.

Mr. Yeo: The Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 (SI No. 1199) require environmental assessment for a wide range of projects where they are likely to have significant environmental effects. These regulations, and other statutory instruments made under the European Communities Act 1972, implement directive 85/337/EEC.

My noble Friend Lady Blatch has undertaken to consider the principle of an amendment to the Planning and Compensation Bill which would enable the Secretary of State to add to the categories of project which are subject to planning control and which require environmental assessment.

Land Register

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of additional acres which would be added to the register if all public and private land had to be shown on the register.

Mr. Yeo: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring only to unused and underused land.

A total of 82,400 acres of unused and underused land owned by the public sector in England was recorded as

being on the register at 30 September 1989. Since that date the register has been maintained only selectively, for the purpose of considering directions to dispose of such land.

No figure is available for the total amount of public and private unused and underused land. It is estimated at present that there are approximately 150,000 acres of vacant land in urban areas, but there is no basis for estimating the amount of such land outside urban areas or the amount of underused land in England as a whole which is not included in this figure.

Wild Birds

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to amend the Wildlife and Countryside Act, in order to prohibit the all-year killing of wild birds in Britain.

Mr. Baldry: The Act permits the killing at any time only of those species listed in part 2 of schedule 2. These species can cause widespread agricultural damage or threaten public health or air safety. The Act implements the objectives of the European Community directive on wild birds to which the Government are fully committed. We have urged the European Commission to propose an amendment to the directive which will establish that member states may operate sensible pest control practices where this would not endanger the conservation of the species.

Magpies

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has received concerning the impact of magpies on song bird populations;

(2) what assessment he has made of which particular song birds are most at risk from magpie predation.

Mr. Baldry: Population levels of magpies have been monitored by the British Trust for Ornithology under contract to the Nature Conservancy Council. The trust found a substantial increase in magpie numbers between 1966 and 1986 and no evidence that magpie numbers had any deleterious effect overall on song bird populations and breeding success in the areas studied.

Land Disposal

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will consult the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and other voluntary organisations concerning the drafting of amendments to the general authorisation issued under section 152 of the Water Act 1989 concerning the disposal of land in a national park, the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads, an area of outstanding natural beauty or a site of special scientific interest.

Mr. Baldry: Consultation is taking place with the Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council and they in turn will take full account of the views expressed to them by voluntary conservation bodies about the operation of the existing general authorisation.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will state the conservation, access and recreation criteria which are applied when entering into a covenant with a company holding an appointment under chapter 1 part II of the Water Act 1989 for the purposes set out in section 152(7) of that Act or directing the disposal to a specified person under section 152(5)(a) of that Act where the land has not been acquired compulsorily.

Mr. Baldry: In exercising his powers under section 152 the Secretary of State must fulfil the duties in relation to the environment and recreation placed on him by section 8 of the Act.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what minor transactions he intends to exclude from the conditions applied in the general authorisation issued under section 152 of the Water Act 1989 concerning the disposal of land, or interests or rights in or over that land, which is situated in a national park, the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads, an area of outstanding natural beauty or a site of special scientific interest.

Mr. Baldry: The review of the general authorisation is still in progress, and conclusions have not yet been reached.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to seek Parliament's approval for the text of any revision or alteration to the general authorisation issued under section 152 of the Water Act 1989 concerning the disposal of land in a national park, the Norfolk and Suffolk broads, an area of outstanding natural beauty or a site of special scientific interest.

Mr. Baldry: No. The Act does not require that.

Canal Towpaths

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to secure continued access to the towpaths of canals owned by the British Waterways Board for cyclists and pedestrians.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 1 March 1991]:* The Government's objectives for BWB require the board to promote the fullest practicable use of the waterways for leisure, recreation and amenity. The aim of the board's integrated business strategy, endorsed by Government, is to enhance the value of the network for the benefits of all users.

Water Contact Sports

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the National Rivers Authority regarding the introduction of appropriate water quality objectives for water contact sports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 1 March 1991]:* We have asked the National Rivers Authority to advise the Department about the establishment of the new system of statutory water quality objectives provided for under the Water Act 1989 and discussions on this are continuing. As part of the preparatory work for the new system, consideration is being given to the setting of appropriate standards for the range of uses for which waters are expected to be suitable. The needs of water contact sports will be taken into account in this process.

Jobs, Leeds

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment further to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *284*, if he will break down by sector *(a)* the 5,241 permanent jobs created in the Leeds development corporation area between June 1988 and March 1990 and *(b)* the expected 885 jobs in the year to 31 March.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 1 March 1991]:* A breakdown, by sector, of the permanent jobs created in the Leeds development corporation's area between designation in June 1988 and the end of March 1990 and in 1990-91 is not available. The Department does not require UDCs to collect information in this detail.

Single Homeless Initiative

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on *(a)* the number of properties on which short-term leases had been entered into, *(b)* the number of empty housing association properties that had been repaired and *(c)* the number of properties that had been purchased as at 31 December 1990 under the single homeless initiative announced by the Minister for Housing in June 1990; and how many single homeless people have been assisted as a result.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 27 February 1991]:* No transactions had been completed by December 31 1990, but for rough sleepers or those who would otherwise be sleeping rough, 70 private sector leasing places are now available, with a total of 500 expected by the end of March. The Housing Corporation has approved expenditure of £3·3 million to provide 220 places in repaired housing association properties; £7 million has been allocated to provide 200 places in purchased properties. These figures exclude the 586 extra places in direct access hostels approved for funding under the initiative.

Bathing Waters

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received a copy of the report on research conducted by Lancaster university's environmental epidemiology department at Blackpool; and whether he intends to consult with the North West Water Company, on action to be taken in respect of the sea off Blackpool.

Mr. Trippier: I have recently received a copy of the report on Lancaster university's research which complements similar studies by the Department over the past two years. The Department will continue to take a close interest in progress on North West Water's comprehensive improvements to bathing waters on the Fylde coast which should be completed as quickly as possible.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Incentive Expenditure

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to restore the level of regional incentive expenditure to that of 1979.

Mr. Leigh: We have no plans to make changes to regional industrial policy. The Government remain committed to an effective regional industrial policy and will continue to make the necessary resources available.

Engineering Trade Balance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the annual trade balance of the engineering sector in each year from 1979 to 1990; and what are the comparable figures for West Germany over the same years.

Mr. Leigh: The information is in the table. Figures for Germany for 1990 are not available.

£ billion

	United Kingdom crude trade balance[1] in engineering[2]			*Federal Republic of Germany's crude trade balance in engineering*		
	Exports to the world	*Imports from the world*	*Trade balance*	*Exports to the world*	*Imports from the world*	*Trade balance*
1979	9·8	7·4	+2·4	23·3	9·2	+14·1
1980	11·5	7·7	+3·7	22·8	9·9	+12·9
1981	11·9	8·9	+3·0	23·1	9·9	+13·2
1982	13·0	10·9	+2·1	26·7	11·1	+15·7
1983	12·9	13·3	−0·4	29·3	13·4	+15·9
1984	15·5	16·4	−0·9	33·4	16·1	+17·4
1985	18·0	18·4	−0·4	38·7	18·6	+20·1
1986	18·3	19·4	−1·1	48·1	22·8	+25·3
1987	20·2	22·3	−2·1	51·7	25·4	+26·3
1988	22·9	26·2	−3·3	52·1	26·8	+25·3
1989	26·7	30·4	−3·7	59·5	33·2	+26·3
1990	29·6	30·5	−0·9	[3]	[3]	[3]

[1] The crude trade balance is exports (FOB) less imports (CIF).
[2] SITC divisions 71 to 77.
[3] Not available.

Source: United Kingdom data from OTS.
Federal Republic of Germany data from OECD series C.

Property Identification

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether it is the policy of his Department to mark property with an indelible mark or similar means of identification.

Mr. Leigh: An exercise was undertaken in 1987 when some 3,000 items of equipment, ranging from computers, typewriters, video recorders and facsimile machines, had identification markings applied to them.

Since then, smaller, easily removable items of IT office equipment, such as telephones, portable PCs, and so on, have a marking applied to them.

In the context of IT and office equipment the issue of potential theft is under continuing review as part of our security policy.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1-7) and overall in the Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Leigh: The figures as at 28 February 1991 are:

Grade	*Number*	*Percentage*
(a) Women		
G1	Nil	—
G2	Nil	—
G3	4	7·5
G4	2	25·0
G5	29	14·0
G6	19	10·4
G7	116	12·9
All staff	5,795	44·6
(b) Ethnic minorities (from 87 per cent. response to survey)		
G1-4	Nil	—
G5	2	1·0
G6	5	2·7
G7	17	1·9
All staff	1,180	9·1

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Leigh: On those few occasions when the DTI recruits senior grades directly, the Department makes clear in its advertisements that it is an equal opportunity employer. Normally, however, the Civil Service Commission conducts recruitment to senior grades on the Department's behalf. The commission has taken a number of measures to aid recruitment of members of the ethnic minorities. It has, for example, increased representation of ethnic minorities in liaison and selection panels, and appointed an Asian woman as a part-time commissioner.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: A voluntary ethnic survey of DTI staff was completed in April 1988, and the resulting database is continuously updated. There is a current positive response rate of 87 per cent. As part of this Department's programme of action on race we intend, in 1991-92, to examine again the ethnic origin database to establish whether an improvement in the response rate is possible.

Instant Coffeee

Mr. Marlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's investigation into the instant coffee market in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redwood: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report into soluble coffee is currently being considered by the Secretary of State and will be published in due course. A copy of the report will be laid before Parliament in the normal way.

Indonesia

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the United Kingdom's main exports, in value, to Indonesia for the last 15 years.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 1 March 1991]:* For the years 1976-89 the information requested can be found in table V of the relevant edition of "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom" (Business Monitor MA20); 1990 figures are in table V of Business Monitor MM20 (December 1990). These publications are available in the House of Commons Library.

Export Controls

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what restrictions are placed on the type of goods available to be exported under the export credit guarantee scheme.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 1 March 1991]:* There are no specific types of goods for which ECGD credit insurance is restricted. However, all exports covered by ECGD must comply with the statutory requirements for export licensing and must also comply with other international agreements of which the United Kingdom is a signatory.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list countries which have had export controls and restrictions placed upon them since 1987.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 1 March 1991]:* Goods which are subject to export controls are listed in the Export of Goods (Control) Order, which specifies in Article 2 the destination to which goods are controlled. Since 1987 India and Pakistan have been added to article 2.

Radioactivity

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects the Radioactive Products (Safety) Regulations to enter into force.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 28 February 1991]:* We hope to make the Radioactive Products (Safety) Regulations in the late spring, to come into force by the end of the year.

Fire-retardant Mattresses

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what evidence he has on the extent to which fumes given off by fire-retardant mattresses if they catch fire are lethal.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 28 February 1991]:* My Department has no evidence that smoke and gas emissions from the ignition of fire-retardant mattresses are more injurious than those from burning mattresses with little or no fire protection.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has sought to obtain any evidence on the

extent of use of fire-retardant mattresses for young children and on the use of fire retardant and non-fire retardant bedding for young children.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 28 February 1991]:* No. Requirements for the fire protection of mattresses, and other nursery furniture, can be met without the use of fire-retardant treatments. There are no specific requirements relating to the fire resistance of bedclothes.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has sought to obtain any evidence of the toxicity in its other uses of the plasticiser used in fire-retardant mattresses.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 28 February 1991]:* No. A number of different plasticisers are used in the manufacture of mattresses which have PVC covers. The chief medical officer's expert group is examining whether current plasticisers are entirely appropriate for use in cot mattresses. The findings of the expert group will be published as soon as possible and the implications, if any, for mattresses and other products will then be considered.

Drinks Cans

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has had with *(a)* the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents *(b)* beverage manufacturers and *(c)* container suppliers about the use of opening mechanisms of cans of drinks which involve part of the opener entering the can and coming into contact with the contents.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 27 February 1991]:* None. My officials regularly meet ROSPA and the enforcement authorities and I am not aware of difficulties giving rise to the need for a meeting with ROSPA or the industry on this matter.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to prohibit the use of opening mechanisms of cans of drinks which involve part of the opener entering the can and coming into contact with the contents.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 27 February 1991]:* I have no such plans.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what moves are being taken within the European Community to prevent the use of opening mechanisms of cans of drinks which involve part of the opener entering the can and coming into contact with the contents; and what information he has on the current policy of other European Governments on this matter.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 27 February 1991]:* I am not aware of any proposals within the European Community to prevent the use of such opening mechanisms. The policy of other European Governments on this matter is not known.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has concerning the number of accidents which have arisen, in the latest year for which figures are available, as a result of the swallowing of any parts of opening mechanisms of cans of drinks which involve part of the opener entering the can.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 27 February 1991]:* No accidents of that type were recorded by my Department's home accident surveillance system for 1988, which is the latest year for which complete information is available.

EC Grants

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list those EC countries that apply additionality conditions to EC grants and payments; and if he will provide details of the conditions that are imposed in each country.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 26 February 1991]:* The terms of Community grants are set out in Community legislation.

SCOTLAND

Local Government Finance

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland is he will list for each regional council in Scotland his estimate of the turnover of the community charge register, expressed as a percentage, *(a)* that took place in 1989-90 and *(b)* that is expected during the current financial year; and what are the equivalent Scottish wide figures.

Mr. Allan Stewart: This information is not held centrally, but the recent report prepared by the Controller of Audit suggests that changes to the register in 1989-90 were equivalent to an annual average of 50 per cent. of total register entries.

Land Grants

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the amounts *(a)* applied for and *(b)* received by the Scottish Office from the European Community for land grants relating to industrial regional aid and the amounts paid to Scottish applicants for land grants for each year since 1975.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the conference prodeedings on proposals for the disposal of radioactive waste in the Highland region by Nirex, held on 28 November in Inverness.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office Environment Department is obtaining a copy of the proceedings of the conference, which was organised by Highland regional council.

Community Charge

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are currently registered as community charge payers in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: As at 1 July 1990 3,834,410 people were included in the community charge registers in Scotland. This figure includes students, who are liable for only 20 per cent. of the community charge, but excludes those liable for collective or standard charges.

Volunteer Fire Brigades

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is satisfied with the level of fire cover provided by volunteer fire brigades in Scotland, in the light of the need to implement regulations relating to health and safety and hazardous substances.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is for fire authorities to satisfy themselves on the level of fire cover, whether this cover is provided by volunteer, retained or whole-time firefighters, taking into account relevant legislation and regulations.

New Towns

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether tenants of existing new town housing authorities will be given the option of choosing public sector landlords when the new town administrations are wound up.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The options for new town tenants remain unchanged from those set out in the White Paper "The Scottish New Towns: The Way Ahead" (Command 711), which states:

"The position in each new town will be carefully considered once an order for dissolution has been made, and formal consultations will be held with development corporations, district councils and representative tenant groups to review the position and to determine to what extent transfers might take place, be it to housing associations, co-operatives, district councils, private or other landlords. Those tenants who have not transferred to other landlords will be transferred to Scottish Homes at wind-up, with a view to pursuing further diversification with the small residual number of houses."

Water Quality

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list each of the water supplies in Scotland which have been issued with a relaxation under regulation 4(1)(c) of the Water Supply (Water Quality) (Scotland) Regulations 1990 in respect of aluminium, the size of the population served, the mean concentration of aluminium recorded, and which of these have aluminium in excess of the EC standard for each of the individual water supplies;

(2) if he will give a breakdown of those water supplies with aluminium in excess of the EC standards which have been granted a relaxation under regulation 4(1)(c) of the Water Supply (Water Quality) (Scotland) Regulations 1990 which have excess aluminium as a result of the naturally occurring aluminium.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Relaxations under regulation 4(1)(c) have been authorised in respect of aluminium in the supply zones listed in the table. The population and the authorised maximum concentration of aluminium in each case are shown. Data on mean concentrations for individual supplies are not held centrally. The EC standard is the same as that set in the regulations (200 micrograms per litre). All these relaxations relate to naturally occurring aluminium.

	Population	*Authorised maximum value micrograms per litre*
Dumfries and Galloway		
Black Esk	27,867	250
Lochinvar	12,863	250
Penwhirn	10,391	230
Carsphairn	153	300
New Abbey	1,458	600
Wanlockhead	128	300
Palnure	191	400
Grampian		
Inverurie—Newbigging (until 1995)	2,131	300
Strathdon	100	500
Highland		
Ardvasar/Dariach	60	800
Balmacara	260	340
Beauly Firth	5,250	290
Carbost	240	770
Dornie	260	230
Drumbeg	70	630
Durness	220	250
Glendale	260	600
Kentallen	250	710
Kilchoan	200	310
Kilmaluag	150	340
Kilmuir	210	650
Kinlochbervie	380	300
Laid	100	220
Mellon Udrigle	100	660
Melness	100	340
Nedd	30	670
Onich	450	1,140
Penifiler	30	650
Poolewe	200	310
Portree	2,670	710
Raasay	160	680
Scourie	180	230
Shieldaig	100	610
Spean Bridge	450	830
Spey Valley—Blackpark	7,640	270
Strontian	340	440
Uig/Idrigill	160	590
Strathclyde		
Brodick (until 2000)	900	370
Catacol (until 1997)	93	240
Kilmory/Sliddery (until 1998)	420	320
Lochranza (until 2000)	300	310
Pirnmill (until 1997)	50	220
Loch Gair (until 1996)	130	210
Portnahaven (until 1991)	180	470
Nerebolls (until 1991)	30	470
Graighouse (until 1999)	150	280
Ross of Mull (until 1994)	135	570
Kilberry (until 1999)	40	240
Arinagour (until 1997)	50	280
Iona (until 1995)	150	320
Mulindry (until 1994)	25	740

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what are the criteria applied in deciding the duration of the relaxations under regulation 4(1)(c) of the Water Supply (Water Quality) (Scotland) Regulations 1990 in respect of individual water supplies; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what are the criteria applied in deciding which water supplies are subject to relaxations under regulation 4(1)(c) of the Water Supply (Water Quality) (Scotland) Regulations 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Relaxations under regulation 4(1)(c) can be authorised only in respect of substances or parameters arising from the nature and structure of the ground in the area from which the supply emanates. They cannot be authorised for toxic substances or microbiological parameters and must not give rise to a public health hazard. An authorisation can be modified or revoked at any time, without notice if that is necessary in the interests of public health.

The regulations do not require any limit of duration to be specified in the authorisation of a relaxation under regulation 4(1)(c). Where a time limit is stated it is the date by which the water authority expects to make improvements, so that the supply will meet the standards, and beyond which the relaxation will not be needed.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will release details of the latest updated list of water supplies which have been granted relaxations under regulation 4(1)(c) of the Water Supply (Water Quality) (Scotland) Regulations 1990 in respect of aluminium; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Current relaxations are listed in my answer to an earlier question today. Water authorities are required by the regulations to maintain a public record containing information on the quality of water in each of their supply zones, including particulars of any relaxations granted. They are also required to publish similar information in an annual report to be issued by 30 June each year. The first such reports, covering the part-year 1 July to 31 December 1990, are due by 30 June 1991.

Training Costs

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average cost per trainee week for *(a)* employment training and *(b)* youth training negotiated in the past year between the Training Agency and each of the local enterprise companies.

Mr. Allan Stewart: There are no such negotiations between the Training Agency and local enterprise companies.

Departmental Policies (Environmental Implications)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what actions have been taken since the appointment of a Minister in his Department to consider the environmental implications of his Department's policies; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 March 1991]:* As the responsible Minister I have set up a new framework for co-ordinating and monitoring Scottish action on the various policy commitments in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance" which was published in September. From the turn of the year the Scottish Development Department was renamed the Scottish Office Environment Department and will take the lead in following up the White Paper.

Legislation was introduced earlier this Session to merge the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland and the Countryside Commission for Scotland to form Scottish Natural Heritage from 1 April 1992. I have increased the funding available to voluntary bodies for environmental activities and commissioned a major survey of attitudes in Scotland to the environment. New guidance has been issued on the design and location of rural housing.

Various measures are being taken to improve Scottish Office housekeeping, including steps to meet energy efficiency targets and to make greater use of recycled products.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table which shows the number of *(a)* sites of special scientific interest in Scotland which were originally notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, *(b)* sites which have been renotified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, *(c)* sites awaiting renotification under the 1981 Act, *(d)* sites whose original boundary was altered when renotified under the 1981 Act and *(e)* original sites which the Nature Conservancy Council has denotified or does not intend to renotify.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 February 1991]:* The information is shown in the table.

Sites of special scientific interest

	Number of sites
Sites originally notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949	905
Sites which have been renotified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	704
Sites awaiting renotification under the 1981 Act	21
Sites where the boundary was extended on renotification under the 1981 Act	254
Original sites which the Nature Conservancy Council has denotified or does not intend to renotify	110

The figure of sites originally notified under the 1949 Act has been adjusted to take account of subsequent amalgamations and divisions. Information is not available for sites where the boundaries were altered because of partial deletions on renotification.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Slaughterhouses

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what basis European Community veterinary inspectors decide which slaughterhouses they will visit when they make their routine checks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Decisions are taken by the European Community Commission. Selection is random, but practical considerations generally result in visits being made to particular geographical areas. The Commission aims to have inspected all existing approved plants at least once by the end of 1992.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when European Community veterinary inspectors will next visit the United Kingdom; whether he will name the slaughterhouses chosen for such a visit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: European Community veterinary inspectors will visit slaughterhouses in England on 11-22 March and in Scotland on 8-19 April. They intend visiting the following slaughterhouses in England:

EWS 17, 24, 30, 41, 51, and 108.

The visits planned for Scotland are a matter for the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Further visits are planned to slaughterhouses in England and Northern Ireland in June and July, but itineraries have yet to be finalised.

Wood Pigeons

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies have been carried out into the impact of shooting wood pigeons as against scare methods as a means of reducing agricultural damage.

Mr. Gummer: Research carried out by my Department has shown that scaring regimes to protect crops against wood pigeon damage are most effective when combined with shooting.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies he has carried out into the agricultural damage caused by wood pigeons in the United Kingdom; and what have been the results.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 21 November to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), *Official Report*, column *135*, and the consequent placing of relevant research in the Library.

Soft Fruit

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimates he has of the possible effects on the raspberry industry in particular, and the soft fruit industry in general, of the ending of minimum import prices; and if he will assist these industries by continuing the minimum import price system until the end of the fruit season.

Mr. Curry: There is a place for semi-processed soft fruit from eastern Europe in the United Kingdom market to complement the home-grown product provided that it is marketed in an orderly manner. Minimum import prices MIPs were introduced by the EC Commission in July 1990 at the request of the United Kingdom Government because east European imports were causing market disruption. We have made it clear that our preferred solution is voluntary price agreements and that the EC Commission should seek to conclude these before the MIPs expire on 31 March. If that is not possible, we will seek the extension of the MIP arrangements to cover the beginning of the 1991 soft fruit season. I shall emphasise this at the Council of Ministers next week.

Foxes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fox destruction societies or clubs are registered with his Department in England; and what level of financial assistance they currently receive.

Mr. Maclean: No such groups are registered in England.

Intervention Storage

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), *Official Report*, 6 February, column *198*, if he will make it his practice to continue to publish figures on the tonnage and value of foodstuffs in intervention storage in response to questions from hon. Members.

Mr. Curry: Tables showing EC and United Kingdom intervention stock levels are deposited in the Library of the House each month. We are willing to supply other information in relation to intervention stocks as long as the cost of providing it is not disproportionate.

Coccidiostat

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce regulations requiring poultry treated with coccidiostat to be labelled as such.

Mr. Maclean: I have asked the food advisory committee in its general review of food labelling to consider whether treatments to living animals should be indicated on food labels. The committee's report on its review will be published shortly and I shall be consulting interested parties on its recommendations before reaching my conclusions.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of confirmed cases of BSE reported from *(a)* livestock markets and *(b)* slaughterhouses in England and Wales in the last six months of 1990.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 22 January 1991]:* Following is the information:

	Confirmed cases
(a) Livestock markets	60
(b) Slaughterhouses	51

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security Agencies

16. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the two new social security agencies are expected to come fully into operation.

Miss Widdecombe: The social security benefits agency and the contributions agency are due to be established in April 1991. We will make a further announcement about this in due course.

Pensioners

17. **Mr. Wilkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners have some form of second income in addition to the basic state pension.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant).

24. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current value of the assets held by the average pensioner household; and what was the comparable position in real terms in 1978-79.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier to the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet).

National Insurance

18. **Sir Marcus Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many individuals would be affected by the removal of the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions.

Mr. Jack: If the upper earnings limit for employees' national insurance contributions were removed it is currently estimated that about 3·3 million people would pay more in contributions. If the corresponding upper profits limit for self-employed people were also removed it is estimated that about another 0·6 million people would pay more in contributions.

27. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the total cost to business would be if national insurance contributions were levied at 5 per cent. on all employees with earnings below the national insurance threshold.

Mr. Jack: On the limited information available, we estimate the cost to employers at around £200 million a year in national insurance contributions. In addition, employers would bear substantial administrative costs arising from the extra record keeping involved.

Single Mothers

19. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the policy towards single parent mothers of small children who by working lose benefit.

Mr. Jack: The social security system already has several provisions which help lone parents benefit from working, where they wish to do so. The White Paper "Children Come First" contains proposals which will further improve the ability of lone parents to combine work with the responsibility of caring for their children and thus to be better off.

Unemployment Benefit

20. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to revise the 26-week rule depriving homeless unemployed people of benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to the rule under which budgeting loans do not become available until a claimant has been on income support for 26 weeks. The purpose of this rule is to target social fund money on people who have been out of work for some time and who are therefore likely to be in greatest need. Crisis loans are available if there is an emergency or serious risk to health or safety.

We have no plans to change this rule.

Computerisation

22. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what evidence he has of improvements in the speed of service offered by social security offices as a result of the computerisation of the benefit system.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department's strategy for the computerisation of the social security payment system will be completed on time in July 1991. One of the aims of the strategy is to reduce the time taken to process benefit claims.

The latest available information indicates that the national clearance time for new and repeat claims for income support stands at around 4·7 days, compared with 6·2 days relating to the period immediately prior to computerisation. The clearance time for claims to retirement pension averages 22·7 days compared with 28·2 days before computerisation.

General benefit inquiries are also being dealt with more efficiently, as local office staff are now able to quickly access an individual's details, via the computer terminal, rather than having to search for the appropriate clerical record.

Family Credit

23. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest figure for the number of families benefiting from family credit; and what was the number of benefiting from the predecessor scheme in 1978-79.

Mr. Jack: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos).

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families in *(a)* west Leeds, *(b)* Leeds, *(c)* West Yorkshire and *(d)* England are in receipt of family credit; and what proportion these families represent of those estimated to be entitled to this benefit.

Mr. Jack: The only figures available for Leeds, west Leeds and West Yorkshire are for the number of families actually in receipt of family credit on a particular day. They do not include those who had claimed by that date but whose claim had not yet been decided. On 8 February 1991, the latest date for which these figures are available, the number of families who, at the date of their award, were living in the places listed, were as follows:

	Number
(a) West Leeds	[1]3,005
(b) Leeds	[2]4,826
(c) West Yorkshire	[3]16,557

[1] The total in the area covered by the Leeds west, Leeds north west and Leeds north local social security offices.

[2] The total in the area covered by all the local social security offices in Leeds.

[3] The total in the area covered by all the local social security offices in West Yorkshire.

For England as a whole, a true caseload figure is available which includes awards covering the given date but not made till later. At 31 July 1990, the latest date for which this figure is available, the caseload for England was 264,000.

Information about the total number of families eligible for family credit can be obtained only for Great Britain as a whole, and only retrospectively, from family expenditure survey data.

Disability Working Allowance

26. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the number of disabled people who will be able more easily to work as a result of the introduction of the new disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: Disability working allowance is an entirely new addition to social security to meet the needs of disabled people who want to work but have limited capacity. We expect that once DWA is established about 50,000 people at any one time will take the new opportunity offered by this benefit.

Management Consultants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the projects *(a)* undertaken in the year to April 1990 and *(b)* proposed but not yet operational by management consultants giving, in each case, its title, author, completion date and whether the document is available.

Miss Widdecombe: Details of the projects in the year 1989-90 and proposed but not yet operational projects are shown in the table. As stated in my reply to the hon. Member's earlier question on 21 February 1991 at col *269*, consultancy reports are usually internal working documents and are not publicly available. The exception in the 1989-90 project list is the Arthur Young assignment which contributed to the efficiency scrutiny on fraud. As this was considered to be of wider interest, a copy of the scrutiny report was placed in the Library.

Consultancy firm	*Subject of the Assignment*	*Assignment completed*
Andersen Consulting	Contributions Unit (Agency) Project	Continuing
Andersen Consulting	Director of Social Security's Central Unit (DSSO/CU)	August 1989
Andersen Consulting	Agency Planning for the Information Technology Services Directorate (ITSD)	March 1990
Andersen Consulting	Agency Implementation for ITSA	March 1990
Andersen Consulting	Senior Management Information Systems	November 1989
Andersen Consulting	Executive Reporting System for the Board of Benefits Agency	January 1990
Applied Learning	Establishment of an Open Learning Centre for ITSD	September 1989
Arthur Allwright Associates	DPSD Purchasing Consultancy	Continuing
Arthur Young	Efficiency Scrutiny of Fraud: Consultancy support	April 1989
Arthur Young	Integrated Complementing System	March 1990
BDO Binder Hamlyn	Central Accounting System Study	March 1990
CAS Marketing Services	DPSD Purchasing Consultancy (Engagement of New Director)	April 1990
Cavendish Tricorne	Local Pay Addition Hazard	September 1989
Cavendish Tricorne	Overbearing Model	September 1989
Cavendish Tricorne	Local Pay Addition Model	September 1989
Cavendish Tricorne	Secondment on various projects	September 1989
Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency	Departmental Information Systems Strategy—Scoping Study	February 1990
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Social Security Agency Study: Future work	August 1990
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Senior Management Structure—Organisational Analysis and Design	March 1990
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Purchasing Information System	November 1990
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Property Consultancy for HQ Relocation	November 1990
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Benefit Agency Implementation Team—Development of Project Timetable, Critical Path and Monitoring	March 1990
D. Chiplett	Review of Computer Security	October 1989
Dun and Bradstreet	DPSD Ad Hoc Purchasing Consultancies	Continuing
Easymove	Provision of Advice on Information Guides for Staff	February 1991
Enator	Integrated Complementing System	October 1989
Ernst and Young	Lone Parenthood Consultancy	July 1990
Ernst and Young	Departmental Debt Scrutiny	December 1989
Ernst and Young	Integrated Complementing System	Continuing
Handley Walker	Post Office Counters—Fee Negotiation	April 1990
King's Fund College	Director of Social Security's Central Unit (DSSO/CU)	April 1990
Kingsley Lord	Social Security Policy Group Consultancy	December 1989
Korn Ferry International	Benefits Agency Chief Executive—Consultancy to Assist Selection	March 1990
Lloyd Northover	Corporate Image and House Style for DSS Property	Continuing
Logica UK Ltd.	Integrated Monitoring System	September 1989
M. Pickett	Accommodation Policy	October 1989
Modulus	Consultancy Support for the Staff Suggestions Working Party	November 1989
MORI Human Resource Research	Headquarters Relocation Preference Exercise	August 1990
Nationwide Anglia Relocation	General Relocation Services for Staff	Continuing
Neville R. Way	Purchasing and Contracting Procedures	March 1990
PA Consulting Group	Review of Management Formula	Continuing
PA Consulting Group	Enhancement of the MMD—BMD Data Base at Nottingham Staff Resource Unit	March 1990
PA Consulting Group	Pay Flexibilities for the Benefit Agency	May 1990
PA Consulting Group	Review of Central Office Management	Continuing
PA Consulting Group	Pay Arrangements for ITSA	May 1990

Consultancy firm	Subject of the Assignment	Assignment completed
PA Consulting Group	Reward Arrangements for the Benefit Agency	May 1990
Peat Marwick McLintock	Centralised Receipts Collection System	February 1990
Peat Marwick McLintock	Efficiency Scrutiny of Management of the Departmental Debt—Consultancy Support	December 1989
P-E Inbucon	Survey of Local Authorities (Preparations for Community Charge Benefit)	February 1990
Price Waterhouse	Administrative Resource Management System	Continuing
Price Waterhouse	Integrated Complementing System	March 1990
Price Waterhouse	Future Career Development for Staff within ITSD/ITSA	March 1990
Price Waterhouse	Forecasting Social Security Expenditure	August 1989
Price Waterhouse	Financial Planning and Control	May 1989
Price Waterhouse	Performance Measurements for ITSA and CU	February 1990
Professor Geoffrey Woodroofe	DPSD Purchasing Consultancy (Post Office Counters Fee)	January 1990
Purchasing and Supply Consultants	DPSD Ad Hoc Purchasing Consultancies	April 1990
Sema Group	Consultancy Support for Integrated Complementing System Project	November 1989
Simmons Relocation Services	Advice on Relocation Package	July 1989
The McNeil Robertson Partnership	Departmental Personnel Management (DPM) Survey	June 1989
Touche Ross	Administrative Resource Management System (Phase 1)	September 1989
Touche Ross	Integrated Complementing System	May 1990
Touche Ross	Finance Information Strategy	January 1990
Touche Ross	Benefit Agency Implementing Work (MIS and Finance)	November 1990
Touche Ross	Monitoring the Camberwell Replacement Scheme	October 1990
Touche Ross	Patterns of Business Study	February 1990
Touche Ross	Administrative Resource Management System (Phase 2)	October 1990

Projects Proposed

Monitoring the Management of Change
Team Building and Communications for the Benefit Agency Management Team
Project Management Software Selection
Yield Measurement on Liable Relative Cases

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many claims for attendance allowance under the terminal illness rules have been received by his Department since the new rules came into force; what is the average number of days between day of claim and the date of the decision for such claims; what are the shortest and longest clearance times to date; and what is the average clearance time for reviews;

(2) what is the success rate for *(a)* initial claims and *(b)* reviews of claims for attendance allowance under the terminal illness rules; and if he will list the numbers of refusals by grounds for refusal.

Mr. Scott: Such information as is available is in the table.

Attendance allowance: claims and reviews under the special rules for terminal illness

	Number and Estimate
Number of claims decided (to end January 1991)	20,200
Estimated average time from claim to decision	10·5 days
Estimated success rate of claims	95 per cent.
Estimated average clearance time for reviews	3·8 weeks
Estimated success rate of reviews[1]	77 per cent.

[1] In a significant number of cases, where the review was not successful under the special rules, the review was changed to one under the normal rules.

Absent Parents

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the details of how the right of appeal will apply in cases where 20 per cent. of the income support personal allowance is deducted from caring parents on income support or family credit who do not provide information for pursuit of maintenance from absent parents.

Mr. Jack: As part of the Government's proposals for reforming the system of child maintenance, the Child Support Bill, introduced on 14 February in another place, provides for a reduction in the income support personal allowance of caring parents on income support or family credit who, without good cause, fail to provide information which will allow maintenance to be recovered from an absent parent. The White Paper "Children Come First" proposed that the reduction should be up to 20 per cent. of the adult income support allowance. In cases to which this reduction applies, the decision will be taken by an adjudication officer on the basis of an opinion from the Secretary of State together with any representations from the person concerned. As with other such decisions, there will be the right of appeal to a social security appeal tribunal and thereafter, on a point of law, to the social security commissioner.

Child Support

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he will take to ensure that child support agency staff are fully trained and can offer an adequate counselling service.

Mr. Jack: Staff in the agency will be properly trained in recognition of the sensitive nature of their work. They will also be able to help those lone parents who wish to work to do so by advising them on "in work" benefits and identifying the practical help available from various sources such as employment training, jobcentres, job clubs, and so on. Training will focus on measures to

provide a good quality service to the public including, among other things how to deal sensitively and sympathetically with people who may be under stress. Staff will be responsible for ensuring that the caring parent understands the range of services that the agency can provide.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the proposed changes to child maintenance will incorporate an additional element when calculations of maintenance levels are being arrived at for children with disabilities.

Mr. Jack: The White Paper "Children Come First" invited comments on whether the maintenance required should be increased for a child who is disabled. The Government are considering the differing comments received.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many responses he has received to the White Paper "Children Come First"; and if he will publish a digest of them, together with the Government response.

Mr. Jack: So far, some 250 submissions from organisations and individuals have been received. The Government have no plans to publish a digest and response. A number of the organisations which commented have already published their responses and in a number of cases individuals commented drawing on their own personal experience. We have considered all the comments received and there will be an opportunity to discuss the issues during debates on the Child Support Bill and the detailed regulations.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy in future legislation on maintenance enforcement to replace the White Paper terms "caring parent" and "absent parent" with "resident parent" and "contact parent", respectively.

Mr. Jack: We received comments on terminology in a small number of responses to the White Paper "Children Come First" and have given thorough consideration to the most appropriate and readily comprehensible phrases to describe the parties involved in a maintenance award. In the Child Support Bill, introduced in another place on 14 February, "caring parent" has been replaced by "person with care". This reflects the fact that a person responsible for the day-to-day care of a child is not necessarily the child's natural or adoptive parent. We do not think that the proposed terms are appropriate, because the responsibility to pay maintenance is wholly independent of whether the parent has any contact with the child.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what mechanism there will be to ensure that the proposed new Child Support Agency will not reduce the income of individuals or families to below the income support level when enforcing maintenance payment; and if he will make a statement on the recommendation of the Social Security Advisory Committee to reconsider the proposal in the White Paper "Children Come First" to impose a penalty of over £7 a week reduction in benefit for lone parents who refuse to name the liable parent.

Mr. Jack: The Child Support Bill sets out the method of calculation of the amount of maintenance due to be paid for a child or children. It makes provision for a protected level of income after the payment of maintenance based on income support levels.

The Bill also makes provision requiring a caring parent who claims income support or family credit to co-operate as far as possible in obtaining maintenance. Where there is no good reason for a failure to do so a reduction may be made in the amount of benefit paid. We have considered very carefully all the comments received on this issue, including those of the Social Security Advisory Committee. We remain convinced that it is right in principle to expect both parents to do as much as they reasonably can to ensure the payment of proper amounts of maintenance for their children. It would, however, clearly not be right to define criteria for this purpose which would mean that the making of a threat of violence would automatically absolve an absent parent from liability being pursued.

Domestic Violence

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to ensure that there is no expectation upon women escaping violent partners to name fathers of their children at liable relatives interviews.

Mr. Jack: Our policy is that caring parents who are in receipt of benefit should be expected to co-operate in obtaining maintenance for their children unless they can show good cause for refusing to do so. It would, however, clearly not be right to define criteria for this purpose which would mean that the making of a threat of violence would automatically absolve an absent parent from liability being pursued.

Maintenance Payments

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a list of the situations where the proposal to deduct 20 per cent. of the income support personal allowance from caring parents on income support or family credit who do not provide information to allow pursuit for maintenance from absent parents, would not be applied.

Mr. Jack: The White Paper "Children Come First" quoted rape and incest as circumstances which might constitute good cause for a caring parent claiming income support or family credit not to co-operate in seeking maintenance from the absent parent. We are still considering carefully all the comments we have received on this proposal, and whether it is in the interests of the children to publish a list. Regulations will prescribe the circumstances in which a benefit reduction will not apply in as much detail as possible.

Income-related Benefits

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the basis on which income-related benefit levels are set.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 2.1 to 2.5 of the memorandum on benefit levels and a minimum income, dated 18 October 1989, and submitted to the House of Commons Social Services Committee. A copy of the complete memorandum is in the Library.

Departmental Relocation

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many jobs have been created outside London by his Department over the last two years.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department has taken a number of positive steps to move work away from London. For example, we are transferring benefits processing work away from 21 London offices to new social security centres in Glasgow, Belfast and Makerfield employing some 1,400 staff.

In addition, new agencies such as the Information and Technology Services Agency are based primarily away from London, and the new Benefits Agency headquarters will be moving to Leeds from June 1992 with the transfer of nearly 500 London-based posts.

Pensioners' Income

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of the average pensioner's income comes from occupational pensions, savings and earnings.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington).

Mr. Ridley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of those over retirement age have additional income over and above their national insurance pension; and what has been the percentage increase, in real terms, of the total income of the average pensioner over the period 1979 to 1990.

Miss Widdecombe: Eighty-four per cent. of pensioners have some form of income in addition to their state retirement pension and other social security benefits. The average pensioner's income increased in real terms by 31 per cent. between 1979 and 1987, the last year for which figures are presently available.

Benefits Agency

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he would list the subject areas in social security which after the creation of the Social Security Benefits Agency will receive a reply which is *(a)* printed in *Hansard* and *(b)* only placed in the Library.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to him on 21 February at col. *272-73*. The precise matters to be delegated to the chief executive will be set out in the framework document when the Benefits Agency is established.

Residential and Nursing Homes

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) of 26 February, *Official Report*, columns *466-67*, whether he will recommission Price Waterhouse to survey the running costs of private residential and nursing homes using the chief social services inspector's recommendations in "Inspecting for Quality Guidance on Practice for Inspection Units in Social Services Departments and Other Agencies."

Miss Widdecombe: We have no current plans to do so.

Research Projects

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answers to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) of 25 February, *Official Report*, columns *401-404*, if he will indicate which of the projects listed *(a)* is to be published and *(b)* when.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 20 November 1990 at column *108*.

Claimants, Leeds

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will show for (1) Leeds, West and (2) Leeds metropolitan district council area the number of applicants for and awards of *(a)* community care grants, *(b)* budgeting loans and *(c)* crisis loans and (i) the amounts awarded, (ii) the percentage refused and (iii) the average award.

Mr. Scott: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as is available as soon as possible.

Pensions

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is taking to assist persons on low incomes to enhance their pension levels.

Miss Widdecombe: Appropriate personal pensions were introduced in 1988 to give people the chance of contracting-out of the state earnings-related pension scheme and investing that money in their own pension arrangement. They have been further assisted in building up their pension by the extra 2 per cent. incentive which is payable for the five years from 1988 to 1993.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 5 March 1991

HOME DEPARTMENT

Court of Appeal

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases were referred back to the Court of Appeal criminal division in each of the last two years under section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968.

Mr. John Patten: The information is as follows:

References to the court of appeal under section 17(1)(a) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968

(a) In respect of conviction

Year	Number of cases referred	Number of defendants involved	Appeals allowed	Appeals dismissed
1989	3	6	3	—
1990	7[1]	18	—	—

[1]Seven cases still awaiting determination.

(b) In respect of sentence

Year	Number of cases referred	Number of defendants involved	Appeals allowed	Appeals dismissed
1989	7	7	6	1
1990	3[1]	3	1	—

[1] Two cases still awaiting determination.

Pardons

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many pardons were granted in each of the last two years to persons convicted after a trial on indictment.

Mr. John Patten: None.

Kiranjit Ahluwalia

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received regarding the conviction of Kiranjit Ahluwalia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Fifty-nine representations have been received about the conviction of Kiranjit Ahluwalia. We have considered these very carefully but have concluded that they do not provide any information that would justify the intervention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in this case. The normal procedures for the review of life sentence prisoners will continue to apply.

Trevi Group

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what meetings of the Trevi group are scheduled for the rest of this year; on which dates they will occur; and what will be the venue.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I shall attend the Trevi Ministers' meeting in Luxembourg on 14 June and the one to be held during the Dutch Presidency in the latter half of this year. A number of meetings of officials take place under each Presidency, normally in the capital of the member state concerned.

Child Abduction Act 1984

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been charged under the Child Abduction Act 1984; how many persons have been convicted by the courts; and what sentences were passed in each case.

Mr. John Patten: Information on the number of people charged is not collected centrally.

The data given in the table relates to the number of persons prosecuted and found guilty for offences under the Child Abduction Act 1984. This information is published annually in volumes 1 and 2 of the Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, supplementary tables, copies of which are available in the Library.

Persons proceeded against and found guilty of child abduction under the Child Abduction Act 1984[1] by result 1985 to 1989 England and Wales

Year	Total prosecuted	Total found guilty	Total sentenced	Absolute or conditional discharge	Hospital orders	Fine	Probation order	Supervision order	Community service order	Fully suspended sentence	Immediate custody	Otherwise dealt with
1985	38	22	22	2	3	1	2	—	1	3	9	1
1986	56	28	28	4	1	2	6	—	—	3	11	1
1987	52	35	35	6	1	5	5	—	1	1	16	2
1988	56	27	27	3	—	1	10	—	—	4	8	1
1989	67	42	42	7	—	2	10	2	—	5	10	6

[1] The Act came into force in October 1984 but court data was not collected until January 1985.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1-7) and overall in the Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The latest available figures show that 117 staff in grades 1 to 7 and their equivalent are women: this represents almost 14 per cent. In the unified grades 11 per cent. of staff at grade 3, 24 per cent. at grade 5, 8 per cent. at grade 6 and 23 per cent. at grade 7 are women.

As to ethnic origin, for which information is derived from voluntary surveys, 36 members of staff in grades 1 to 7 and their equivalent described themselves as of ethnic minority origin: this represents some 4 per cent. of respondents in these grades.

In the Home Office as a whole, 24 per cent. of staff are women and almost 5 per cent. of respondents to voluntary surveys described themselves as of ethnic minority origin.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at the Home Office.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Most senior posts are filled internally and the most important factor in increasing the number of ethnic minority staff in those posts will be their advancement over time through the promotion system. Considerable importance is attached to ensuring that they have every opportunity to do so. Recruitment direct to senior grades is generally conducted by the Civil Service Commission, and is always on the basis of fair and open competition. Advertisements make clear that the civil service is an equal opportunities employer.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: All non-industrial staff in the Home Office were asked to state their ethnic origin in voluntary surveys conducted between 1983 and 1986. A further questionnaire was sent in 1988 to those who had not previously responded. Consideration is now being given to ways in which the response rate for surveys can be increased, and measures are being taken to obtain survey data for industrial staff. People seeking posts in the Department are asked to state their ethnic origin when making their applications.

Community Charge

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have now received court summonses over failure to pay the poll tax, and, of these, how many are income support claimants; how many liability orders have been issued by the courts and, of these, how many applied to income support claimants; what estimates he makes for these totals over the current three months; and if he will give a geographical breakdown by area or by court.

Mr. John Patten: Information about the number of summonses and liability orders in the period 1 April to 31 December 1990 is available in the Library; comparable information for the period 1 January to 31 March 1991 will be placed in the Library within six weeks of the end of this quarter. I have no information about the number of community charge enforcement proceedings against income support claimants, since this information is not available to justices' clerks and is not necessary for the purposes of these proceedings.

Detainees

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Iraqi and other nationals taken into custody in connection with events in the Gulf are still detained; and what steps he is taking to release them.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At 4 March, 31 Iraqis and two other nationals were detained under the provisions of the Immigration Act 1971 pending deportation for reasons of national security and 32 Iraqis were detained as prisoners of war.

With the exception of those held as prisoners of war, whose release is a matter for the Ministry of Defence, any detainee is free to leave the United Kingdom at any time. The decisions to detain and to deport continue to be reviewed on an individual basis in the light of representations received, including the advice of the advisory panel.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individuals detained by him on the ground of national security under the Immigration Act 1971 have *(a)* appealed and *(b)* have had their cases determined by his advisory panel since 16 January 1991, of these how many have been (i) recommended for deportation and (ii) recommended for release; and how many have been (1) released and (2) deported.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* Fifty-six of those detained under the Immigration Act requested an appearance before the advisory panel and 42 have been heard since 16 January. Those who have not been heard have requested postponements.

The advice of the panel is confidential but following consideration of this advice and all other representations, my right hon. Friend has decided to continue deportation action in 20 cases and to take no further action in 13. In the other nine cases, the advice is awaited or is under consideration.

A total of 20 were released from detention following my right hon. Friend's consideration of the advice. Two have left the United Kingdom after deportation orders were made against them.

Boundary Commission

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will announce the present membership of the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Mr. Speaker is Chairman of the Commission. The other members are:

	Appointed by	*Date*
Mr. Justice Knox	The Lord Chancellor	1 January 1991
Miss Sheila Cameron, QC	The Home Secretary	3 March 1989
Mr. David Macklin	The Secretary of State for the Environment	16 February 1989

[1] First appointed 1 January 1987.

Paul Malone

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the relevant chief constable on the present location of exhibits DHH/1, J/T1, J/T2, J/T3, J/T4 and J11, a hospital appointment card, photographs relative to the charges made against Malone and original handwritten interview notes taken at Ellesmere Port police station, Cheshire, in the case of Paul Malone currently residing in Durham prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* The location of these exhibits is a matter for the relevant chief officer of police to whom inquiries should be addressed directly.

WALES

Road Safety Education

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) which *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in each local education authority area in Wales currently do not have road safety education programmes;

(2) what was the average amount of time given to teaching road safety education programmes in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schoools in each local education authority area in Wales during 1990; and what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not held centrally.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his Department's policy to maintain the voluntary nature of environmentally sensitive area schemes and maintain the role of the project officers as interpreters and advisers on the guidelines.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no plans to change these arrangements.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any plans to link payments made under the environmentally sensitive areas scheme to the annual rate of inflation.

Mr. David Hunt: No. The level of payments in the Cambrian mountains and Lleyn peninsula ESAs have been reviewed and my judgment was that the existing rates of payment were appropriate and there was no justification for increasing them.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to offer a minimum level of payment per farm when deciding on environmentally sensitive areas scheme allocations.

Mr. David Hunt: This is one of the matters which I will consider as part of our review of the scheme which is now under way.

Property Marking

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether it is the policy of his Department to mark property with an indelible mark or similar means of identification.

Mr. David Hunt: As a rule my Department finds it unnecessary to have to use special markings to protect its property, but we have taken action to mark telephone handsets which have proved to be vulnerable to theft.

Family Planning Clinics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many family planning clinics have been operational in each district health authority area in Wales in each year since 1976.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not available centrally.

Secure Accommodation (Juveniles)

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration he has given to the provison of secure establishments in Wales for juveniles awaiting trial; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Nicholas Bennett: Our officials are presently conducting a review of secure care in Wales, including the need to make provision for juveniles on remand. We expect to have their final report shortly.

Veterinary Inspection Centre, Bangor

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if any decision has been taken on the future of the Bryn Adda veterinary inspection centre in Bangor, Gwynedd.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food expects to be able to make an announcement about the review of the veterinary investigation service very shortly.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for 5 March.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

My right honourable Friend the Prime Minister is in Moscow having bilateral discussions with President Gorbachev.

CIVIL SERVICE

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at the Cabinet Office.

Mr. Renton: The top grades in my Department are normally filled by promotion from within, or by staff on loan from other Departments. The Cabinet Office monitors the ethnic origin of all new entrants to the Department and promotion is solely on merit. If it is necessary to recruit to the top grades from outside the civil service, the Cabinet office turns to the Civil Service Commissioners. They adopt a wide range of good equal opportunity practices to aid recruitment of members of the ethnic minorities, including the monitoring of applicants at every stage of the selection process.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Telephone Calls (Tracing)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures are being taken to encourage the development of equipment to trace hoax and nuisance telephone calls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The provision of call tracing facilities is primarily a matter for the network operators. I know that the Director General of Telecommunications, Sir Bryan Carsberg, is keeping the situation under close review.

Hoax and nuisance calls are an obnoxious practice, causing great distress, and I have every sympathy with the victims. Complaints should be referred to the police, who have the power to prosecute under the Telecommunications Act 1984. British Telecom and Mercury are ready and willing to co-operate in such inquiries by tracing calls.

There is at present no equipment approved for connection to the public telephone network that the residential customer can use to trace calls. An application for approval has been received in respect of a call filter device. This would enable certain customers, connected to digital exchanges, to screen calls before answering them. The device works by requiring the caller to key in a number before the called party has to accept the call.

Trade Balance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will set out the increase or decrease in value and volume of manufactured trade to and from the Federal Republic of Germany of *(a)* United Kingdom, *(b)* France and *(c)* the United States of America in each year from 1985 to 1990, together with the balance of total trade and manufactured trade with Germany in each case.

Mr. Leigh: The information is in the tables. Figures for 1990 are not available for the United States of America and France.

Data in volume terms are not available for bilateral trade.

Exports of manufactures[1] to Federal Republic of Germany

From:	USA $B	USA per cent. annual change	France $B	France per cent. annual change	UK $B	UK per cent. annual change
1985	6·8	—	11·0	—	7·4	—
1986	7·9	15·8	14·9	35·7	9·3	25·3
1987	8·6	9·2	18·6	24·7	12·0	28·3
1988	10·7	24·6	20·6	10·8	13·4	11·6
1989	13·2	23·0	21·8	6·0	14·5	8·7
1990	N.A.	—	N.A.	—	19·6	—

Imports of manufacturers from Federal Republic of Germany

To:	USA $B	USA per cent. annual change	France $B	France per cent. annual change	UK $B	UK per cent. annual change
1985	19·8	—	15·9	—	14·9	—
1986	24·5	24·0	22·6	42·4	19·2	29·1
1987	26·5	8·0	28·6	26·7	24·2	26·2
1988	25·0	−5·7	32·1	12·1	29·1	20·3
1989	24·0	−4·1	33·8	5·2	30·5	4·7
1990	N.A.	—	N.A.	—	33·4	—

Crude trade balance[2] in manufactures with Federal Republic of Germany

	USA $B	France $B	UK $B
1985	−13·0	−4·9	−7·4
1986	−16·7	−7·7	−9·9
1987	−17·9	−10·1	−12·2
1988	−14·3	−11·5	−15·8
1989	−10·8	−12·0	−16·0
1990	N.A.	N.A.	−13·8

Crude trade balance with Federal Republic of Germany

	USA $B	France $B	UK $B
1985	−12·7	−3·2	−4·8
1986	−16·3	−5·7	−8·3
1987	−17·1	−7·3	−10·6
1988	−13·3	−8·5	−14·8
1989	−9·7	−9·2	−14·8
1990	N.A.	N.A.	−12·0

[1] = SITC divisions 5 to 8.
[2] The crude trade balance is exports (FOB) less imports (CIF).
Source: OECD Series C.

Companies Act 1989

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to commence provisions of the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Redwood: On Monday 4 March I signed an order which commences certain provisions of the Act. Sections 126 and 127(3) concerning company records come into force on 1 July. Certain powers to make regulations under part VII of the Act—financial markets and insolvency—are also commenced so as to permit regulations under that part to be made to take effect at the time the substantive provisions come into force, which is expected to be in mid-April. The remaining provisions of section 193 come into force on 1 April 1991. Section 193 inserts section 62a and paragraph 22A of schedule 11 into the Financial Services Act 1986, restricting to private investors the right to bring action for contravention of rules, regulations and so on. I have also made regulations under section 62a of the 1986 Act defining "private investor" and specifying circumstances in which rights are retained by persons other than private investors. These will also come into force on 1 April 1991.

I have placed a copy of the order in the Library.

ECGD Insurance Services Group

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish the list of potential purchasers after privatisation of the insurance services group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Lilley *[pursuant to the reply, 4 February 1991, c. 25]:* The privatisation of ECGD's short-term business, currently undertaken within the insurance services group, will, as previously announced, be by means of a competition among prospective trade purchasers and consortia.

Last July, Samuel Montagu, acting on my behalf, issued a prequalification questionnaire accompanied by a preliminary information memorandum to potential investors who had expressed a written interest in acquiring the business. There was a good response to these documents from a wide range of investors.

The Government have now decided on a shortlist of potential bidders for the business. In alphabetical order, these are:

Assicurazioni Generali;
Cobac;
A consortium comprising Eagle Star and Gerling, with shareholdings of 95 per cent. and 5 per cent. respectively;
NCM;
Sun Alliance;
Trade Indemnity.

The shortlisted companies have been informed of the Government's decision and are being invited to tender accordingly.

The shortlist has been selected with regard to a range of criteria including the candidates' commercial understanding of, and commitment to, the credit insurance business, their financial robustness and willingness to take over the business broadly on the basis proposed by the Government. The shortlisted candidates have all stated their willingness to bid for 100 per cent. of the business.

Prior to the submission of tenders bidders will have the opportunity of detailed discussions with ECGD, including members of insurance services management, staff representatives and the Government's advisers on the sale.

The deadline for receipt of tenders will be 30 April 1991, following which there will be a period of evaluation. Price will be an important, but not the sole, criterion to be taken into account. I reserve the right to reject any or all of the bids. The sale is not likely to be completed before the end of July, but it is our intention to proceed as quickly as possible, subject to the successful passage of the Bill through Parliament.

Normal competition legislation and procedures will apply to the sale.

Arrangements are being made for appropriate information from the invitation to tender to be laid in the Library of the House.

TRANSPORT

Seatbelts

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many children who were killed or injured in road accidents were not wearing seatbelts in *(a)* 1989 and *(b)* 1990.

Mr. Chope: The information available is as follows:

(a) Since January 1983, all front seat occupants of cars or light vans have been required to wear a seat belt. From 1 September 1989, further regulations were introduced requiring children aged under 14 to wear a selt belt in the rear of cars or light vans where such a belt was fitted. Casualty figures for 1989, for children aged 0 to 13 travelling in cars or light vans, are given in the following table:

Child casualties in cars and light vans in road accidents
Great Britain
1989

	Children aged 0 to 13	
	Killed	*Injured*
Seat belt worn	20	4,143
Seat belt not worn	34	4,864
Not reported	16	2,180
TOTAL	70	11,257

(b) Corresponding figures for 1990 are not yet available.

MV Breydon

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the destination and cargo of the British registered coaster MV Breydon when fire broke out earlier this month.

Mr. McLoughlin: A statement is not appropriate at this stage as the cause of the fire is still being investigated by the marine accident investigation branch. However, I understand that when the fire broke out the vessel was on passage from Great Oakely, near Harwich to Drogheda in Southern Ireland, with a cargo of explosives.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department completed its latest voluntary survey of the ethnic origins of its staff during January 1991. The Department's response rate following the re-survey is 91 per cent. This information will be kept up to date by asking new entrants to complete an ethnic background questionnaire.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1-7) and overall in the Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. McLoughlin: The numbers and percentages of women and ethnic minority staff employed in the Department at present are:

	Total	*Women*		*Recorded number*	*Ethnic*[1] *percentage*
		Number	*Percentage*		
All grades	15,274	7,005	45·86	644	4·22
Grade 1	1	—	—	—	—
Grade 2	4	—	—	—	—
Grade 3	20	—	—	—	—
Grade 4	18	1	5·50	—	—
Grade 5	107	8	7·47	1	0·93
Grade 6	146	2	1·36	3	2·05
Grade 7	526	58	11·02	16	3·04
Total	822	69	8·38	20	2·43

[1] These figures are based on a voluntary confidential survey of staff. the response rate overall and for the grades 1-7, is 91 per cent.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Civil Service Commission is responsible for the recruitment of top grades to all Departments of the civil service. Recruitment and promotion are carried out on the principle of fair and open competition.

The Commission is extending links with universities, polytechnics and tertiary colleges to attract more applicants including those from ethnic minorities; ensuring that its recruitment brochures reflect a multi-racial work force; and validating selection procedures to ensure that they are fair and non-discriminatory.

British Rail

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what performance targets he set British Rail for the number of trains which arrive on time during *(a)* 1989 and *(b)* 1990; what was the performance against target; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail's current quality of service objectives were set in December 1989 by my right hon. Friend, the member for Hertsmere, to cover a three-year period from April 1990 to March 1993. BR's quality objectives for InterCity and Network SouthEast were set by the Government in October 1986 and covered the period up to the end of March 1990. Quality objectives for regional railways were first set in July 1989. The performance of each sector against their separate objectives is shown in the attached table:

British Rail performance: Punctuality

InterCity

Punctuality	*Objective Per cent.*	*1989-90 Per cent.*	*1990-91 Per cent.*
+/− 10 minutes	90·0	84·2	86·2

Note:
1990-91 figures for InterCity cover period 1 April 1990 to 31 December 1990.

Network SouthEast

Punctuality +/− 5 minutes	*Objective Per cent.*	*1989-90 Per cent.*	*1990-91 Per cent.*
AM peak	88·0	84·1	87·5
PM peak	88·0	81·1	83·8
All day	92·0	89·6	90·5

Notes:
(1) Objectives for NSE were revised 1 April 1990 from 87·5 per cent. for AM and PM peaks and 90·0 per cent. for all day.
(2) 1990-91 figures for NSE cover period 1 April 1990 to 2 February 1991.

Regional

Punctuality	*Objective Per cent.*	*1989-90 Per cent.*	*1990-91 Per cent.*
Express and longer rural +/− 10 minutes	90·0	91·0	90·0
Urban and shorter rural +/− 5 minutes	90·0	90·0	89·5

Note:
1990-91 figures for Regional cover period 1 April 1990 to 2 February 1991.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he could list the amount spent on research and development by British Rail for each year since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: This is a matter for British Rail. The information is not immediately available in my Department.

Coastguard Service

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the detailed recommendations of the regional controllers on the implementation of the review of the auxiliary coastguard service.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is not normal practice to publish the advice of officials to Ministers. However, I would be willing to discuss the outcome of the review with the hon. Member before reaching decisions.

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a full copy of the review of Her Majesty's coastguard sector organisation and auxiliary coastguard service.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. But I have made widely available a summary of those points of the review that are likely to be of interest outside the coastguard service.

Roads

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the next stage in the Government's policy of encouraging privately-financed roads infrastructure will be.

Mr. Rifkind: The Government are committed to greater use of the private sector in providing transport infrastructure. I have now decided to seek views on the suitability of the western orbital route for a private finance competition.

The scheme has been planned hitherto as a public sector road. But I believe that the private sector should be given the opportunity to play the leading role in designing, planning, building and operating this road and financing it by tolls paid by the motorist. Of course, the Government are concerned to achieve the most cost effective provision of roads, and so will choose the option which offers better value for money. The costs and benefits of private sector proposals for the western orbital route will therefore be compared with those of the public sector alternative.

Private sector involvement can provide the opportunity for more and better transport provision, relieving congestion whilst safeguarding the environment. Market disciplines should lead to greater efficiency and innovation. The private sector costs would not be subtracted from total public sector provision.

There will be full safeguards for the environment and for local people, if a private sector scheme goes ahead. The Department of Transport will be looking for proposals for a privately financed road on broadly the same route as that already announced.

Extensive environmental protection, including sensitive landscaping, would be a dominant feature of the proposed public sector scheme. Any private sector scheme would be required to achieve the same environmental standards, and a full environment assessment carried out.

If the privately-funded scheme goes ahead authorisation will be sought under the new procedures proposed under the New Roads and Street Works Bill. This means that those affected by the road would have the same opportunities to voice their opinions as if the road were a public scheme. And the arrangements for compensation of owners of land or property would be exactly the same as if the scheme were publicly-funded.

I would aim for a private sector road to be completed at approximately the same time as the public sector scheme, that is towards the end of the 1990s.

This is a major new opportunity for the private sector to provide roads, and good news for the west midlands. It shows that the private finance initiative goes from strength

to strength. I look forward to seeing an imaginative response from industry to get this road built as quickly as possible.

The positive benefits of this scheme are enormous. It would reduce congestion on the existing M5 and M6, and improve access to the western side of the west midlands conurbation, and therefore assist in the economic regeneration of the inner city areas, particularly in the black country.

We would ensure that the positive benefits of this route for the west midlands are protected by seeking from bidders a road which achieves the objective of relieving the present M5 and M6 within the conurbation and provides better connections to the national motorway system for Dudley and Wolverhampton.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1-7) and overall in the Treasury are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities respectively.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested in respect of grades 1 to 7 is shown in the table. The proportion of Treasury staff who are women is 43 per cent. Ethnic origin data is held for 84 per cent. of Treasury staff and of this total just over 7 per cent. are from ethnic minorities. All figures reflect the position as at 28 February 1991.

Grade	Women		Ethnic minorities	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
1A	—	—	—	—
2	1	11	—	—
3	4	13	—	—
4	—	—	—	—
5	11	14	—	—
6	—	—	—	—
7	50	18	3	1

Income Tax

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 18 December, *Official Report*, column *111*, whether he has completed his consideration of the tax liability of hostages and refugees from Iraq and Kuwait who have been obliged to return home before the end of the tax year; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I am still considering the matter.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many tax units in the United Kingdom had *(a)* earnings, *(b)* total incomes per annum and *(c)* total assets exceeding (i) £70,000, (ii) £100,000, (iii) £250,000, (iv) £500,000 and (v) £1,000,000 in 1990-91; what was the percentage of the total in each category; and what were the comparable figures in 1978-79, adjusted for inflation.

Mr. Maude: The available information is given in the table:

	Number of individuals (thousands)	Percentage of taxpayers
1990-91		
Earnings over £70,000	115	0·4
Total income for income tax purposes over £70,000	170	0·6
1978-79		
Earnings over £27,700	20	0·1
Total income for income tax purposes over £27,700	30	0·1

Estimates of the value of assets of the United Kingdom population in 1990-91 are not yet available. Information for 1988 and earlier years is published in *Economic Trends* October 1990.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost in 1991-92 and a full year of increasing all personal allowances by *(a)* the current increase in average earnings, *(b)* the inflation rate in December 1990, *(c)* 8 per cent. and *(d)* 5·5 per cent.; what would be the impact in each case on the number of people paying tax; and what would be the average gain per person in each case for people on annual incomes of £5,000, £10,000, £15,000, £20,000, £30,000, £40,000 and £50,000 and over.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* The latest estimates are given in the tables.

Effects of changes for 1991-92 compared with 1990-91 income tax allowances and thresholds

Increase in allowances[1] by	Direct revenue cost				Reduction in number of taxpayers	
	On receipts in 1991-92		In a full year at 1991-92 income levels			
	Compared with 1990-91 allowances (£ billion)	Statutory indexation (£ billion)	Compared with 1990-91 allowances (£ billion)	Statutory indexation (£ billion)	Compared with 1990-91 allowances (millions)	Statutory indexation (millions)
(a) Increase in average earnings[2]	2·1	−0·3	2·9	−0·3	0·9	−0·1
(b) Change in RPI in year to December 1990	2·4	—	3·2	—	1·0	—
(c) 8 per cent.	2·0	−0·4	2·7	−0·5	0·9	−0·1
(d) 5·5 per cent.	1·4	−1·0	1·9	−1·3	0·6	−0·3

[1] And basic rate limit.
[2] The working assumption used in the autumn statement of 8·5 per cent.

Average cash gains compared with 1990-91 allowances and thresholds

£ per year

Total annual income of individuals in 1991-92 £	*Increase in average earnings*	*Allowances and basic rate limit increased by Change in RPI in year December 1990*	*8 per cent.*	*5·5 per cent.*
5,000—10,000	80	90	80	50
10,000—15,000	90	100	80	60
15,000—20,000	90	100	80	60
20,000—30,000	120	130	110	80
30,000—40,000	390	440	370	260
40,000—50,000	420	470	400	280
Over 50,000	420	470	400	280

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost of enabling married couples who wish to share the benefits of married couple's allowance equally between them to do so.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* About £5 million in a full year at 1990-91 levels.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue would be obtained if *(a)* personal tax allowances, *(b)* age allowance, *(c)* mortgage interest tax relief and *(d)* tax relief for occupational and private pensions were restricted to the basic rate in 1991-92 and in a full year.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* Estimates for 1991-92 are not yet available.

The latest estimates of the direct revenue yields in a full year at 1990-91 levels of income from restricting the income tax reliefs and allowances to the basic rate are as follows:

	£ million
Personal tax allowances	1,270
Age allowance[1]	nil
Mortgage interest relief	470
Relief on contributions to personal pensions[2]	[3]130
Relief on employee's contributions to occupational pension schemes	220

[1] The extra component of the personal allowance given solely to aged taxpayers.
[2] Including relief for retirement annuity premia and free standing additional voluntary contributions.
[3] This estimate is subject to a wide margin of error.

The direct revenue yield from restricting all reliefs and allowances to the basic rate is likely to be in the order of £3 billion, somewhat more than the sums of the yields from restricting the reliefs and allowances separately; this is due to the cumulative effect of bringing more people into higher rate tax. About two-thirds of those who would pay more tax as a result of this change are currently liable only at the basic rate. No account is taken of possible behavioural changes or the effect on receipts of capital gains tax.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many new lettings from investments under the business expansion scheme in 1989-90 there were in *(a)* south-east England and *(b)* the United Kingdom; and what percentage these figures represent of (i) all privately rented property and (ii) all rented property.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* Provisional estimates for new lettings from investments under the business expansion scheme in 1989-90 are as follows:

	New lettings	*As a percentage of:*	
	Total number	*All privately rented property per cent.*	*All rented property per cent.*
South-east England	1,000	0·18	0·05
United Kingdom	3,000	0·18	0·04

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many individuals are currently receiving mortgage interest tax relief; how many of these are men; and how many of the total are receiving relief at the top rate of tax.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* There are an estimated 9·4 million single people and married couples with mortgages in 1990-91, of whom about one million receive interest relief at a rate in excess of the basic rate of income tax. A breakdown of the total number of mortgagors is given in the table.

Mortgagors	*Million*
Single men	1·3
Single women	1·0
Married couples	7·1
Total	9·4

THE ARTS

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1-7) and overall in the Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Renton: The number and percentage, of women in grades 2, 5, 6 and 7, and overall in the Office of Arts and Libraries, is as follows. The Department does not employ anyone in grades 1, 3 and 4.

	Number in grade	Number of women in grade	Percentage
Grade 2	1	0	0
Grade 5	4	1	25
Grade 6	1	1	100
Grade 7 (and equivalent)	9	2	22
Departmental total	59	26	44

When responding to the ethnic origin questionnaire none of the staff in the Office of Arts and Libraries indicated that they were of ethnic minority origin.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at the Office of Arts and Libraries.

Mr. Renton: The top grades in my Department are normally filled by promotion from within, or by loans from other Departments. The Cabinet Office records the ethnic origin of all new entrants to the Department, and promotion is solely on merit.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister for the Arts when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The last survey of staff was conducted in 1986. This is kept up to date by information on the ethnic origins of new staff and leavers.

EMPLOYMENT

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The first survey of ethnic origin of staff took place in 1986 and was undertaken on the basis of voluntary self classification. A reminder was sent to all staff for whom the information was not held in November 1988. As a result we now know the ethnic origin of 92·1 per cent. of ED group staff. My Department is now considering whether further action is required.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his forecast of changes in employment by industry for the period 1991 to 2000 for Leeds, West for men, women, young persons and ethnic minorities.

Mr. Jackson: The Department does not make forecasts of employment.

Taylorplan Services Ltd.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the wages inspectorate has examined rates of pay advertised or paid by Taylorplan Services Ltd. for contract employees in the public or private sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The wages inspectorate has no record of Taylorplan Services Ltd. However, in 1986, the wages inspectorate examined rates of pay at Taylorplan Catering Ltd.

Efficiency Scrutinies

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to undertake new efficiency scrutinies.

Mr. Forth: I have decided to set up an efficiency scrutiny to examine the industrial tribunal system.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Companies

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment at the time of privatisation, what guidance he gave to water companies with regard to the companies offering consumers alternatives to water metering; and what discussions took place with local authorities on plans to provide alternative systems of valuation in new premises.

Mr. Trippier: We have not given any guidance to water companies or held discussions with local authorities about methods of charging for water services. Each company has had to decide how to charge customers in new or converted properties, in the light of the abolition of domestic rates from 1 April 1990, and I understand that most companies have decided to meter such properties. The Director General of Water Services is responsible for protecting customers' interests and for ensuring that companies do not show undue preference or discrimination in their charging policies.

Dredging

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that British Waterways is carrying out all its statutory obligations under section 105 of the Transport Act 1968 with respect to dredging.

Mr. Trippier: Responsibility for day-to-day waterway operation and maintenance rests with the British Waterways Board. It is for the board to satisfy itself that it is fulfilling its statutory obligations for dredging.

Housing

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many additional units of accommodation each local authority originally estimated would result from the extra housing investment allocation announced on 27 March 1990; and how many units have been provided to date comprising *(a)* local authority empty dwellings refurbished, *(b)* housing association empty dwellings refurbished, *(c)* hostel places provided by local authorities, *(d)* hostel spaces provided by housing associations, *(e)* mobile homes provided by local authorities, *(f)* homes becoming available through cash incentive payments and *(g)* other.

Sir George Young: The cost of compiling the information in the form requested would be disproportionate. I will write to the hon. Member with the material we already have available.

Homelessness

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities have received extra housing investment allocation in 1990-91 to provide

additional accommodation for the homeless under its £112 million initiative announced on 27 March 1990; and what additional housing investment allocation each local authority has received.

Sir George Young: My Department's news release No. 198 dated 27 March 1990, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House, sets out the information requested by the hon. Member.

Lead-free Petrol

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the results of his Department's survey into motorists' attitudes to the use of lead-free petrol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Yes. We expect to have the results of the survey in April.

Households, Hackney

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has of the number of households in the London borough of Hackney which are occupied by *(a)* two or *(b)* more than two adults.

Mr. Yeo: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. However, projections of married couple, lone parent, one person and other households for 1991 are published in the Department's "1985 based estimates of numbers of households in England, the regions, counties, metropolitan districts and London boroughs 1985-2001", which is in the Library.

Council Homes, Exeter

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest figure for the number of unoccupied council houses and flats in Exeter.

Mr. Yeo: The latest available information on empty council dwellings relates to 1 April 1990 and was provided by Exeter city council in its April 1990 housing investment programme return (HIP1), a copy of which is in the Library.

Gulf Casualties

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans have been made to provide adapted housing for service personnel permanently disabled in the Gulf; and how these will be financed.

Sir George Young: British casualties in the Gulf have, mercifully, been light and no difficulty is expected in providing adapted housing for any of them who may have been permanently disabled. Disabled people may obtain assistance for house adaptations under the house renovation grant system introduced by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Community Charge

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his estimate of the total amounts of money to be made available under the community charge reduction scheme to residents in Gedling borough;

(2) if he will set out the calculation of the community charge reduction scheme applying to the borough of Gedling.

Mr. Key: No information is yet available on the amount of reduction scheme grant payable to each charging authority. However, if Gedling borough council sets its community charge for 1991-92 at or above £364, a couple who have not moved since 31 March 1990 living in a property of average rateable value could look forward to a reduction of £120 between them; a couple living in a property of half average rateable value could get a reduction of £371 between them.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take in regard to Redditch borough council under part I of the Local Government Act 1988.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend has today issued a direction under section 14 of the Local Government Act 1988 requiring Redditch borough council to expose refuse collection work to competitive tendering again by 1 February 1992. He has taken this action because he was not satisfied with the response which Redditch borough council made to the notice served on 18 January 1991 under section 13 of the Act.

That notice set out the Secretary of State's view that Redditch borough council had acted contrary to the requirement of section 7(7) of the Act, which is that, in awarding a contract, an authority must not act in a manner having the effect or intended or likely to have the effect of restricting, distorting or preventing competition, in that, in assigning this work to its direct service organisation, it rejected a lower tender from a private contractor without sufficient reasons.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take in relation to those authorities which have now set budgets above the limits implied by the intended capping criteria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: We will not hesitate to use our capping powers to curb those authorities' budgets which we consider excessive or represent an excessive increase over the previous year.

As we have made clear on a number of occasions our present intention is to apply the criteria which my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State announced on 31 October 1990. These intended criteria are, however, necessarily provisional since we cannot take our capping decisions until authorities generally have set their budgets. When we do so, we shall take into account all appropriate considerations. But it is clearly a matter of concern that a few authorities have decided to budget at levels which under the intended criteria are excessive or represent an excessive increase: it remains open to such authorities to adopt substitute lower budgets if they so wish.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment at what stage in their posting local authorities are able to exempt *(a)* married and *(b)* single Gulf service personnel from the poll tax.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* There is no exemption for people serving in the Gulf. It is for community charge registration officers to decide when the law requires a person to be removed from the register, thus ending liability to the charge. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 19 February that it is our intention that those serving in the Gulf should not have to pay the charge during that period. We are currently considering what steps need to be taken to realise this objective.

Acid Rain

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now place in the Library detailed maps of those parts of the country vulnerable to acid rain pollution from sulphur dioxide emissions from electricity generating stations.

Mr. Baldry: I have placed in the Library copies of two reports to my Department by the United Kingdom critical loads advisory group. These include maps of the United Kingdom in respect of soils, and of Scotland in respect of freshwaters, showing "critical loads" for sulphur—the levels of deposition in excess of which damage may be caused to ecosystems—and the places in which those loads are currently exceeded as a result of emissions of sulphur dioxide from all sources, not merely from electricity generating stations. The maps have been produced to inform discussions in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe which are intended to lead to agreement of a new protocol on the abatement of sulphur dioxide emissions. They represent the latest available scientific assessment of the current position, and are not indications of policy. The United Kingdom is already committed, under the EC large combustion plants directive, to secure reductions of 60 per cent. in sulphur dioxide emissions from existing large combustion plant by 2003, compared with 1980 levels.

Departmental Policies (Environmental Implications)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what actions have been taken since the appointment of a Minister in his Department to consider the environmental implications of his Department's policies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 1 March 1991]:* My Department has been active in implementing the commitments made in the Environment White Paper, "This Common Inheritance", since its publication in September. Our departmental report, published on 13 February, recorded progress with a wide range of initiatives, reflecting the White Paper's comprehensive review of policy affecting the environment. These included a 20 per cent. increase in funding for environmental research over the next three years, increased staffing for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and a £60 million pilot energy efficiency programme for local authority housing.

Snow Clearing

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will issue a circular to local authorities on clearing snow from pavements in built-up areas.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

I have no plans to issue a circular, but I shall be happy to consider any specific representations which the hon. Member has about snow clearing by local authorities.

ENERGY

Energy Conservation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his Department's policy to adopt specific annual targets for energy conservation and efficiency.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Decisions on investment in energy efficiency measures are a matter for individual consumers and it would be inappropriate for the Government to set specific national targets for annual improvements.

However, my energy efficiency office offers a range of programmes and other initiatives designed to encourage the adoption of cost effective energy efficiency measures. Measures of performance for each of these programmes are published annually, most recently in February 1991 in "The Government's Expenditure Plans Within the Energy Sector 1991-92 to 1993-94" (Cm 1505), copies of which are available in the Library.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on progress on the renewable non-fossil fuel obligation 1991 bidding round.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has informed the House of our intention to make a further Renewables Order in the autumn of this year. The procedure that has been adopted by the regional electricity companies (RECs) to select the projects to be contracted under the order has been widely publicised, and was the subject of a seminar for renewables operators, jointly hosted by the Non-Fossil Purchasing Agency Ltd. and the Office of Electricity Regulation (OFFER), last month. That procedure is now in hand. It involves an initial scrutiny of the tenders, against the requirements of the legislation, by OFFER; a review period for unsuccessful tenderers; and a competitive bidding procedure for successful tenderers. My right hon. Friend will then determine the level of the obligation and the technology bands to be included within it, in the light of the advice of the Director General of Electricity Supply as to the available field and in consultation with the regional electricity companies. The RECs will then conclude contracts, to the required level of capacity, with the most economic projects in each band.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what financial contribution he will make to the Price Waterhouse critical path with analysis for the 1991 round of tendering for the non-fossil fuel renewables tranche; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: None. Price Waterhouse are advisers on the non-fossil fuel obligation to the regional electricity companies, and this is therefore a matter for the RECs and their agent the Non-Fossil Purchasing Agency.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the potential for wind,

wave and other intermittent renewable energy services taking part successfully in the 1991 round of bidding for the non-fossil fuel obligation renewables tranche.

Mr. Moynihan: In answer to a parliamentary question on 19 December, at columns *162-63*, my right hon. Friend gave an initial indication of the likely sizes of bands which might be included in the 1991 Renewables Order. However, it is for the regional electricity companies (RECs) to submit the projects that apply for inclusion in the 1991 renewables non-fossil fuel obligation (NFFO) to the Director-General of Electricity Supply (DGES), and for the DGES to assess the projects against the requirements of the legislation. We will then consult the DGES and the RECs before eventually setting the level of the obligation for the 1991 order.

Office of Electricity Regulation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he had with the Director-General of the Office of Electricity Regulation between 18 and 20 February.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I, my Ministerial colleagues and officials are in regular contact with the Director-General of Electricity Supply and OFFER on regulatory matters concerning electricity.

DEFENCE

The Gulf

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent the 1st Armoured Division has been dependent on assistance from United Kingdom helicopters during the Gulf conflict.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A force of Lynx anti-tank and Gazelle observation/general purpose helicopters operate as an integral part of the 1st Armoured Division. The division is supported by Royal Air Force Chinook and Puma helicopters, together with Royal Navy Sea Kings, which provide rapid airlift for both personnel and materiel.

Dockyards

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people were employed by his Department in the chief executive dockyard section *(a)* prior to the closure of Portsmouth and Chatham royal dockyards and *(b)* prior to the introduction of commercial management at Devonport and Rosyth; and how many people are now employed in the directorate general for ships repair.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Chief Executive Dockyards (CED) HQ staff (excluding Dockyard staff) were 344 in April 1982 prior to the closure of Chatham Dockyard and the conversion of Portsmouth Dockyard to the Fleet Maintenance and Repair Organisation which were completed in 1984. In April 1985, when commercial management of the Dockyards was proposed, there were 255 CED HQ staff; building up to 439 Directorate General Ship Refitting and transitional CED HQ staff in April 1987 when commercial management was introduced. There are currently 346 HQ staff in DGSR excluding the Superintendent Ships organisation in the dockyards. It should be noted, however, that DGSR now includes staff performing contracting, accounting, estimating and pricing functions which were not part of CED's responsibility.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Veal Crates

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he proposes to take to ensure that British standards relating to the use of veal crates are adopted by the European Community.

Mr. Maclean: Community proposals on the welfare of calves are already under discussion in the Council. We are pressing for our standards to be adopted throughout the Community from the earliest possible date.

Animal Feed

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any proposals to improve the monitoring of Chinese cotton seed imported for use as animal feed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Department is currently working with the feed industry on a survey on the contamination of raw materials of vegetable origin, including cotton seed. The results of the survey will be carefully studied to see whether any further action will be necessary on any of these materials.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any proposals to introduce labelling requirements for clean animal feeds.

Mr. Maclean: It is already an offence to sell animal feeds containing ingredients which are deleterious to animals. Manufacturers are required to label detailed information on nutritional quality and from next January they will also have to declare the ingredients of their feeds.

Property Marking

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether it is the policy of his Department to mark property with an indelible mark or similar means of identification.

Mr. Curry: It is not the policy of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to mark property with an indelible mark or similar means of identification. Most high-value items have registered numbers and these are recorded in stock registers. An annual stocktake is carried out. To mark items would be highly labour-intensive and not cost-effective.

Salmonella

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to abandon his policy of compulsory slaughter of egg-laying flocks infected with salmonella enteritidis.

Mr. Maclean: We have no plans to do so.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Enrolments

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the most recent enrolment figures for primary and secondary schools in the Crewe and Nantwich area.

Mr. Fallon: Information for areas within local education authorities is not available centrally.

The number of new admissions to maintained primary and secondary schools in Cheshire as at January 1990 is:

Schools	*Number of new admissions*
Primary[1]	12,171
Secondary[2]	11,575

[1] Children aged 4 and 5 admitted in September 1989 and January 1990. Excludes admissions to nursery classes.
[2] Number of pupils admitted in September 1989. Includes admissions to sixth form colleges.

"New Directions"

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received a copy of "New Directions" published by the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

Mr. Fallon: My hon. Friend Under-Secretary of State (Mr. Howarth) was formally presented with a copy of "New Directions" on 31 October 1990. He welcomed the report and acknowledged it as a major contribution by the RNIB to advance the interests of visually impaired children and adults in this country.

Multi-disabled Children

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to review the work of agencies involved in the care of multi-disabled, visually impaired children.

Mr. Fallon: This Department does not at present have any plans to review the work of these agencies.

Higher Education

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of the United Kingdom population achieved higher education qualifications in the latest period for which figures are available; and what comparable information he has for France and Germany.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The requested information is given in the table.

Country	*Year of Data*	*Higher education[1] qualifications awarded per 100 of relevant age group[2]*
United Kingdom[3]	1988	33
France[4]	1987	33
Germany	1987	37
	1987	22

Sources:
"Demographic Statistics 1990" Eurostat
"Education in OECD Countries 1987-88" OECD

1. International standard classifications of education (ISCED) level 3 incorporating sub-degree, first degree and post-graduate study.
2. The relevant age group is taken as the average single-year population in the group including 70 per cent. of new entrants at the start of the course. This is the standard OECD definition.
3. Includes estimated professional qualifications and nursing and paramedical qualifications gained at DH establishments. Excludes private sector.
4. Includes some sub-degree diplomas awarded on completion of the first two years of a first degree course.

Geography

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he took in amending the National Curriculum Council's consultation report, to produce the draft order for geography.

Mr. Fallon: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) on 13 February at column *464*.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has gathered when considering the geography national curriculum about the ways in which geography teachers have studied the Gulf and explored the issues involved.

Mr. Fallon: None.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what strategies the draft order for geography offers to teachers to enable their students to handle the amount of available information relating to geographical and environmental issues;

(2) what role is envisaged for geography, as outlined in the draft national curriculum order, in the teaching of the cross-curricular themes of economic awareness and citizenship.

Mr. Fallon: The National Curriculum Council intends to publish detailed advice on the implementation of the statutory requirements for geography in the national curriculum. This guidance will cover issues such as the organisation of teaching within the classroom and links with cross-curricular themes.

Specific guidance on the cross-curricular themes of economic and industrial understanding and citizenship, which was published by NCC in 1990, explains in broad terms the contribution which geography and other national curriculum subjects can make towards the teaching of these themes.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what responses he has received to the draft order for geography; and how he proposes to respond.

Mr. Fallon: During the statutory consultation on the draft order for geography in the national curriculum, my right hon. and learned Friend received a total of 289 responses. He will consider the comments made in drawing up the final order which will set out in statute the attainment targets and programmes of study for national curriculum geography.

Lancashire Education Department

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many persons were employed in the education department of the Lancashire county council in 1981 and each year to the present day.

Mr Fallon: The total employees of Lancashire local education authority in March 1990 were as follows:

	Number
Full-time teachers and lecturers	13,400
Part-time teachers and lecturers	4,700
Full-time other employees	4,200
Part-time other employees	13,700

These figures include the nursery, primary and secondary schools sector, special and further education and central administration.

Comparable figures for other years are not available.

History

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received this month on the history curriculum.

Mr. Fallon: During the statutory consultation on the draft order for history in the national curriculum, my right hon. and learned Friend received a variety of representations from 225 organisations or individuals. These included representations from LEAs, teacher associations, religious bodies and subject associations such as the Historical Association, the Royal Historical Society, the Primary History Association and the History Curriculum Association.

University Grants Committee

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out calculations showing how (i) basic grant, (ii) current grant and (iii) total resources are distributed to universities by the University Grants Committee for academic year 1991-92 *(a)* compared with the allocations for 1990-91 and *(b)* reconciled to the Department's expenditure plans as set out in Cm. 1511.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The aggregate sums distributed by the Universities Funding Council in each academic year are:

£ million

	Basic grant	*Grant plus fees*	*Final resources*
1990-91	1,341	1,816	1,894
1991-92	1,350	2,049	2,098

Basic grant excludes provision for certain items of funding distributed by the Council outside its allocation formula. These are set out for 1990-91 and 1991-92 in Circular Letters 12/90 and 6/91 respectively, copies of which are in the Library. Those letters also describe the details of the allocation process. Final resources for each year take account of tuition fees for funded places and adjustments for changes in specific funding. Figures for basic grant are not directly comparable with those in Cm. 1511, which relate to financial years and include the sums distributed by the Council outside its allocation formula.

Council for National Academic Awards

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will announce a decision on the Bird report on the future of the Council for National Academic Awards and related issues.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The right for institutions to award their own degrees cannot be taken as an issue on its own. The report also raises important questions about which institutions should have this right, and about the nature of future quality assurance arrangements. We need to consider these further.

Durants School, Rickmansworth

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to make a decision on the proposal by Hertfordshire county council to close Durants school, Rickmansworth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to make a decision on Hertfordshire's proposal in respect of this school very shortly. His decision will be notified to Hertfordshire county council as soon as possible.

Student Loans

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the basis for calculating the unit cost per borrower's account of administering the student loans scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The unit cost per account for the academic year 1990-91 will be the operational costs of the Student Loans Company, excluding VAT, during that year, divided by the number of accounts open during the year. The unit cost per account has already fallen substantially during the first months of the scheme. It will continue to fall over the next few years.

The calculation excludes the start-up costs of £9·3 million, excluding VAT, incurred up to 31 August 1990. This one-off expenditure has enabled the company to administer the loans scheme efficiently. It therefore represents an investment in the future of both the company and the loans scheme.

The student loans scheme has made additional resources available to students in higher education. The number of applications passed the 100,000 mark last month. Thousands more students are applying every week. The scheme will generate substantial savings for the taxpayer in the medium term—and facilitate the expansion of higher education that we all want to see—even when the costs of administering the scheme are included. I congratulate the Student Loans Company on its achievement so far.

HEALTH

General Practitioners

15. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the change in the number of general practitioners between 1979 and the latest year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Between 1 October 1979 and 1 October 1990 the number of general practitioners in England (1990 figures are provisional) increased by 4,267 —an increase of 20 per cent.

NHS Trusts

16. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the progress with setting up health service trusts.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am delighted to report that there has been great interest in national health service trust status. Fifty seven national health service trusts will be operational from 1 April this year. The other nine candidates are continuing to work towards trust status. To date, a further 129 hospitals and units have expressed an interest in gaining trust status by April 1992.

Drugs

17. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he intends taking further steps to combat waste of money due to overprescribing of drugs.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government are committed to a programme of measures to help eliminate wasteful and unnecessary prescribing. These include educational initiatives, the introduction of medical advisers on prescribing at each family health services authority and the introduction of indicative amounts for practices from 1 April 1991 to provide a financial benchmark against which performance can be measured.

20. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost of the drugs budget to the NHS in the current year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest forecast of spending on drugs in family health services in 1990-91 is £2,116 million. This represents an increase in real terms of 1 per cent. over the outturn for last year, although the rate of growth has slowed compared with previous years as a result of our initiative to encourage cost-effective prescribing. Information on expenditure on drugs in the hospital and community health services is not available for the current year but in 1989-90 amounted to £414 million.

Liver Transplants

18. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his department is taking to promote liver transplants.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government are continuing to promote the success of the United Kingdom liver transplant programme in a number of ways. Central funding in excess of £14·7 million will be provided in 1991-92, a fifth supra regional liver transplant centre will be designated from April 1991, and resources aimed at improving the supply of donor organs are regularly increased.

Hearing Aids

19. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is proposing to take to reduce the waiting times for those requiring hearing aids.

Mr. Dorrell: We have set up and are funding twelve pilot projects in hospitals throughout England. The projects are aimed at testing a variety of ways of reducing waiting times for hearing aid services.

Pay Awards

21. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what reaction he has received to the recent pay awards to NHS employees.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced on 31 January that the Government had decided to accept in full the review body recommendations, including those for doctors, dentists, nurses and the professions allied to medicine in the national health service. We have received one letter registering disappointment at the staging of the award.

Residential Care

22. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the future of local authority residential care for the elderly and disabled.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Our community care policies, to be implemented between now and 1993, will improve standards in residential care for old or disabled people either in local authority or independent care, and help to ensure that it is not used except where home-based alternatives are or have become unsuitable.

Regional Pay Bargaining

23. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has had about Government plans to decentralise pay bargaining in the health service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn, Hatfield (Mr. Evans).

NHS Spending

24. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the spending per head of population on the NHS, now and in 1979; and what are the figures in real terms.

Mr. Dorrell: In 1990-91 planned expenditure per head of population in the United Kingdom is £511. The equivalent figure in 1978-79 was £144 or £365 at today's prices. This is a real terms increase of 40 per cent.

Community Care

25. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from local authorities with regard to the implementation of Government proposals for community care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department meets regularly with the local authority associations and welcomes their continued support for our community care policy.

Primary Health Care

26. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to improve the performance of family health service authorities in meeting primary care targets.

Mr. Dorrell: All family health services authorities (FHSAs) have been funded to appoint independent

medical advisers to advise general practitioners on clinical and organisational issues. FHSAs can also target funds for GP premises and staff (for example, practice nurses) to support GPs in areas of greatest need. In addition many have appointed facilitators to work with GPs in establishing and improving their health promotion services.

Children

27. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many scheduled surgical operations to infants under the age of three years have been cancelled for the remaining weeks of the present financial year.

Mr. Dorrell: Information collected centrally refers to cancelled operating sessions, not operations, and does not distinguish the age of the patient. Information for 1989-90, the latest available, is published in "NHS operating theatres availability and use in England—financial year 1989-90", a copy of which is available in the Library.

29. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action the Government are taking to prepare for the implementation of the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Dorrell: A number of documents have already been issued to local authorities including "An Introduction to the Children Act", a training curriculum produced by the London Boroughs Training Committee, and "The Care of Children—Principles and Practice in Regulations and Guidance", copies of which are available in the Library.

The first phase of a wide-ranging consultation exercise on the guidance and regulations required under the Act ended last year. Some 21 draft papers were sent out for comment to a great variety of statutory and voluntary organisations; the response which we received from the field to these drafts was both helpful and encouraging, and the comments were fed into the final drafting of the guidance. The consultation exercise has culminated in the issue of guidance on court orders, one in an initial series of five volumes of guidance and regulations. Some 20,000 copies of this guidance will be distributed free of charge this week. Other volumes will follow shortly.

We have commissioned several projects to provide training in the fields of child care and child protection in advance of implementation on 14 October 1991. Some projects are complete, and the material has been disseminated to the target audiences; others are nearing completion. The projects commissioned will provide professionals and others with a broad understanding and initial awareness of the Act or specialised training in specific aspects of the Act. We are confident that most projects will be completed before October 1991, and staff responsible for working with the Act will receive training in advance of implementation.

We recently announced the provision of an additional £250,000 to assist voluntary organisations in the provision of training for the Act. This money will be administered by the National Council for Voluntary Child Care organisations. In addition, further training projects will be commissioned from April this year, to address areas not covered in the first phase of training. This will include material for guardians ad litem, and on the provisions of the Act relating to children leaving care.

East Cumbria Health Authority

28. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the chairman of the Northern regional health authority to discuss the funding of East Cumbria health authority.

Mr. Dorrell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not discussed the funding of East Cumbria health authority with the chairman of the Northern regional health authority.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current waiting time for women who require laser treatment for pre-cancerous cervical cells.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The statistics are not held centrally. These figures would not be recorded separately from other gynaecology statistics.

Food Safety

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations his Department has received from the cheese manufacturing industry concerning the proposals made in the Food Hygiene (Amendment) Regulations;

(2) how many cases of food poisoning have been traced to hard cheeses in the last three years;

(3) whether the Food Hygiene (Amendment) Regulations will apply to traditionally produced hard cheeses when *(a)* vacuum packed and *(b)* wax coated;

(4) how many cases of food poisoning have been traced to hard cheeses delivered in the post over the last five years.

Mr. Dorrell: The Food Hygiene (Amendment) Regulations 1990 specify that mould (or other micro-organism) ripened soft cheese should be temperature controlled. Hard cheese is only covered by the regulations in cooked products. The regulations do not differentiate vacuum packed or wax coated cheeses.

Data on the incidence of outbreaks of food poisoning related to particular foods is not in itself a conclusive indicator of the need for controls to improve food hygiene.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made of the effect of the Food Hygiene (Amendment) Regulations on the mail-order food industry.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on 21 February at columns *245-46*. The Government are consulting mail order firms and others on proposals for amendments to these regulations, including an exemption for mail order to allow industry more time to develop practical means of achieving necessary controls. Amending regulations will be laid before Parliament when the consultation is complete.

Supra-regional Services

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he received the recommendations of the supra-regional services advisory group on the future funding and management of the supra-regional services; and what response he has made.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Chairman of the Supra Regional Services Advisory Group sent his recommendations to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 21 December 1990. We accepted the recommendations in full, and issued an announcement to health authorities on 8 February. A copy of this announcement has been placed in the Library.

Officials are arranging contracts with the designated centres. When these are complete, we will make a further announcement of the agreed funding level for each unit.

NHS Pay

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the average rates of pay for NHS ancillary staff *(a)* in Yorkshire and Humberside and *(b)* nationally.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The estimated average gross annual rate of pay for NHS ancillary staff in Yorkshire region at September 1990 was £8,200 per whole-time equivalent compared with a figure of £8,170 nationally.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The last survey of ethnic origin conducted in the Department was over the period June to October 1989. In accordance with the Department's action plan on equal opportunities, a further survey is planned to commence in June this year.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1-7) and overall in the Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is set out in the table:

Grade	*Total Staff*[1]	*Female*		*Ethnic Minority*[2]	
		Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
1	1	0	—	0	—
2	9	2	22·2	0	—
3	24	5	20·8	0	—
4	24	7	29·2	0	—
5	173	55	31·8	7	4·0
6	183	51	27·9	5	2·7
7	341	94	27·6	8	2·3
Total	755	214	28·3	20	2·6

[1] Figures from the Department's payroll as at 31 January 1991.
[2] Figures based on questionnaires voluntarily completed by staff. For the grades shown the overall response rate was 89·4 per cent.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Dorrell: Recruitment for established appointments at senior level is undertaken by the Civil Service Commission. The Department supports the various initiatives which the Civil Service Commission is taking to aid the recruitment of members of the ethnic minorities.

Pharmaceuticals

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his response on 30 January, *Official Report*, column *530*, if he will name the major manufacturer of generic pharmaceutical products that has opposed the restoration of patent term protection by the European Commission and indicate what is its manufacturing capacity in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No.

Personal Social Services

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated outturn of expenditure on the personal social services for each local authority in 1990-91; and what was the level of each authority's expenditure on the personal social services in 1979-80 adjusted by *(a)* the gross domestic product deflator and *(b)* the change in input unit costs.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is shown in the table:

Net current expenditure on personal social services

	1990-91 budgets	*1979-80 outturn revalued to 1990-91 using GDP*	*PSS pay and prices index*
	£ million	*£ million*	*£ million*
Shire Counties			
Avon	73·3	54·6	59·6
Bedfordshire	38·9	26·6	29·1
Berkshire	53·4	30·8	33·6
Buckinghamshire	44·2	20·8	22·7
Cambridgeshire	43·6	25·0	27·3
Cheshire	68·0	44·2	48·3
Cleveland	47·2	33·3	36·3
Cornwall	28·5	15·3	16·7
Cumbria	31·8	21·6	23·6
Derbyshire	81·5	42·8	46·7
Devon	63·0	39·9	43·5
Dorset	35·3	27·4	29·9
Durham	36·3	31·4	34·2
East Sussex	52·4	41·2	45·0
Essex	107·1	56·9	62·1
Gloucestershire	31·2	22·3	24·4
Hampshire	81·0	61·1	66·7
Hereford and Worcester	38·5	26·8	29·3
Hertfordshire	64·9	39·9	43·6
Humberside	69·0	41·8	45·6
Isle of Wight	8·8	4·8	5·3
Kent	99·1	63·2	69·0
Lancashire	109·7	76·3	83·2
Leicestershire	63·1	39·6	43·3
Lincolnshire	32·9	26·2	28·5
Norfolk	42·5	30·9	33·7
Northamptonshire	41·6	23·0	25·1
Northumberland	22·5	14·5	15·8
North Yorkshire	39·9	26·9	29·3
Nottinghamshire	88·5	54·5	59·5
Oxfordshire	37·4	27·2	29·7
Shropshire	24·3	12·9	14·1
Somerset	32·7	18·8	20·5
Staffordshire	57·2	39·9	43·5
Suffolk	35·1	22·3	24·3
Surrey	57·7	36·8	40·1
Warwickshire	31·0	19·4	21·1
West Sussex	38·7	27·9	30·5
Wiltshire	35·0	21·5	23·5
Isles of Scilly	0·1	0·1	0·1
Metropolitan Districts			
Bolton	22·0	15·3	16·7
Bury	13·8	10·2	11·1

	1990-91 budgets	1979-80 outturn revalued to 1990-91 using GDP	1979-80 outturn revalued to 1990-91 using PSS pay and prices index
	£ million	£ million	£ million
Manchester	63·1	59·8	65·3
Oldham	19·8	15·1	16·5
Rochdale	23·7	15·7	17·1
Salford	25·6	18·7	20·4
Stockport	22·4	15·2	16·5
Tameside	21·9	14·4	15·8
Trafford	16·2	11·0	12·0
Wigan	21·0	16·4	17·9
Knowsley	14·1	11·8	12·8
Liverpool	57·1	44·6	48·7
St. Helens	17·4	16·9	18·4
Sefton	24·5	9·8	10·7
Wirral	29·8	21·4	23·3
Barnsley	15·2	12·3	13·4
Doncaster	19·9	18·0	19·6
Rotherham	21·0	13·3	14·5
Sheffield	56·4	42·8	46·7
Gateshead	19·7	15·4	16·8
Newcastle	35·7	31·7	34·6
North Tyneside	22·3	13·6	14·9
South Tyneside	14·3	11·7	12·8
Sunderland	24·4	22·2	24·2
Birmingham	112·0	82·5	90·0
Coventry	33·8	24·0	26·2
Dudley	20·0	11·2	12·2
Sandwell	32·7	16·6	18·1
Solihull	15·1	6·8	7·4
Walsall	19·8	14·2	15·5
Wolverhampton	27·6	14·9	16·2
Bradford	47·7	34·2	37·3
Calderdale	18·0	10·8	11·8
Kirklees	31·7	20·8	22·7
Leeds	72·2	40·0	43·7
Wakefield	24·1	18·8	20·5
Inner London Boroughs			
Camden	42·5	41·0	44·8
Greenwich	42·0	25·5	27·9
Hackney	46·4	36·9	40·3
Hammersmith	35·8	27·6	30·1
Islington	45·5	32·7	35·7
Kensington	29·0	21·9	23·9
Lambeth	. .	51·1	55·7
Lewisham	44·7	37·7	41·1
Southwark	49·3	37·3	40·7
Tower Hamlets	28·3	27·8	30·4
Wandsworth	52·0	45·9	50·0
Westminster	41·8	32·1	35·0
City of London	3·0	1·1	1·2
Outer London Boroughs			
Barking	16·5	10·8	11·8
Barnet	27·4	21·0	23·0
Bexley	15·9	11·6	12·7
Brent	42·2	28·3	30·9
Bromley	21·8	15·8	17·3
Croydon	32·6	21·7	23·7
Ealing	37·5	23·6	25·8
Enfield	26·3	14·9	16·3
Haringey	. .	29·9	32·7
Harrow	18·6	12·8	14·0
Havering	19·9	13·7	14·9
Hillingdon	25·8	16·3	17·8
Hounslow	27·0	16·0	17·4
Kingston-upon-Thames	13·9	9·3	10·1
Merton	19·1	14·8	16·1
Newham	37·5	21·5	23·5
Redbridge	21·2	14·2	15·4
Richmond-upon-Thames	16·9	9·3	10·1
Sutton	16·8	9·7	10·6
Waltham Forest	33·3	21·5	23·5

Notes:

1. 1990-91 budgets are based on authorities own estimates.
2. Budget returns have not been received from Lambeth and Haringey.
3. Shire Counties figures for 1979-80 exclude expenditure by Shire Districts of £8 million revalued.

Salmonella

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what factor he attributes the latest annual increase in salmonella enteritidis infections in humans.

Mr. Dorrell: Epidemiological and microbiological work by the public health laboratory service on salmonella enteritidis phage type 4, which is the main salmonella associated with food poisoning in humans, continues to demonstrate that this organism is predominantly associated with poultry meat and eggs. Reports of illness are still being received where the public health advice about the safe consumption of eggs and the hygienic handling of raw meats especially poultry, is not being followed. It is important that producers, caterers and consumers continue their efforts to control this problem.

Deaths

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of deaths of persons classified as of no fixed address for each year since 1980.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

GP Budgets

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practices intend to hold their own budget from 1 April.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall make an announcement shortly.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much cash is currently being spent on the national health service; what was the figure for the year to May 1979 in real and actual terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Expenditure figures for England are available on a financial year basis only. This year gross spending on the NHS in England will be £23·7 billion compared with £6·6 billion, or £16·5 billion in today's prices in 1978-79. This represents a real terms increase of nearly 44 per cent.

Dental Contract

Sir John Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists in the Bromley area have withdrawn from the national health service since the introduction of the new dental contract.

Mr. Dorrell: Since the introduction of the new dental contract on 1 October 1990, two dentists in the Bromley area have withdrawn from the national health service. This compares with eight withdrawals for the corresponding period in the previous year.

Nurses' Accommodation

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has investigated the amount of surplus nursing accommodation in the London area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department recently commissioned a further study of the utilisation of the NHS residential estate and the report of that study is presently being considered. The details of the availability and utilisation rates of health authorities in the Greater London area and the special health authorities for the London post-graduate teaching hospitals are shown in the table.

Table showing availability and utilisation rates for health authorities in the Greater London area. (Figures as at 30 November 1990)

	(a) Total Number of Units	(b) Percent availability	(c) Percent utilisation
North West Thames			
Barnet	930	[1]	[1]
Ealing	328	100	97
Harrow	639	100	97
Hillingdon	904	92	100
Hounslow and Spelthorne	[1]	[1]	[1]
Parkside	1,991	96	96
Riverside	1,908	94	100
North East Thames			
Barking Havering and Brentwood	1,247	92	85
Bloomsbury	[1]	[1]	[1]
City and Hackney	1,139	91	97
Enfield	510	93	91
Hampstead	1,029	98	87
Haringey	402	99	100
Islington	[1]	[1]	[1]
Newham	412	98	98
Redbridge	476	78	95
Tower Hamlets	1,165	[1]	[1]
Waltham Forest	802	87	86
South East Thames			
Bexley	[1]	[1]	[1]
Bromley	[1]	[1]	[1]
Camberwell	799	92	93
Greenwich	805	90	89
Lewisham and North Southwark	[1]	[1]	[1]
West Lambeth	[1]	[1]	[1]
South West Thames			
Croydon	780	96	100
Kingston and Esher	681	96	84
Merton and Sutton	[1]	[1]	[1]
Richmond Twickenham and Roehampton	417	99	95
Wandsworth	1,141	85	86
SHAs for the London Post-Graduate Teaching Hospitals			
Bethlem and Maudsley	307	100	90
Hospital for Sick Children	903	97	91
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte	623	95	93
National Neurology	240	100	93
Royal Marsden	323	97	94
National Heart and Chest	557	86	93

[1] Figures not provided.

Notes:

(b) Percentage of units available for letting out of the total stock.

(c) Percentage of *(b)* actually occupied.

Gulf Casualties

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans have been made to provide the rehabilitation which may be needed for service personnel injured in the Gulf; and how it will be financed.

Mr. Dorrell: Injuries to service personnel in the Gulf have been mercifully few. We anticipate that any rehabilitation needed after their treatment can be provided within existing plans.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans have been made to provide adequate social services for service personnel wounded in the Gulf; and how these will be financed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 5 February at columns *154-55*.

AIDS

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the Government are doing to combat the spread of AIDS.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government are fully committed to the fight against AIDS. Since 1985, we have allocated more than £500 million of earmarked funding to health and local authorities for the development of AIDS-related services and nearly £8 million to the voluntary sector. During this period we have also allocated over £62 million to support a major public education campaign and made some £50 million available for research into AIDS. In addition, we have played a full part in supporting international initiatives; we are the third largest contributor to WHO's global programme on AIDS.

Achondroplasia

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has to improve the availability of treatment facilities for achondroplasia.

Mr. Dorrell: It is for local health authorities to decide what services to make available for the treatment of achondroplasia, in the light of their assessment of local health needs and priorities, as against resources.

Hospital Treatment, York

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the numbers of in-patients and day cases treated respectively in the York health authority area were in (i) 1979 and (ii) the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is given in the table.

In-patients and day cases in York health authority

Year	*In-patients*	*Day cases*
1979		
Discharges and deaths	27,296	4,444
1988-89		
Discharges and deaths	34,176	5,523
Finished consultant episodes	38,184	
1989-90		
Finished consultant episodes	39,434	5,626

Source: 1979 SH3; 1988-89 SH3A; 1989-90 KP70.

Taylorplan Services Ltd.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the Bradford hospitals national health service trust assumed responsibility for hospitals in Bradford; when the contract for catering was signed with Taylorplan Services Ltd.; whether he was asked to supply any information about companies tendering for the catering contract; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Bradford hospitals NHS trust was established on 17 December 1990 and has certain functions, which include entering into contracts, before it becomes fully operational on 1 April. The tenders and the contract for catering services are a matter between the Trust and the contractors concerned and the Department has no direct involvement.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library a copy of the technical evaluation by Price Waterhouse of the tender submitted by Taylorplan Services Ltd. to North Lincolnshire district health authority in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. The evaluation was a contract matter between Price Waterhouse and the North Lincolnshire district health authority, and formed only part of a wider tendering exercise by that authority. Its contents are commercial in confidence. I can confirm that the authority has awarded two contracts to Taylorplan Services Ltd.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Soviet Union

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made in respect of Boris Nepomniashy of Moscow who has been unsuccessfully applying to leave the Soviet Union.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have included Mr. Nepomniashy's name in the list of cases regularly brought to the attention of the Soviet authorities and will continue to make firm representations in support of his application to leave the Soviet Union.

Israel

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the international nuclear-free zone local authorities conference, held in Glasgow last November, concerning the imprisonment in Israel of Mordechai Vanunu.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are aware of representations made by this body to the Israeli embassy in London. As we have stated on previous occasions, Mr. Vanunu appears to have been treated in accordance with the normal judicial process in Israel and his conditions of imprisonment are compatible with normal Israeli practice.

United Kingdom Embassies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the role of British military attachés at United Kingdom embassies.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The role of British military attachés at United Kingdom embassies and high commissions is to liaise with defence authorities of host countries on a range of military topics of common interest.

The Gulf

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy on the end of hostilities in the Gulf to investigate the extent to which non-lethal and lethal military technology sold by British firms to Iraq since 1979 was used by Iraq in abuses of the human rights of Kuwaitis or Iraqi dissidents since 2 August 1990.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Such an investigation is neither practicable nor necessary.

Libya

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current state of relations with Libya; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We see no prospect of an improvement in Anglo-Libyan relations until we are satisfied that Libya has terminated its support for international terrorism.

Nature and Natural Resources

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on resolution 18/7 which was passed by the 18th General Assembly of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources in Perth in 1990.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom state delegation to the 18th general assembly of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources explained that it could not support resolution 18/7 on Antarctica because the resolution endorsed only one possible mechanism for the comprehensive protection of the Antarctic environment. Had the general assembly been required to vote on that resolution the United Kingdom state delegation would have abstained. The state delegations of the United States of America and Norway associated themselves with the United Kingdom's position. A copy of the delegation's statement is being placed in the Library of the House.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs under what circumstances he would consider it appropriate to seek a single tender rather than open a contract to competitive tender in public relations or similar areas of work.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is FCO policy to award contracts on the basis of competitive tender for all kinds of work. Single tender action is used only when there are compelling reasons to do so, for example:

(a) When only one supplier on the bid list submits a bid.
(b) In cases of extreme urgency.
(c) In cases where only one source is acceptable for technical or quality reasons.
(d) When we are seeking extensions to existing contracts.

Hong Kong

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Hong Kong citizens have applied for United Kingdom passports; what is the likely proportion that will be granted passports; and how many dependants are likely to attach to each passport granted.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As at 4 March, the total number of applications, including those made by registered post before the 28 February deadline, stands at 65,623. It will not be possible to estimate the proportion of applicants who are likely to succeed, nor how many dependants there may be until all applications have been processed.

Embassy and Consular Staff

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to increase embassy and consular staff in former Warsaw pact countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are no further plans to increase embassy and consular staff in eastern European posts. These were inspected at the end of 1990 when increased staffing levels, authorised during 1990, were endorsed. Future staffing requirements for the Soviet Union are currently under review.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many *(a)* 16 and 17 year-olds and *(b)* people aged 18 to 25 years have (i) lost entitlement to or *(b)* been refused income support since the introduction of the age additions in severe disablement allowance;

(2) how many recipients of severe disablement allowance have lost entitlement to income support as a result of the introduction of age-related additions from December 1990.

Miss Widdecombe: It is estimated that up to 5,000 people no longer require income support as a result of the award of age-related additions to severe disablement allowance. This is because their incomes are above income support level. Information about the number of people affected by reference to their ages is not available.

Source: Modelled using data drawn from the 1989 ASE.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many people aged between six months and two years have *(a)* claimed and *(b)* been awarded attendance allowance for each year since 1971; and what is the total number of awards made to two-year-olds since 1971;

(2) how he plans to identify the people who were entitled to attendance allowance before their second birthday prior to the commissioner's decision CA/380/199; and what plans he has for compensating those who have been awarded the benefit following the commissioner's decision.

Mr. Scott: Attendance allowance has been payable to persons aged between six months and two years only since 9 April 1990. Claims decided during the period April 1990 to end of January 1991 are as follows:

	Number
Decisions made	6,800
Awards	5,300

Figures for awards made to two-year-olds could be separately identified only at disproportionate cost. An application for leave to appeal has been lodged against the commissioner's decision CA/380/1990.

Pregnancy

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the cost of making income support payable to pregnant 16 and 17-year-olds from the date that their pregnancy is confirmed.

Mr. Jack: There is inadequate information on which to make a reasonable estimate, because it is not known how many pregnant 16 and 17-year-olds would prefer to claim income support and not take up youth training, which pays an allowance at, normally, a higher rate than income support.

Child Benefit

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many *(a)* children and *(b)* families are in receipt of child benefit in the parliamentary constituencies of (i) Bury, North and (ii) Bury, South;

(2) how many children are expected to be in receipt of the higher-rate child benefit from 1 April in the parliamentary constituencies of (i) Bury, North and (ii) Bury, South.

Mr. Jack: Information relating to child benefit is available only on a national basis and cannot be given for particular areas.

Severe Disability Premium

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will outline the grounds on which payments and backpayments of the severe disability premium are being withheld from those on income support and attendance allowance; and whether he has plans to legislate retrospectively so that payments do not have to be made if the Court of Appeal decides in favour of disabled people.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings) on 27 February 1991 at column *541*.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department last conducted a full survey of the ethnic origins of its employees in June 1989. The survey was by means of a voluntary questionnaire. The data from the survey is routinely up-dated with information on new staff and leavers.

As part of our equal opportunities action plan and in common with other Government Departments, we are committed to improving the results of the last survey to achieve a 90 per cent. response rate. In consequence, some parts of the Department, where response rates were low, are currently conducting a resurvey.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Miss Widdecombe: In addition to steps being taken by the Civil Service Commission on recruitment, the Department has developed an action plan on equal opportunities. This includes several initiatives, to improve the representation of staff from ethnic minorities at all stages from recruitment to promotion.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1-7) and overall in the Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Miss Widdecombe: The information for the Department at 1 February 1991 is in the table.

Grade	*Total*	*Women*		*Ethnic minority staff*	
		Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
1	1	0	0	0	0
2	4	0	0	0	0
3	14	6	43	0	0
4	11	0	0	1	9·1
5	81	19	23	2	2·5
6	190	29	15	16	8·5
7	564	74	13	3	0·5
Others	85,434	57,925	68	3,295	3·9
Total	86,299	58,052	67	3,317	3·8

Note:
Ethnic minority figures are based on questionnaires voluntarily completed by staff (82 per cent. response rate to date).

Social Fund

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many payments were made from the social fund in 1988-89 and 1989-90 analysed by type of payment.

Mr. Scott: Payments were as follows:

	1988-89 thousands	*1989-90 thousands*
Maternity payments	170	175
Funeral payments	40	45
Community care grants	155	230
Budget loans	505	580
Crisis loans	380	450
Cold weather payments	1	45

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his parliamentary answers of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *292*, and 15 February, *Official Report*, column *629*, in which newspapers and on what date the local social security office for Clitheroe published the availability of, qualifying conditions for and application forms for special cold weather payments.

Mr. Scott: The Department's Accrington office, which deals with Clitheroe, placed an advertisement in the *Citizen* and the *Herald and Post* on 14 February 1991.

Earnings Disregard

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much additional expenditure would be involved if the £15 earnings currently disregarded for benefit purposes were to be increased to £50 per week.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 19 February 1991]:* An increase of £35 in the earnings disregard would have effects on people's choices which are difficult to anticipate. However, we estimate that the cost might be in the region of £150 million across the income-related benefits.

Income Statistics

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table in the manner of the tax-benefit model tables showing in 1988-89 and 1990-91 the gross earnings and net income with relevant social security benefits of (i) a married couple with two children aged four and six years with the head in full time work, (ii) a married couple with three children aged three, eight and 11 years with the head in full-time work, (iii) the same family types as in (i) and (ii) but with the head in full-time work and the wife in part-time work assuming average hours and earnings, assuming in all cases that the family types are home owners and paying average mortgages, breaking down their earnings into £10 bands ranging from £100 to £250.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 23 January 1991]:* I have placed the information requested in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Local Government Finance

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the level of general Exchequer grant paid to each district council in Northern Ireland for each financial year since 1985.

Mr. Needham: The information is set out in the table:

Grant paid to each council since 1985

District	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £	*1987-88* £	*1988-89* £
Antrim	312,498	370,276	297,415	230,107
Ards	853,823	1,145,922	1,144,002	1,109,965
Armagh	806,218	874,313	934,594	917,120
Ballymena	416,316	515,209	441,014	468,248
Ballymoney	433,467	457,971	600,171	553,888
Banbridge	505,922	529,522	605,433	586,867
Belfast	4,692,549	5,122,136	5,368,404	580,258
Carrickfergus	423,650	430,674	462,328	449,508
Castlereagh	435,300	526,291	426,557	430,021
Coleraine	370,204	342,722	288,401	311,666
Cookstown	470,701	479,230	517,465	477,515
Craigavon	1,258,565	1,256,531	1,503,284	1,505,757
Derry	2,150,279	2,411,072	2,517,295	2,698,647
Down	1,059,929	1,235,652	1,427,921	1,437,359
Dungannon	945,193	887,350	971,853	942,600
Fermanagh	1,054,522	1,144,780	1,193,343	1,116,206
Larne	383,348	395,700	372,040	390,630
Limavady	428,037	486,044	522,866	607,730
Lisburn	798,696	1,089,944	1,015,680	1,117,620
Magherafelt	615,274	623,256	687,739	711,912
Moyle	372,579	447,269	463,143	457,943
Newry and Mourne	2,387,487	2,598,258	2,632,989	2,670,374
Newtownabbey	1,027,691	1,050,207	1,053,659	986,500
North Down	347,092	655,536	581,305	591,281
Omagh	1,109,986	1,026,753	1,114,700	1,106,807
Strabane	1,163,216	1,097,377	1,243,202	1,204,510

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the district rate fixed by each district council in Northern Ireland for each financial year since 1985.

Mr. Needham: The information is set out in the table:

District rate fixed in pence

District	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
1. Antrim	42·00	45·75	48·50	51·00	53·00	54·50
2. Ards	50·00	53·00	53·00	54·00	57·50	65·00
3. Armagh	34·50	38·00	38·00	41·00	44·00	47·50
4. Ballymena	36·35	38·00	39·85	42·85	44·00	47·00
5. Ballymoney	42·25	45·25	46·00	47·00	50·25	54·00
6. Banbridge	44·93	47·97	50·98	50·98	50·98	54·88
7. Belfast	69·04	76·36	80·03	83·96	83·96	88·08
8. Carrickfergus	55·00	57·50	59·41	62·50	65·75	69·50
9. Castlereagh	33·00	39·08	41·00	39·90	37·90	44·39
10. Coleraine	45·00	49·00	50·00	53·00	55·00	55·00
11. Cookstown	35·85	39·75	43·00	42·75	47·75	51·75
12. Craigavon	54·93	60·21	63·35	63·35	67·47	70·77
13. Derry	59·50	67·00	69·50	72·55	76·80	84·00

District	District rate fixed in pence					
	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
14. Down	45·00	53·00	60·00	65·00	68·00	70·00
15. Dungannon	38·00	41·50	44·00	44·00	44·00	47·75
16. Fermanagh	42·75	48·75	50·75	53·50	55·50	57·50
17. Larne	45·00	49·25	52·55	55·75	56·75	64·68
18. Limavady	35·00	39·00	40·95	43·50	47·00	50·50
19. Lisburn	46·24	48·80	49·75	53·57	53·57	55·56
20. Magherafelt	33·04	36·56	41·05	43·50	46·34	49·00
21. Moyle	59·75	65·75	65·75	65·50	68·40	74·22
22. Newry and Mourne	49·00	54·30	59·70	59·70	58·00	58·00
23. Newtownabbey	52·60	55·11	57·24	60·06	64·10	64·69
24. North Down	51·50	56·90	60·90	63·70	65·85	69·24
25. Omagh	43·00	47·00	51·65	55·00	58·50	64·30
26. Strabane	43·50	50·50	54·00	57·00	60·75	67·25

Libraries and Information Services Council

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will list the reports produced by the Libraries and Information Services Council for Northern Ireland in each year from 1986.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

1986 — Annual report
1987 — Annual report
1988 — Annual report
1989 — Annual report
1990 — Annual report and
1990 — Library and information plan for Northern Ireland

Housing Waiting Lists

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applicants are at present on the Housing Executive waiting list in categories A1, A2, A3, A4, B1, B2 and B3 in *(a)* Antrim borough council area and *(b)* Mossley district office area in Newtownabbey.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I am advised by its chief executive that the information requested is as follows:

Number on waiting list as at 26 January 1991

Area	A1	A2	A3	A4	B1	B2	B3
Antrim borough council area	20	26	13	7	485	48	—
Mossley district office area	15	23	10	—	351	114	1

Housing Developments

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* Housing Executive or *(b)* private housing developments in the Newtownabbey borough council or Antrim borough council areas where building work has ceased for 12 months have (i) portions of road or (ii) portions of pavement still unadopted.

Mr. Needham: The information is not available in the form requested. However, there are *(a)* four Northern Ireland Housing Executive developments and *(b)* approximately 40 private developments in the two council areas where building work has ceased for 12 months and which have roads or footpaths still unadopted.

Building Control Fees

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has proposals to bring building control inspection fees and plan fees to a level closer to the cost of the services.

Mr. Needham: Yes. The Department of Environment for Northern Ireland will be consulting later this year on a proposal to increase fees for prescribed building control functions.

Ballycloughan Primary School

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the enrolment at Ballycloughan primary school for each of the past five years;

(2) how many applicants there are for new places at Ballycloughan primary school for the academic year beginning September; how many of these applications have been approved; what is the planned enrolment at Ballycloughan school in September; what proposals there are to provide for increased enrolments at Ballycloughan school; whether parental choice to send children to Ballycloughan school will be respected; and if he will make a statement about future enrolments at this school.

Dr. Mawhinney: The enrolments were as follows:

	Number
January 1987	42
January 1988	44
January 1989	45
January 1990	51
January 1991	53

The South-Eastern education and library board, in consultation with the school's board of governors, is responsible for the determination of the enrolment number and admission criteria for Ballycloughan primary school.

I understand that 23 children sought admission to the school for September 1991; 18 have been offered places and 15 have accepted. The enrolment planned for September 1991 is 63.

The enrolment of a school is limited by its physical capacity. Ballycloughan primary school is oversubscribed for admissions in September 1991 and the school's admission criteria has been applied to determine which children should be admitted. The criteria give priority to

children for whom Ballycloughan primary school is the nearest primary school or who have a brother or sister already enrolled.

It is intended that part IV of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 will be brought into operation for primary schools in September 1992. This will require the Department of Education, in consultation with boards of governors, to determine an enrolment and admissions number for all primary schools. it is not possible to say at this stage what future enrolments at Ballycloughan primary school will be. Under open enrolment generally, parents will have the opportunity to express their preference as to the school they wish their children to attend.

Labour Statistics, Coleraine

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were employed in the civil service in the Coleraine council area by Department as at 1 January and 1 July in each year from 1985 to 1991; and if he will list the reasons for any substantial change in the numbers year on year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information in respect of the dates specified is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost. However, the table lists the number of non-industrial Northern Ireland civil servants employed in the Coleraine district council area by Department as at 1 April in each year from 1985 to 1991 and as at 1 March in 1991.

The increase in staff numbers in 1986 was a result of expansion in the Department of the Environment's vehicle licensing office and water service and the decrease in 1990 was the result of fluctuations in staff numbers across a number of Departments.

Northern Ireland Civil Service
Coleraine District Council area—non-industrial staff in post at 1 April

Year	DANI	DED	DOE	DFP	DHSS	NIO	PANI	Total
1985	173	18	382	57	96	5	20	751
1986	173	19	404	53	101	6	19	775
1987	164	22	391	53	109	10	24	773
1988	156	22	395	52	112	9	23	769
1989	156	23	395	51	107	9	23	764
1990	149	21	383	46	99	16	25	739
[1]1991	135	23	390	42	91	16	30	727

[1]At 1 March.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of persons employed by sex in each standard category of employment in the Coleraine council area for 1 January and 1 July for each year from 1985 to 1991.

Mr. Needham: Information on the number of employees by industry (excluding agriculture) and district council area is obtained from the census of employment which has been conducted every two or three years since 1978. The information available from this source from September 1984 onwards by sex and industrial sector is as follows:

Employees in employment—Coleraine district council

Industrial division	SIC 1980 division	Males	Females	Total
September 1984				
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing[1]	0	—	—	—
Energy and Water Supply Industries	1	808	104	912
Manufacture Metals, Mineral Products and Chemicals	2	505	29	534
Metal Goods, Engineering and Vehicle Industries	3	426	509	935
Other Manufacturing Industries	4	1,375	717	2,092
Manufacturing	2-4	2,306	1,255	3,561
Construction	5	691	60	751
Distillery, Hotels and Catering; Repairs	6	1,516	1,430	2,946
Transport and Communication	7	388	92	480
Banking, Finance, Insurance and Business Services	8	484	406	890
Other Services	9	2,339	3,925	6,264
Services	6-9	4,727	5,853	10,580
Total		8,532	7,272	15,804
September 1987				
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing[1]	0	—	—	—
Energy and Water Supply Industries	1	732	92	824
Manufacture Metals, Mineral Products and Chemicals	2	148	13	161
Metal Goods, Engineering and Vehicle Industries	3	562	910	1,472
Other Manufacturing Industries	4	1,436	843	2,279

Industrial division	SIC 1980 division	Males	Females	Total
Manufacturing	2-4	2,146	1,766	3,912
Construction	5	699	95	794
Distillery, Hotels and Catering; Repairs	6	1,470	1,603	3,073
Transport and Communication	7	390	47	437
Banking, Finance, Insurance and Business Services	8	467	455	922
Other Services	9	2,486	4,047	6,533
Services	6-9	4,813	6,152	10,965
Total		8,390	8,105	16,495

[1] Agriculture figures related to Coleraine rural district.
Source: 1984 and 1987 census of employment.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number and percentage of (i) male unemployed, and (ii) female unemployed in the council area of Coleraine as at 1 January and 1 July for each year from 1985 to 1991; and where Coleraine council area was ranked among all council areas in Northern Ireland for each figure given.

Mr. Needham: The number of male and female unemployed claimants in the Coleraine district council area for the months requested is as follows:

Table 1
Number of unemployed claimants in the Coleraine district council area

	Male	Female
1985		
January	2,767	994
July	2,625	1,002
1986		
January	3,008	1,117
July	3,100	1,125
1987		
January	3,212	1,105
July	2,909	1,091
1988		
January	2,946	1,015
July	2,789	1,077
1989		
January	2,764	986
July	2,622	980
1990		
January	2,567	888
July	2,382	888
1991		
January	2,399	774

Unemployment rates are available only for travel-to-work-areas (TTWAs). Coleraine district council area falls within the Coleraine TTWA which also includes Ballymoney and Moyle district council areas. The table shows the unemployment rates for males and females in the Coleraine TTWA and where each was ranked among the twelve TTWAs in Northern Ireland.

Table 2: Unemployment in the Coleraine travel-to-work-area

	Males			Females		
	Number of unemployed	Rate	Rank	Number of unemployed	Rate	Rank
January 1985	5,100	21·7	7	1,636	11·8	9
July 1985	4,911	20·9	7	1,667	12·0	9
January 1986	5,555	23·4	7	1,822	12·9	8
July 1986	5,706	24·1	5	1,864	13·2	8
January 1987	5,961	25·5	5	1,861	12·9	9
July 1987	5,530	23·7	5	1,862	12·9	9
January 1988	5,486	23·8	5	1,681	11·4	9
July 1988	5,072	22·0	6	1,796	12·1	7
January 1989	5,017	22·2	6	1,667	11·2	7
July 1989	4,752	21·0	6	1,662	11·2	8
January 1990	4,627	20·1	5	1,418	9·6	8
July 1990	4,351	19·2	5	1,450	9·8	8
January 1991	4,501	19·9	6	1,311	8·8	8

The rankings are on the basis of Coleraine's position within the 12 Northern Ireland TTWAs and these were ranked from the highest to the lowest unemployment rate.

Hospital Expenditure

Rev. Martyn Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide in tabular form the capital expenditure on hospital provision in each board area for the years 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Year	Northern board £	Southern board £	Eastern board £	Western board £	Total £
1987-88	1,929,000	1,452,978	10,495,130	3,587,000	17,464,108
1988-89	2,913,000	2,399,613	9,570,042	3,410,000	18,292,655
1989-90	4,256,000	1,614,691	10,337,931	3,761,000	19,969,622

New Hospitals

Rev. Martyn Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the new hospitals provided in each board area from 1970.

Mr. Hanley: The following new hospitals have been provided since 1970:

Eastern board
- Belfast City hospital tower block
- Mater Infirmorum hospital, Belfast, new block

Southern board
- Craigavon area hospital, Portadown
- Daisy hill hospital, Newry
- Mullinure hospital, Armagh

Western board
- Waterside hospital, Londonderry

Terrorism

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the security statistics for the first half of 1990 are now available, together with details of persons charged with terrorist type offences and convictions for scheduled offences for that period.

Dr. Mawhinney: Yes. The statistics for the first half of 1990 are as follows. (Statistics for earlier years can be obtained from the Library).

Statistics on Security (January to June 1990)
Part I—Statistics of Terrorist Activity

	Number	Number
Shooting Incidents[2]	202	(90)
Explosions	105	—
Bombs neutralised	72	—
Weight of explosives in lbs[1]	6,556	—
Explosions neutralised	7,918	—
Armed robberies	203	—
Amount stolen	£860,368	—
Malicious fires	166	—
Deaths:		
Civilian	18	—
Army/UDR	7	(1/6)
RUC/RUC'R'	4	(3/1)
Injuries:		
Civilian	228	—
Army/UDR	96	(83/13)
RUC/RUC'R'	131	(100/31)

[1] Estimated weight only.
[2] Figures in ( ) refers to shots heard only and are not included in the total.

Part II—Statistics of Security Forces' Activity
Dwellings Searched

	Army	RUC
Occupied	278	—
Unoccupied	122	—
Derelict	94	—
Total	494	1,870

Note:
Searches of dwellings frequently involve both the Army and RUC and are registered in their respective records. The totals therefore should not be aggregated and are shown separately to avoid an element of double counting.

	Number
Finds:	
Weapons	139
Ammunition (rds)	12,559
Explosives (lbs)	4,004

Persons charged with terrorist-type offences

	Number
Murder	4
Attempted murder	35
Firearms offences	67
Explosives offences	15
Theft act	18
Other	82
	221

Part III—Convictions and Sentences for Scheduled Offences
Notes on the tables

1. The offence classifications are based on those used by the Crown Court in their annual return.
2. The tables relate to persons convicted at the Belfast Crown Court. This covers all scheduled offences tried on indictment.
3. Some jury trials are included in cases where the Attorney General certified out of the scheduled mode of trial, ie non-terrorist serious offences.
4. Where a person has been convicted of more than one offence only the most serious or that which received the longest sentence is recorded in the statistics.

Convictions and sentences for scheduled offences
Sentence (January to June 1990)

Number convicted

Offence	*1990*	*Non-custodial sentence*	*Young offenders centre training schools*	*Less than 5 years*	*5 years and less than 7 years*	*7 years and less than 10 years*	*10 years and less than 15 years*	*15 years and less than 20 years*	*20 years and over*	*Life*
Murder	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Attempted murder	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Aid and abet murder	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Conspiracy to murder	6	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	0	0
Manslaughter	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm	13	5	2	2	0	1	0	3	0	0
Causing grievous bodily harm	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assault occasioning actual bodily harm	11	9	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Causing explosion	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0
Placing explosives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Offence	1990	Non-custodial sentence	Young offenders centre training schools	Less than 5 years	5 years and less than 7 years	7 years and less than 10 years	10 years and less than 15 years	15 years and less than 20 years	20 years and over	Life
Possessing explosives with intent	8	1	0	0	1	2	2	2	0	0
Other explosives offences	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possessing a firearm with intent	22	4	4	1	5	3	5	0	0	0
Possessing a firearm	4	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Carrying a firearm with intent (including imitation)	4	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other major firearms offences	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minor firearms offences	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Robbery	54	21	2	16	7	2	3	3	0	0
Armed robbery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Membership of an illegal organisation	3	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Attempted robbery	17	12	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Soliciting support for proscribed organisation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unlawful collection of information	3	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Illegal training	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kidnapping and false imprisonment	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Blackmail	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Contributing to resources of a proscribed organisation	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Burglary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Aggravated burglary	6	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Hijacking	14	11	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Attempted Hijacking	5	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arson	12	6	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Possession of an offensive weapon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Petrol bomb offences	18	16	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Escape offences	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Criminal damage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intimidation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assisting offenders	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Withholding information (terrorist and terrorism)	7	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possessing prohibited articles (weapons)	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possession of information	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bomb hoax	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Perverting the course of justice	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Withholding information re arrestable offence	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common law riot affray	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rape	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Handling	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Making property available	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common assault	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	249	120	20	40	19	9	16	14	3	8

Storm Damage

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums were received from the EC. for the victims of the storms of 5 and 6 January in respect of emergency aid; what sums were received in each of the previous three years for such a purpose; and how the sums for each year were expended and in what areas.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 26 February 1991]:* A total of 500,000 ECUs (£340,000 sterling equivalent) has

been provided by the European Commission to assist victims in the United Kingdom of the recent storms (December 1990 and January 1991) and arrangements are now being made by the British Red Cross Society for distribution.

Under existing EC priorities, aid is given to relatives of those who have been killed, to those injured and, where appropriate, to those who have suffered material loss.

Following the storms of late 1989 to early 1990, Northern Ireland received and distributed £14,100 in respect of two persons who died and three who were seriously injured as a result of those storms.

Senior Complaints Officer

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applicants applied for the post of senior complaints officer as advertised by the Fair Employment Commission on 15 February; how many of these applicants were *(a)* Roman Catholics and *(b)* Protestants; and why it has been necessary to re-advertise this post on 26 February.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* When the Commission had received only three applications in response to its first advertisement it decided to re-advertise the position in order to attract more candidates.

The religious affiliation of the applicants will be monitored when the recruitment exercise has been completed.

SCOTLAND

Takare plc

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he was consulted about any proposal to provide exclusive private sector elderly care units on the land sold by Greater Glasgow health board to Takare plc.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I was aware that Takare was constructing a facility for 240 beds and that the board had entered into a contract for 180 of these.

Forestry

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to produce a new set of objectives for forestry policy covering environmental needs, public enjoyment and timber production.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. The principles of multi-purpose forestry, with a greater emphasis on social and environmental benefits, have been fully adopted. A review of forestry policy would not serve any useful purpose at the present time.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he plans to take any steps to halt the commercial afforestation of hilly areas.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government's policy is that proposals for the large-scale planting of conifers in the English uplands will not normally be approved. The Government remain of the view, however, that there is scope for such planting in the hills of Scotland and Wales, provided that this is carried out in an environmentally sympathetic way.

Foxes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many fox destruction societies or clubs are registered with his Department.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Thirty one fox destruction societies or clubs are currently approved for grant purposes by my right hon. Friend.

Schools

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many secondary schools there were in Scotland in 1979-80 and at the latest recorded year;

(2) how many primary schools there were in Scotland in 1979-80 and at the latest recorded year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There were 2,530 and 2,372 education authority primary schools and departments at September 1979 and 1990 respectively.

The corresponding numbers of education authority secondary schools and departments were 445 in 1979 and 423 in 1990.

Bilingual Tourism Signs

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be in a position to respond to Ross and Cromarty district council's proposal to erect seven bilingual tourist signs at points of entry to the district; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office has received numerous requests from regional and district councils to further relax the design rules to permit boundary signs to carry more information to help project corporate identities, including a request from Ross and Cromarty district council for bilingual tourist signs. In order to achieve a fair and consistent policy in these matters the Scottish Office propose to issue for consultation by the end of April draft guidance on tourist signposting, which will include proposals for council boundary signs. Decisions will be taken later this year in the light of responses received from consultees.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many current hill livestock compensatory allowance applications he has received; how many have been processed; and when he expects the payments to be completed and paid.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A total of 11,326 applications had been received by local offices of the Department by Wednesday 27 February. Payments totalling £25·139 million were issued on 4 March to 7,807 producers, under arrangements announced on 1 March. it is anticipated that the great majority of payments will be made in full by the end of April, although this will depend on the speed with which application forms, still outstanding, are completed and returned to the Department.

Housing

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the detailed burdens and conditions to be built into the title deeds of the heritable

property disposed of under the voluntary disposals of former Scottish Special Housing Association housing stock in the Borders region in terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988; and what mechanisms and sanctions would be available to Ministers against any future private sector landlords succeeding to the ownership of the stock.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* These properties are owned by Scottish Homes and it is a matter for the current owner to determine, on the basis of its own legal advice, which, if any, burdens and conditions should be imposed on the stock to be transferred. As part of the process leading to the ballot these burdens and conditions would be made clear to tenants.

There is no provision in statute which enables Ministers to take any sanction against any future private sector landlords succeeding to the ownership of the stock.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if Scottish Homes has discretionary power to allow two or more options of private sector landlords to proceed to the ballot stage for consideration by tenants under the procedures laid down for the voluntary disposal of former Scottish Special Housing Association housing stock in terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* In the guidance which my right hon. Friend has given to Scottish Homes, there is nothing which prevents the agency from putting forward two or more options to the ballot stage for consideration by tenants. Scottish Homes procedures of October 1989 allow proposals which have been accepted after initial screening to be processed until they have been rejected by Scottish Homes or by evidence of the ballot of tenants or by the decision of my right hon. Friend.

In practice, tenants will have an opportunity before ballot stage to seek advice from advisers chosen by themselves and financed by Scottish Homes. At each ballot only one proposal for change will be put to the tenants. Where a majority of tenants vote against the proposal they will have the option of remaining as tenants of Scottish Homes.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland under what circumstances he would give consent to public sector housing authorities in rural areas to (i) seek to factor former Scottish Special Housing Association housing stock and (ii) to make bids to acquire former Scottish Special Housing Association housing stock under the provisions for voluntary disposal of housing stock under the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* No guidance has been issued on which bodies would be acceptable as factors for Scottish Homes stock. Management arrangements are essentially matters for the landlord, in the first instance, and do not of themselves require the approval of my right hon. Friend.

As indicated in his recent guidance to Scottish Homes, my right hon. Friend would be willing to consider a recommendation from that agency for a disposal to a local authority where Scottish Homes took the view that there were special circumstances relating to those particular houses such that the disposal would not compromise Ministers and Scottish Homes objective of promoting diversity of choice in housing. I would not wish to prejudge the precise circumstances in which that would be the case, but would expect that these would rarely arise.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the recommended timescale to allow the published procedures to be carried out for each phase of the voluntary disposal of former Scottish Special Housing Association housing stock by Scottish Homes in the Border region;

(2) if he will delay stage 3 of the prescribed process for considering voluntary disposals of housing stock under the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 in circumstances where a private sector landlord who entered the bidding at stage 2 of the procedure argues that insufficient time has been allowed to complete their detailed application.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* No. The procedures published by Scottish Homes in October 1989 indicated that the evaluation of any proposals should be completed within three months of the proposals being accepted after the initial screening stage. This period should include evaluation within Scottish Homes and any associated negotiation with the prospective new landlord up to the ballot stage.

However, since the publication of those procedures my right hon. Friend has issued additional guidance to Scottish Homes on the handling of the current proposals. I understand that Scottish Homes accepts that the period for processing proposals requires to be reviewed and extended. I will ask Scottish Homes to make public the revised timetable for the proposals in the Borders.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will require Scottish Homes to publish the names of all unsuccessful bids made by private sector landlords to acquire former Scottish Special Housing Association housing stock in the Borders at the end of stage 2 of the procedure for the voluntary disposal of stock and prior to the tenants being balloted;

(2) if he will require Scottish Homes to publish a summary statement of reasons for arriving at conclusions, whether positive or negative, in any proposals submitted by any private sector landlords applying under the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 to acquire former Scottish Special Housing Association housing stock.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* No. Without the specific authority of the bidders concerned it would be inappropriate to publish reasons for arriving at conclusions without breaching the bidders' commercial confidentiality.

However, Scottish Homes published procedures set out the requirement that tenants affected by particular proposals must be advised of the proposal as soon as the board have approved the Sub-Committee's recommendation to follow the initial screening stage with detailed evaluation. At that time a press release will be made by Scottish Homes. If the proposal is rejected at the initial screening stage, the regional director of Scottish Homes will consider whether there is a requirement to provide any information to tenants at that time.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to oblige Scottish Homes to undertake to ensure that the private sector landlords who seek to be considered as bidders for the voluntary

disposal of former Scottish Special Housing Association housing stock in the Borders at the end of stage 2 of the prescribed procedures are not disadvantaged in any way relative to the party whose initial proposal triggered the process of voluntary disposal under the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* The procedures published by Scottish Homes specify the range of information to be provided to all prospective purchasers to facilitate their preparation of formal proposals. These procedures also provide that all proposals will be assessed on the same basis and that all proposals which have been accepted after initial screening will be processed until they have been rejected by Scottish Homes, or by evidence of the ballot of tenants or by the decision of the Secretary of State.

I look to Scottish Homes to ensure that all prospective purchasers have adequate time to prepare their proposals in line with the guidance which my right hon. Friend has issued that fair and proper competition should be undertaken whenever possible.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will commission independent consultants to assess any proposals submitted by any private sector landlords applying under the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 to acquire former Scottish Special Housing Association housing stock.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* No. Assessment of individual proposals is a matter for Scottish Homes to consider, in terms of its published procedures for considering voluntary disposals of stock, with such assistance as it considers necessary. My right hon. Friend will assess any proposals for disposal which are submitted for his consent, with such assistance as he considers necessary, and will withhold his consent if he is not satisfied that the interests of the tenant have been fully protected.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those areas of housing policy which he would expect Scottish Homes to raise with local statutory housing authorities as a consequence of proposals being submitted by any private sector landlords applying under the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 to acquire former Scottish Special Housing Association housing stock located in the local authority area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* In accordance with the guidance which was issued to Scottish Homes in February 1989, in putting forward any proposals for my right hon. Friend's consent, the agency should draw attention to any impact on the local authority's interest and their capacity to meet their statutory obligations. In particular, the impact should be identified on the authority's duties towards those accepted as homeless under the "Homeless Persons" provisions in part II of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987; and under section 36 of Land Compensation (Scotland) Act 1973. The impact of any proposal can best be identified by consultation with the authority concerned, taking into account any current or future provision of housing agreed between Scottish Homes and the authority.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what safeguards will be required by him to protect the interests of tenants of any private sector landlord who acquires housing stock under the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 and who subsequently is made bankrupt or goes into liquidation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* Details of which, if any, safeguards are required to be written into any conditions of disposals are presently being considered by Scottish Homes.

I will ask Scottish Homes to make public its decisions on this matter.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what regard to local income levels and economic circumstances has to be paid by private sector landlords who have acquired housing stock under the voluntary disposals procedures under the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 when setting future levels of rent.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* In terms of Scottish Homes published procedures, the rental proposals for the property will form a part of Scottish Homes assessment of the overall proposal. And it is the overall proposal which will be put to tenants in any ballot. Future rental increases will be determined by the provisions of the tenancy agreement or will be subject to the arrangements for rental increases under assured tenancies under the provisions of sections 24 and 25 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on what instructions he would give to Scottish Homes in the event that he refuses to transfer any of the former Scottish Special Housing Association housing stock in the Borders region to any private sector landlord, in terms of the future factoring arrangements on expiry of the existing contractual arrangements.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* Factoring and management arrangements are essentially landlord responsibilities and as such fall to be dealt with by Scottish Homes itself.

The financial memorandum which sets out the arrangements under which grant in aid is payable to Scottish Homes specifies that value for money should be ensured through economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the management of resources and that financial considerations should be borne in mind in all transactions.

The need for further guidance will be kept under review.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be able to make public the system of valuation to be used when considering the transfer of former Scottish Special Housing Association housing stock in the Borders region to private sector landlords under the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* It is intended that the valuation system to be adopted in any large-scale voluntary transfer of housing stock will be that the houses will be valued on the basis of open market value subject to existing tenancies with account being taken of the condition of the stock.

The district valuer will be invited to assess the market value of the stock and this valuation will subsequently be used as a benchmark against which final decisions will be taken.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in what circumstances he would consider allowing the transfer of former Scottish Special Housing Association housing stock in the Borders region to private sector landlords under the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 at a transfer price which was below the district valuer's assessment of its market value.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* Transfer at less than the district valuer's valuation would not normally be acceptable. However, Scottish Homes in agreeing to the terms of a sale may impose conditions on the tenancies which will require financial support to be given to the landlord. Scottish Homes procedures allow for such financial support to be given.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he has given to Scottish Homes on the procedures to be observed when disposing of amenity land and other open spaces unrelated to housing; and whether such amenity space will form any part of any proposal made by a private sector landlord bidding for former Scottish Special Housing Association housing stock in the Borders region.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* The disposal of surplus land by Scottish Homes is governed by the consent of my right hon. Friend and in accordance with the procedures applying to the disposal of land by Departmental public bodies as set out in the paper issued by the Scottish Office in August 1984.

In accordance with Scottish Homes, published procedures on the consideration of voluntary disposals of stock, planned open space in housing developments, which is proposed should be transferred with the properties, should be identified on an appropriate plan of the proposed acquisition. It will be subject to valuation by the district valuer. The procedures require that arrangements for the maintenance of the open space, be determined, identifying how the costs are to be met and apportioned since, in principle, landlords will be expected to assume this responsibility unless there are agreed arrangements to the contrary.

Sports and Recreation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average time spent in physical education and sports by children in Scottish schools in *(a)* 1978, *(b)* 1984 and *(c)* 1990.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 8 February 1991]:* Information in the form requested is not available. The average proportion of pupil time given to physical education in education authority secondary schools in 1983 was 6·5 per cent.; the corresponding figure for 1989 was 6·6 per cent. ranging from 7·3 per cent in S1 to 4·5 per cent. in S6. Figures for the percentage of time spent separately on sport are not available but arrangements are being made for statistics to be collected in future of time spent on physical recreation as a timetabled activity within the curriculum.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 6 March 1991

TRANSPORT

Light Dues

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what decisions he has taken about light dues in 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: After three successive years in which light dues have been reduced, I regret that increases in costs over that period make a 6·7 per cent. increase in the light dues tariff unavoidable this year. This is not unexpected and was anticipated in the light dues statement of my predecessor a year ago. Even with this increase, which is below the rate of inflation, light dues are still below their 1987 level and are at the same cash level as in 1981. In real terms the burden has been reduced by about half in a decade.

Coupled with the tariff change there are two measures which will particularly benefit the regular payers of light dues. First, I am satisfied that there is room for a second year of the "bargain break" introduced in 1990-91 whereby the maximum number of chargeable voyages in the cargo sector will be reduced from seven to six. This will benefit shipping which has contributed in the past to the strength of the liquid funds of the general lighthouse fund. For individual ships the "bargain break" represents a 14 per cent. reduction in their annual liability.

Secondly, in response to representations from the shipping industry, I am revising the dues liability for ships paying on a per voyage basis. From April such ships will be required to pay dues on no more than one voyage per month; and "month" for this purpose will be a rolling, rather than calendar, month. This replaces the present rule under which ships of less than 25,000 net tonnage have been liable to dues on two voyages per calendar month (up to the exemption limit) and ships of 25,000 net tonnage and over have been liable to dues on one such voyage. This will have significant cash flow benefits for most cargo shipping, and for some ships the total liability in the year will also be reduced.

The necessary order to give effect to these changes will be laid shortly.

I have not yet reached a conclusion on the recommendations in the British Ports Federation report about the extension of light dues to pleasure craft, but this matter is being actively considered. Any change here would almost certainly require primary legislation.

Road Construction

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much he expects his Department to spend on road construction in 1991-92; and what new schemes are expected to start construction.

Mr. Chope: Spending on road construction, including land acquisition, in 1991-92 will total over £1,300 million. A total of 53 new schemes, as listed, are expected to be started. Whether and when individual schemes start depend on the satisfactory completion of the statutory procedures.

New Starts 1991-92

Eastern
- A14 (M1–A1) Contract 2
- A14 (M1–A1) Contract 3
- A14 (M1–A1) Contract 5N
- A14 (M1–A1) Contract 8
- A14 (M1–A1) Contract 9
- M25 Junction 15–16 widening
- A12 Gorleston relief road
- A11 Thetford–Bridgham
- A602 Little Wymondley bypass
- A5 Little Brickhill bypass
- A41 Kings Langley bypass
- A41 Berkhamsted bypass
- A47 East Dereham–North Tuddenham
- A11 Four Wentways–Newmarket
- A11 Besthorpe–Wymondham
- A11 Newmarket–Red Lodge
- A47 Narborough bypass

South East
- M20 Junction 5–8 improvement
- A20 Court Wood–Dover
- A20 Folkestone–Court Wood Contract 2
- A23 Warninglid–Sayers Common
- A41 Wendlebury–Bicester
- A27 Westhampnet bypass
- A27 Crossbush bypass
- A23 Handcross–Pease Pottage
- A2 Hardshoulders
- M25 Clackett Lane motorway service area
- A3 Milford bypass
- A339 Basingstoke bypass
- A420 Kingston Bagpuize bypass

North West
- M66 Denton–Middleton Contract 4
- M56 Junction 4–6 widening
- A568 Widnes Eastern bypass
- A585 Fleetwood Dock Street
- A59 Greengates–Gutteridge

London
- Hackney–M11 Contract 4
- A40 Long Lane
- A13 Blackwall/Cotton Street
- A13 Butcher Row improvement

West Midlands
- M5 Junction 6–8 widening
- A5 Fazeley, Two Gates and Wilnecote bypass
- A423 Southam bypass
- A38 Fradley Lane

Yorkshire and Humberside
- A638 Doncaster North Bridge relief road

East Midlands
- A16 Ludborough bypass
- A16 Stickford bypass

Northern
- A595 Egremont bypass
- A596 Wigton bypass
- A590 Dalton bypass
- A1 Marshall Meadows improvement
- A1 Browniesside improvement

South West
- A30 Okehampton–Launceston
- A39 Wadebridge bypass

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to which posts in public bodies he appoints individuals where the posts are *(a)* part-time and *(b)* remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Mr. McLoughlin: Only one: the chairmanship of the Civil Aviation Authority.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of those employed in his Department are disabled.

Mr. McLoughlin: Of the Department's current staff of 15,274, 187 are registered as disabled (1·24 per cent.). A further 188 staff, who have indicated that they have disabilities, have not registered their disability.

Antares Inquiry

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the results of the inquiry into the sinking of the vessel Antares from Carradale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* I understand that the inspector's inquiry is likely to be completed by the early summer.

Under the Merchant Shipping (Accident Investigation) Regulations, a minimum of two months will then be needed while the report is considered by persons whose reputations are likely to be adversely affected. Unless the Secretary of State finds good reason not to publish, this will follow as soon as possible after the chief inspector has submitted his final report.

Inland Waterways

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to carry out his duties under section 13 of the Transport Act 1978 to promote a policy for the use of inland waterways for commercial transport.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

The Government wish to see maximum use of rivers and canals for freight transport where it is commercially sensible. But they take the view that customers should be free to choose the mode of transport best suited to their needs. The Government's role is to ensure that conditions of competition are fair and subject to proper safety and environmental standards.

However, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport may give grants under section 36 of the Transport Act 1981 towards inland waterway freight facilities. This brings environmental benefits by reducing the number of lorries on unsuitable roads.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Property Marking

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Attorney-General whether it is the policy of the departments for which he is responsible to mark property with an indelible mark or similar means of identification.

The Attorney-General: The Departments for which I am responsible do not at present have a policy of indelibly marking equipment. Each Department records the serial number of equipment where such equipment is so marked.

The Crown prosecution service requires all offices to maintain a register of valuable items of equipment recording serial numbers or other identification marks. Line managers are required periodically to check equipment against the register.

The Treasury Solicitor's Department is introducing an asset register identifying assets within the Department and recording date of purchase, type of asset, and its location.

Katyn Massacre

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 6 February, *Official Report*, column *140*, if he will now reconsider the status of the eight documents contained on the file with Public Record Office references FO 371/34563-345900 and currently identified as withheld.

The Attorney-General: The eight papers referred to from the 1943 Foreign Office file on Polish-Soviet relations are retained by that Department under section 3(4) of the Public Records Act 1958. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor is satisfied, on advice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, that the documents are properly retained in accordance with the arrangements set out in paragraphs 28 to 31 of the White Paper "Modern Public Records", Cmnd 8531, March 1982.

Omar Bakri Mohammed

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Director of Public Prosecutions will initiate proceedings to prosecute Omar Bakri Mohammed for incitement to murder.

The Attorney-General: I understand that the Metropolitan police are investigating possible offences by Omar Bakri Mohammed in the light of statements attributed to him by the media. The result of the investigation will be reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Authorised Conveyancing Practitioners Board

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Lord Chancellor has decided whom he proposes to appoint as members of the Authorised Conveyancing Practitioners Board.

The Attorney-General: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has today appointed the following people to serve as members of the Authorised Conveyancing Practitioners Board.

Alan Brakefield
Tamara Goriely
Alan Mills
Kate Mortimer
June O'Dell, OBE.

The chairman of the board is John Sadler CBE, whose appointment was announced by the Lord Chancellor on 20 December 1990.

Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Lord Chancellor has decided whom he proposes to appoint as members of the Lord Chancellor's advisory committee on legal education and conduct.

The Attorney-General: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has today appointed the following people to serve as members of the Lord Chancellor's advisory committee on legal education and conduct:

Mrs. Liliana Archibald
Professor Richard Card
His Honour Judge John Gower, QC
Eric Hammond, OBE
Brian Harvey
John Hosking, CBE
Patrick Lefevre
Luke March
The Reverend Dr. Colin Morris
Dr. Claire Palley
Ms. Usha Prashar
Nicholas Purnell, QC
Peter Scott, QC
Graham Smith, CBE
David Ward
David Wilkins.

The chairman of the advisory committee is Lord Griffiths MC, whose appointment was announced by the Lord Chancellor on 16 October 1990.

CIVIL SERVICE

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether he will make a statement on the progress of monitoring exercise carried out in the civil service in accordance with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Renton: Departments, agencies and the Civil Service Commission continue to make good progress in carrying out monitoring exercises and taking follow-up action in accordance with the Commission for Racial Equality and Equal Opportunities Commission codes of practice. My office monitors overall progress.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Building Control Fees

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to what extent the increase in building control inspection fees and planning fees has fallen behind inflation since 1980.

Mr. Needham: Building control inspection fees are related to the cost of providing the service rather than the rate of inflation. Fees were first introduced in 1982. The retail prices index shows an increase of 65 per cent. between January 1982 and January 1991. Building control fees for the erection, alteration or extension of small domestic buildings rose by 52 per cent. in the same period. The sliding scale of fees for larger construction work is linked to the cost of the works.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) when he will establish a policy for 1991 renewables non-fossil fuel obligation in respect of Northern Ireland.

(2) what action he proposes to encourage hydro-electric generation from sites in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply which I gave the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) on 11 February 1991 at column *324-25*.

Bus Services

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made towards implementation of the recommendations contained in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report of June 1989 on the bus services in Northern Ireland provided by Ulsterbus Ltd. and Citybus Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The initial response announced to the House on 24 April 1990 indicated that there had been a positive reaction to the recommendations, none of which was rejected. The follow-up response, which I have today placed in the Library of the House, confirms that 32 of the 58 recommendations have already been implemented and the remaining 26 are in the process of implementation. The response was produced in consultation with the Northern Ireland Transport holding company and the bus companies.

I am pleased to report that, among the more important developments, a new market-led approach with emphasis on customers' needs is now firmly established; capital expenditure on all major projects is subject to investment appraisal and post-completion audit; and a new unit, under an inspector general, ensures that quality of service is accorded high priority.

The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland will keep the implementation of the recommendations under periodic review to gauge the improvement in bus services and management of the companies. I will report the progress to the House in due course.

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to which posts in public bodies he appoints individuals where the posts are *(a)* part-time and *(b)* remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no part-time posts in public bodies in Northern Ireland remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

HEALTH

Waiting Lists

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the percentage of those waiting for non-urgent operations who wait longer than *(a)* six months, *(b)* one year and *(c)* two years, (i) nationally and (ii) in the South Manchester health authority area;

(2) what was the number and percentage of patients waiting for non-urgent operations in 1980, 1985 and 1990 (i) nationally and (ii) in the South Manchester health authority area.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is given in the tables. Since March 1987 information on waiting lists has not been classified according to urgency of condition. Figures for 1990 therefore relate to all patients waiting for in-patient treatment in the surgical acute specialties.

It is the time people wait which is important. Since 1980 the number of patients waiting for over one year for in-patient treatment in the surgical acute specialties has fallen by 1 per cent. in South Manchester health authority and by nearly 11 per cent. in England as a whole.

Numbers of non-urgent cases waiting on surgical specialty lists for in-patient treatment

Year	England	South Manchester
March 1980	580,596	5,781
March 1985	614,217	4,875

Total numbers waiting on surgical specialty lists for in-patient treatment

Year	England	South Manchester
March 1990	723,447	7,122

Percentage waiting on surgical specialty lists for in-patient treatment by time waiting at March 1990

	England	South Manchester
6 months +	45	54
12 months +	24	32
24 months +	9	15

Source: KH06/7/7A—March 1990
SBH 203—1980 and 1985

Devon Health Authorities

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what brief has been given to Touche Ross regarding a merger of North Devon, Torbay and Exeter health authorities; on what date this survey was commissioned; and by what date it will report.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that South Western regional health authority has commissioned Touche Ross to conduct a preliminary examination of the case for mergers between health authorities in Devon. My hon. Friend may wish to contact Mr. Charles Stuart, the chairman of South Western regional health authority for details.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make it his policy not to approve formally any merger between Torbay and North Devon health authorities without prior consultation with the right hon. and hon. Members representing the county;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 28 February, what is the timetable for any regional decision, consultation and formal approval for any merger between Exeter, Torbay and North Devon health authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that South Western regional health authority is still considering whether to propose any amalgamation of health authorities in Devon. Should it decide to do so, it would formally consult all interested parties, including right hon. and hon. Members representing the county. The regional health authority would consider the responses before deciding whether to recommend any amalgamation of Devon health authorities to my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State.

New Hospitals

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what effect including a calculation of capital charges in a business plan for a bid to build a new hospital would have on its financial viability;

(2) how capital charging has affected the planning of the building of new hospital projects.

Mr. Dorrell: The existing methodology for appraising options for NHS building plans takes account of the costs of capital, including the opportunity cost. The introduction of capital charges will have a similar effect in appraising options.

From April 1991, when considering plans to alter service provision, provider units will also need to ensure that purchasing authorities are willing and able to meet any additional costs which may arise.

Census Enumerators

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many advertisements for census enumerators were placed in jobcentres in January; and how many of these vacancies were filled by Friday 1 February.

Mr. Dorrell: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and the General Register Office for Scotland made arrangements with the employment service to display a special poster advertising census enumerator posts in all job centres throughout Great Britain from early January 1991. A total of 117,550 enumerators are due to be appointed by 22 March 1991. By 1 February 91,041 people had applied, either to jobcentres or direct to the census offices; and 2,324 appointments had been made. The latest information available centrally is for 20 February. By then 185,960 people had applied and 24,671 appointments had been made.

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to which posts in public bodies he appoints individuals where the posts are *(a)* part-time and *(b)* remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Mr. Dorrell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is responsible for approximately 1,213 part-time appointments to public bodies. Details of these posts can be obtained from the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1990". A copy of which is available in the Library.

None of our part-time or full-time posts receives salaries in excess of £50,000 per annum.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of those employed in his Department are disabled.

Mr. Dorrell: A total of 0·74 per cent. of staff working in the Department are registered as disabled. The Department also employs a number of people with disabilities who are not registered as disabled.

Mortality Statistics

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will update his replies to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East on 21 October 1987, *Official Report*, columns 808-09 and 2 December 1988, *Official Report*, columns 439-40, regarding mortality statistics.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is shown in the following table.

The data for 1990 are provisional, and the later months in particular are likely to be affected by late registration.

Number of deaths by month of occurrence and age group

	Males		*Females*		*Persons*
	65+	*75+*	*60+*	*75+*	*75+*
England and Wales, 1987					
January	20,835	12,812	26,067	19,115	31,927
February	17,262	10,609	21,379	15,617	26,226
March	18,662	11,407	22,975	16,530	27,937
April	16,717	10,095	20,788	14,890	24,985
May	16,736	9,977	20,525	14,567	24,544
June	15,930	9,523	19,995	14,047	23,570
July	15,771	9,383	19,836	14,112	23,495
August	15,557	9,304	19,427	13,978	23,282
September	15,404	9,192	18,782	13,353	22,545
October	17,460	10,557	21,788	15,612	26,169
November	17,358	10,488	21,554	15,537	26,025
December	20,183	12,517	25,135	18,313	30,830
England and Wales, 1988					
January	19,994	12,411	24,840	18,290	30,701
February	18,486	11,571	23,179	16,906	28,477
March	19,911	12,402	25,661	19,022	31,424
April	17,439	10,666	22,067	16,097	26,763
May	16,608	10,064	20,711	14,939	25,003
June	15,686	9,558	19,638	14,124	23,682
July	15,915	9,682	19,563	13,991	23,673
August	16,071	9,667	19,879	14,218	23,885
September	15,569	9,504	19,099	13,729	23,233
October	17,025	10,427	21,007	15,229	25,656
November	17,774	10,990	22,189	16,056	27,046
December	19,924	12,584	25,647	18,914	31,498
England and Wales, 1989					
January	19,576	12,340	24,787	18,306	30,646
February	16,734	10,431	20,769	15,174	25,605
March	18,114	11,351	22,731	16,713	28,064
April	17,317	10,706	21,370	15,531	26,237
May	16,866	10,576	20,755	15,237	25,813
June	16,173	10,053	20,235	14,785	24,838
July	15,795	9,909	20,030	14,703	24,612
August	15,294	9,454	19,134	13,923	23,377
September	15,486	9,589	19,032	13,851	23,440
October	17,030	10,693	21,366	15,545	26,238
November	18,087	11,308	22,539	16,604	27,912
December	27,909	18,587	37,589	28,894	47,481
England and Wales, 1990 [1]					
January	21,018	13,589	27,279	20,606	34,195
February	17,182	10,924	21,290	15,864	26,788
March	18,036	11,387	21,963	16,277	27,664
April	17,154	10,898	21,532	15,881	26,779
May	16,977	10,584	20,775	15,243	25,827
June	16,125	10,088	19,916	14,578	24,666
July	16,087	9,922	20,043	14,771	24,693
August	15,400	9,610	19,501	14,306	23,916
September	15,588	9,765	18,956	13,814	23,579
October	16,778	10,587	20,594	15,182	25,769
November	—	—	—	—	—
December	—	—	—	—	—

[1] 1990 data are provisional and the later months in particular are likely to be affected by late registration. Figures for November and December are not yet available.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Education

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set a date to give every prisoner the right of access to prison education and to make the escorting of prisoners to education classes a duty for prison officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government are already considering the recommendation of the third report from the Education, Science and Arts Committee on this matter and will now wish to take into account the various recommendations that have been made by Lord Justice Woolf and His Honour Judge Stephen Tumim in the report of their recent inquiry into the prison disturbances, April 1990. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has said that the Government plan to issue a White Paper later this year, but we have already made clear the importance which we attach to education as part of a positive and constructive regime and that we want to see more prisoners taking up education courses. Escorting inmates, where necessary, to enable them to attend educational classes or to take part in other regime activities is already part of the task of prison officers.

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to which posts in public bodies he appoints individuals where the posts are *(a)* part-time and *(b)* remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The chairman of the Independent Television Commission is the only post in a public body to which I have appointed someone who is part-time and remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Homicide

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many recorded cases of homicide remain unsolved since 1960; whether these files remain open; and what guidance his Department is giving to police forces on whether to pursue investigations of unsolved homicides.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No central record is kept of the number of recorded cases of homicide which remain unsolved since 1960. Figures for recorded homicides where no subject was charged during the year in question are set out in the table; figures for years prior to 1979 are not available. The police are always ready to investigate unsolved murders further. Decisions about whether to pursue such investigations are operational matters for chief officers of police. The clear-up rate for homicide cases is high; in 1989 it was 92 per cent.

Recorded offences of homicide where no suspects are charged

	Number
1979	32
1980	19
1981	24
1982	50
1983	31
1984	38
1985	34
1986	36
1987	35
1988	35
1989	57

Disabled Employees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of those employed in his Department are disabled.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Home Office currently employs 138 registered disabled persons, which represents 0·32 per cent. of the total number of staff. No record is kept of staff with disabilities who have chosen not to register.

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he plans to review the registration fee payable under the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The triennial registration fee is intended to recover the costs of the Office of the Data Protection Registrar. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary order, the Government propose to increase it from £56 to £75 from 1 June 1991.

Prison Escapes

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether Mojisola Soetan, Gena Aina and Aderinjola Absosede Agbabiaka who escaped from East Sutton Park on 5 April 1990 and 22 April 1990 have since been recaptured.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. These three women are still unlawfully at large.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether Bernadette Ambrose, Mavis mary Sasu and Kudi Balogun who escaped from Drake Hall on 4 February 1990 and 25 February 1990 have since been recaptured.

Mrs. Rumbold: Bernadette Ambrose has been recaptured. The other two women remain unlawfully at large.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many absconders from open prison were recaptured in 1990.

Mrs. Rumbold: A new system of recording data on the recapture or surrender of absconders was introduced in November 1990. From that date until the end of 1990, a total of 190 prisoners unlawfully at large from open prisons were recaptured or surrendered. This figure includes prisoners who had failed to return to prison having been granted temporary release. The information requested prior to November 1990 is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners absconded from open prisons in 1990.

Mrs. Rumbold: During 1990 1,148 prisoners absconded from open prisons.

Iraqi Citizens (Entry Visas)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if entry visas have been granted to the Iraqi citizens M. Ibrahim Hammadi and Qahman Al Azzawi since January 1986.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have been unable to trace any record of the issue of a visa or of the entry to the United Kingdom of a Mr. Hammadi or a Mr. Al-Azzawi from the information provided.

Police

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the 700 extra police posts approved by him have been taken up by the local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend announced on 20 December 1990 the allocation in 1991-92 of 564 police posts for the provincial forces, 100 for the Metropolitan police and 36 for the regional crime squads. Of the 564 extra posts that have been allocated to 34 provincial forces 26 have not yet been taken up, by two police authorities which have so far been unable to confirm that they will be able to meet their share of the additional cost.

Private Medical Treatment

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people who entered Britain on a visa, in the last year for which figures are available, did so for the purposes of receiving private medical treatment; what proportion were required to produce medical records; and what is the procedure if their medical records are not available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Those coming for medical treatment are not distinguished in statistical records from visitors arriving for other purposes. Under paragraph 23 of the published immigration rules passengers may be required to produce evidence that arrangements have been made for consultation or treatment but production of medical records would not normally be a matter for the immigration officer.

Crime, Leicestershire

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what percentage reported crime has increased in Leicestershire since 1979; and what proportion of that increase was in crimes of violence.

Mr. John Patten: In the 12 months to the end of September 1990, the number of recorded crimes in Leicestershire was 122 per cent. higher than in 1979. Six per cent. of the increase was attributable to crimes of violence.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received concerning the location of premises selected for the European bank for reconstruction and development; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The choice of a permanent headquarters building will be made by the European bank for reconstruction and development. Meanwhile the Government have provided transitional accommodation for the bank in the City. I refer the hon. Member to the Overseas Development Administration departmental minute laid before the House on 17 December 1990.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many United Kingdom citizens are to be employed by the European bank for reconstruction and development; and what roles they will perform.

Mrs. Chalker: The president-designate of the bank is responsible for staff recruitment from among member states of the bank and he will make his choices on merit. I am pleased to note the bank has selected Mr. John Flemming, previously with the Bank of England, for the senior position of chief economist.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will estimate the cost to Her Majesty's Government of the establishment of the European bank for reconstruction and development in London.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) on 17 December 1990. In addition, we are meeting transitional accommodation and office support costs estimated at £2 million to enable the bank to prepare for operations.

THE ARTS

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Minister for the Arts to which posts in public bodies he appoints individuals where the posts are *(a)* part-time and *(b)* remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Mr. Renton: The appointments which I make of trustees, board members, etc., to posts in public bodies, are part-time. None is remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum; most are unpaid.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total amount of mortgage interest relief that would be withdrawn per £1 billion existing relief per year if the relief percentage were reduced by (i) 1 per cent., (ii) 5 per cent. and (iii) 10 per cent. in England and in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maude: Available estimates for the United Kingdom in 1990-91 are given in the following table.

Reduction in the rate of mortgage interest relief	*Reduction in mortgage interest relief per £1 billion of relief*
Percentage points	*£ million*
1	40
5	190
10	370

Separate estimates in respect of England are not available.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total amount of mortgage interest relief that would be saved per £1 billion existing relief per annum if the eligible loan ceiling for such relief for standard rate payers were reduced to (i) £29,000, (ii) £25,000, (iii) £20,000 and (iv) £15,000 in England, the United Kingdom and London and the south-east.

Mr. Maude: Available estimates for the United Kingdom in 1990-91 are given in the table. They relate to all mortgagors and exclude behavioural effects. Estimates for England, London and the south-east are not separately available.

Limit on Mortgage interest relief £	*Direct revenue yield per £1 billion of relief £ million*
29,000	10
25,000	90
20,000	190
15,000	330

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the amount of mortgage interest tax relief going to each economic planning region of the United Kingdom in 1990-91; and what is the average amount of subsidy per person in each region with a mortgage.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* Broad estimates, based on the regional distribution of mortgage interest relief recorded in the family expenditure survey for 1988 and 1989, are as follows:

Mortgage interest relief 1990-91

	Total cost £ million	*Average cost per mortgagor £*
Northern	360	680
Yorkshire	530	670
North West	770	680
East Midlands	490	720
West Midlands	620	710
East Anglia	310	890
Greater London	1,130	1,090
Other South East	1,960	1,000
South West	750	870
Wales	260	670
Scotland	530	810
Northern Ireland	90	750
United Kingdom	7,800	830

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to which posts in public bodies he appoints individuals where the posts are *(a)* part-time and *(b)* remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My right hon. Friend does not make any appointments to posts which are both part-time and remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will provide the information on United Kingdom manufacturing investment given in his answer to the hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) on 5 June 1990, *Official Report*, column *406*, at constant prices for the latest year available.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* The table provides revised and updated information for the years from 1985.

United Kingdom manufacturing investment (including leased assets) £ million 1985 prices

Year	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Actual Investment (a)	10,264	9,656	10,185	11,505	12,421	11,738
Difference from 1978-79 average (a)—£10,937	−673	−1,281	−752	+568	+1,484	+801
1979 Investment Projected at 1974-79 average rate of change (2·1 per cent.) (b)	12,639	12,905	13,176	13,453	13,735	14,023
Difference from actual level (a)—(b)	−2,375	−3,249	−2,991	−1,948	−1,314	−2,285
1979 Investment projected at year on year per cent. changes[1] for:						
Japan	not available	not available	not available	not available	not available	not available
France	11,365	11,801	12,449	13,838	—	—
USA	11,103	9,905	9,980	10,897	—	—
West Germany	11,680	12,589	13,293	—	—	—
OECD[2]	not available	not available	not available	not available	not available	not available

Source:

[1] OECD National Accounts Volume 2 1976-88. The percentage changes are based on figures, at 1980 prices, of gross fixed capital formation by owners engaged in manufacturing. The coverage is therefore not exactly comparable to the United Kingdom figures which differ, in particular, by the inclusion of leased assets.

[2] Figures of gross fixed capital formation in manufacturing are not available for a number of OECD countries. It is not possible to produce average change figures covering the group of countries for which figures are available because all figures are expressed in national currencies.

Inflation

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the annual rate of inflation for the fiscal years 1989-90 and 1990-91; and what is his estimate of the rate of inflation for fiscal year 1991-92.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* All-items RPI inflation averaged 7·8 per cent. in the financial year 1989-90. The comparable figure for the market price GDP deflator was 6½ per cent. (adjusted for the distortion caused by the abolition of domestic rates). Complete data for 1990-91 are not yet available. The autumn statement forecast was for an increase in the GDP deflator of 8 per

cent. in 1990-91 and 6 per cent. in 1991-92; no such forecast is published for the RPI. A new forecast will be published with the Budget.

Research and Development

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list, for each year since 1979, for each of the G7 countries, the amount of *(a)* civil research and development expenditure undertaken by private firms, *(b)* civil research and development expenditure undertaken by governments and *(c)* each of the above as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* In 1989 civil research and development undertaken by industry in the United Kingdom was £5,730 million which represents 1·1 per cent. of GDP. Prior to 1989 information collected did not distinguish between civil and defence R and D. Comparable information for other countries is not readily available.

The available information on Government civil R and D in G7 countries (except Canada) is given in tables 6.8 and 6.9 of the 1990 edition of the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Mortgage Rates

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effects of *(a)* annual and *(b)* six-monthly changes in mortgage rates set by building societies on fluctuation in the monthly figures for the retail prices index.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* The mortgage interest payments component of the RPI is calculated using the current rates of interest charged by building societies and banks in order to reflect the changes in liabilities as they accrue for typical mortgage payers. The RPI is an index of prices rather than payments and it is not appropriate to reflect the various arrangements where payments are fixed for set periods.

North Sea Oil

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the total revenues to the Exchequer from North sea oil since May 1979, expressed in 1990 prices.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* The total over the period since 1979-80 is estimated at around £98 billion at 1990 prices.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for each of the years of the existence of the business expansion scheme, what was *(a)* the regional distribution of BES funds and the associated cost to the Exchequer, *(b)* the distribution of BES investments by two-digit SIC and *(c)* the average size of investment.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* Information on the companies receiving investments through the business expansion scheme is published in chapter 7 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1990". Further information that is readily available is as follows:

Companies Receiving BES Investments

Industry	*1987-88*		*1988-89*	
	Number of companies	*Amount of investment £ million*	*Number of companies*	*Amount of investment £ million*
Agriculture, Horticuture, Forestry	21	9	13	1
Fishing	20	6	11	1
Manufacture of Metals, Minerals and Chemicals	32	3	21	1
Mechanical Engineering	26	2	7	1
Electrical and Electronic Engineering	51	5	26	1
Manufacture of Transport Equipment	20	7	11	4
Instrument Engineering	20	2	7	1
Food and Drink Industry	30	2	12	—
Textile, Clothing and Footwear Industry	24	1	7	—
Manufacture of Paper and Paper Products	40	3	33	3
Other Manufacturing Industries	49	4	40	3
Construction and Real Estate	50	34	30	3
Wholesale Distribution	41	7	42	4
Retail Distribution	88	27	51	3
Distribution and Repair of Motor Vehicles	24	3	11	1
Hotels and Catering	74	43	42	4
Transport and Storage Services	28	1	21	9
Business, Professional and Technical Services	69	6	64	4
Medical, Educational and Social Services	38	30	26	1
Recreational, Hairdressing and Personal Services	59	4	38	2
Private Rented Housing	—	—	1,948	365
Others	14	2	15	2
Total	818	200	2,476	416

The average size of investment per company is as follows:

	£ thousand
1983-84	147
1984-85	183
1985-86	224
1986-87	222
1987-88	245

	£ thousand
1988-89	168
[1]1989-90	240

[1] Provisional.

Income Tax

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the annual reduction in income tax for a person on an annual income of *(a)* £10,000, *(b)* £20,000, *(c)* £30,000, *(d)* £40,000, *(e)* £70,000 and *(f)* £150,000 as a result of income tax changes since the 1988 Budget.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* The information is in the table, which compares the income tax liability in 1990-91 with liability under 1988-89 rates of tax with allowances and thresholds indexed to 1990-91 levels by reference to movements in the RPI. The calculations are for a single, non-aged person with no reliefs or allowances apart from the personal allowance.

Annual income £	*Increase in tax liability* £
10,000	0
20,000	0
30,000	225
40,000	225
70,000	225
150,000	225

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average individual cumulative gain *(a)* in current prices and *(b)* in 1990-91 prices to those earning £5,000, £10,000, £15,000, £20,000, £25,000, £30,000, £40,000, £50,000, £60,000 and £70,000 a year as a result of changes in income tax since 1979.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* Latest estimates of the annual change in income tax liability resulting from the changes in tax rates, allowances and thresholds are in the table. The 1978-79 income tax regime has been indexed to 1990-91 levels of reference to the statutory formula, and allowing for independent taxation.

For the purposes of these calculations the indexed regime of 1978-79 is applied directly to the income base of 1990-91. In practice, retention of the regime, indexed as appropriate, for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

Average reduction in income tax per individual[1] in 1990-91 compared with 1978-79 indexed regime

Range of individual's income in 1990-91 (£)	*Average reduction at 1990-91 prices (£)*
Under 5,000	130
5,000 to 10,000	360
10,000 to 15,000	650
15,000 to 20,000	930
20,000 to 25,000	1,250
25,000 to 30,000	1,680
30,000 to 40,000	2,340
40,000 to 50,000	4,000
50,000 to 60,000	6,830
60,000 to 70,000	9,980
Over 70,000	36,430
Total	910

[1] Individuals paying income tax under the 1978-79 indexed regime.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many tax units and individuals had *(a)* earned income and *(b)* total income in the top (1) 1 per cent., (2) 5 per cent. and (3) 10 per cent., and the bottom (i) 10 per cent. and (ii) 50 per cent. of the earnings and income distribution, respectively.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 27 February 1991]:* In 1990-91 it is estimated that there are 26·5 million individuals liable to income tax of whom 26·3 million have earned income. Information is accordingly as follows:

Thousands

	Number of individual taxpayers in 1990-91 *Earned income distribution*	*Total income distribution*
Top 1 per cent.	300	300
Top 5 per cent.	1,300	1,300
Top 10 per cent.	2,600	2,600
Bottom 10 per cent.	2,500	2,600
Bottom 50 per cent.	13,100	13,200

Incomes

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total and average investment income and earned income in 1989-90 and 1990-91 of *(a)* the top 1 per cent., *(b)* the top 5 per cent., *(c)* the top 10 per cent., *(d)* the bottom 70 per cent., *(e)* the bottom 50 per cent., *(f)* the bottom 10 per cent., of taxpayers and *(g)* all taxpayers.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* Estimates are in the table.

Group of income taxpayers	*1989-90[1]* *Total earned income* £ billion	*Average earned income* £ per annum	*Total investment income* £ billion	*Average investment income* £ per annum	*1990-91[2]* *Total earned income* £ billion	*Average earned income* £ per annum	*Total investment income* £ billion	*Average investment income* £ per annum
Top 1 per cent.	17·8	82,800	6·9	32,200	20·6	78,800	7·4	28,200
Top 5 per cent.	49·7	46,000	12·2	11,300	55·4	42,200	13·0	10,000
Top 10 per cent.	78·5	36,300	15·6	7,300	85·6	32,500	16·7	6,500
Bottom 70 per cent.	134·2	8,900	11·6	880	150·1	8,200	13·5	870
Bottom 50 per cent.	79·4	7,400	7·5	820	88·7	6,800	8·9	830
Bottom 10 per cent.	10·2	4,800	n/a	n/a	11·2	4,300	n/a	n/a
All taxpayer	292·3	13,500	33·6	1,700	321·7	12,200	37·1	1,600

[1] Counting married couples as one unit.
[2] Counting husbands and wives as separate individuals under independent taxation.
n/a Estimates not available.

All estimates are provisional and subject to a wide margin of error since they are based on a projection of the 1988-89 survey of personal incomes and the coverage of investment income in the survey is incomplete. In some cases investment income on which basic rate liability is satisfied by deduction at source is not reflected in the survey. Information on the investment income of the bottom 10 per cent. of taxpayers is not available.

European Regional Support

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he is taking to ensure that moneys provided by the European Community in support of regional need are neither classed as items of United Kingdom public expenditure nor limited because of any curb on public spending imposed by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Mellor: The estimated moneys provided by the European Community in support of regional need, as with other receipts from the European Community, are taken into account in setting our public expenditure programmes, which are thus higher than they would otherwise be.

EMPLOYMENT

South Glamorgan TEC

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether, pursuant to his answer of 26 February, *Official Report*, column *480*, his Department was aware of the involvement of E C Harris, quantity surveyors, in the proposed new South Glamorgan TEC headquarters building project prior to 24 September 1990.

Mr. Jackson: The Department was aware before 24 September that E C Harris has been commissioned by South Glamorgan TEC to undertake some preliminary work which preceded the tendering process.

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment to which posts in public bodies he appoints individuals where the posts are *(a)* part-time and *(b)* remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Mr. Howard: The public bodies sponsored by the Employment Department Group are listed on pages 18 to 22 of the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1990" which is available in the House of Commons Library. The list shows the appointments and the salaries paid. Part-time appointments are printed in light type and bold type denotes full-time appointments.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of those employed in his Department are disabled.

Mr. Jackson: The Employment Department Group employed 3·2 per cent. registered disabled staff at 1 June 1990, which is the latest available figure. The group also employs people with disabilities who have chosen not to register. The group complies with the code of practice on the employment of people with disabilities issued by the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service, and aims to increase the representation of those with disabilities especially at higher grades. The group as an employer has adopted the disability symbol it recently launched.

Nursery Courses

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will restore funding to the nursery nurses course at Basford Hall college of further education, Nottingham to enable those students currently on the course to complete their studies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My Department's Greater Nottingham area office is seeking ways to support the continuation of training for trainees currently undertaking NNEB courses in nursery nursing at Basford Hall college of further education.

All trainees will be given the opportunity to complete their period on employment training.

Gulf Casualties

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans have been made to provide suitable jobs for service personnel permanently disabled in the Gulf.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* It is too soon to say how many United Kingdom service personnel who sustained injuries in the Gulf crisis might be discharged on medical grounds.

Service personnel who are medically discharged because retention in the relevant service is not a possible option are helped by the resettlement officers of each service both before and after discharge. These officers work in close liaison with disablement resettlement officers (DROs) from the employment service, and with a variety of other organisations which can provide resettlement, rehabilitation and training assistance, to ensure that the needs of the service personnel when re-entering civilian life are met most effectively.

In particular, DROs are invited to resettlement panels run by the services and can offer advice and guidance there. Anyone who requires further help, perhaps in their home area, in identifying, gaining and retaining suitable work can obtain it from the employment rehabilitation service and from DROs and other employment service staff.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to issue guidance on conflicts of interest to the chairmen or women and all board members of all training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* The revised TEC operating agreement which will come into force from April this year includes new clauses on conflicts of interest.

ENERGY

Natural Gas

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the location and estimated reserves of natural gas in Scotland.

Mr. Moynihan: Exploration and appraisal to date indicate only minor amounts of natural gas in onshore oil and gas discoveries in Scotland.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of those employed in his Department are disabled.

Mr. Wakeham: At 1 June 1990, 1·18 per cent. of my Department's staff were registered disabled persons.

My Department's staff also included at this date other people with disabilities who had chosen not to register. No separate records are kept of unregistered disabled people.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufactured Trade Balance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the balance of manufactured trade between *(a)* Britain and the United States of America and *(b)* Germany and the United States of America in 1980, 1983, 1986, 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information is in the table. Figures for 1990 are not available for Germany's trade with the United States of America.

Crude trade balance[1] in manufactures[2] with United States of America

US$ billion

	Federal Republic of Germany	*United Kingdom*
1980	2·6	−2·4
1983	4·9	−1·7
1986	15·0	1·6
1988	12·6	−0·4
1989	8·1	−1·3
1990	n./a.	−3·7

[1] The crude trade balance is exports (fob) less imports (cif).
[2] Manufactures = SITC divisions 5 to 8.
Source: OECD Series C.

Iraq

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what was the value of goods and services supplied to Iraq last year; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the value of goods and services supplied to Libya last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: This information is available in Business Monitor MM20: Overseas Trade Statistics for the United Kingdom (December 1990) Table 1b. A copy is available in the Library.

Data on United Kingdom trade in services are not available by partner country.

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to which posts in public bodies he appoints individuals where the posts are *(a)* part-time and *(b)* remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Mr. Leigh: The chairmanship of British Shipbuilders.

Rechar

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what expenditure has been undertaken under the terms of the European Rechar programme in the United Kingdom and in each of the other EC member states.

Mr. Leigh: The question does not arise, since implementation of most Rechar programmes, including those in the United Kingdom, has yet to begin. Decisions from the European Commission are awaited.

Argentina

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what subjects the Minister for Trade raised with the Argentine Government on his recent visit.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 1 March 1991]:* Among the subjects discussed were the improvement in relations between Britain and Argentina, the increase in our bilateral trade, the progress of the Uruguay round, opportunities for British investors and exporters, the Argentine economy and the country's plans for privatisation.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much was paid out as *(a)* incentive bonuses and *(b)* rebates to persons opting out of (i) SERPS and (ii) occupational pension schemes for each year since 1986; and how many persons opted out in each case during each of these years.

Mr. Jack: The main objective of the pensions reforms was to reduce the long-term costs of SERPS by encouraging the growth of alternative forms of pension provision.

The Government Actuary estimates that the numbers opting out of SERPS (either in contracted-out occupational schemes or with personal pensions) are as follows:

Great Britain, Millions

	Number in contracted-out schemes	*Number with personal pensions*	*Total contracted-out*
1987-88	9·1	3·1	12·2
1988-89	9·3	3·1	12·4
1989-90	9·4	4·0	13·4

The revenue forgone in respect of rebates and incentives is estimated to be as follows:

Great Britain, £ billions

	Rebates to schemes	*Rebates to personal pensions*	*Rebates Total*	*Incentives to schemes and personal pensions*
1987-88	4·7	1·0	5·7	0·3
1988-89	4·8	1·0	5·8	0·4
1989-90	5·3	1·5	6·8	0·6

The amounts paid are shown against the year to which they relate rather than the year in which payment was made.

Maternity Pay

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the average amount of maternity leave taken, in weeks, by women in receipt of statutory maternity pay;

(2) if he will estimate the proportion of women in receipt of statutory maternity pay who receive the lower rate only throughout the maternity pay period;

(3) if he will publish figures showing the number and proportion of women in receipt of statutory maternity pay who receive less than the maximum 18 weeks' statutory maternity pay entitlement.

Mr. Jack: Detailed statistics about statutory maternity pay are not collected centrally from employers. It is not possible, therefore, to provide sufficiently accurate estimates of the information requested at this time. It is hoped that the information will be available to allow such estimates to be made when a survey of maternity rights being carried out by the Policy Studies Institute is published later this year.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate how many women lost entitlement to the earnings-related element of statutory maternity pay as a result of the 1987 changes which changed the qualifying week to the 15th week before expected confinement.

Mr. Jack: Information is not available of the numbers of women who either gained or lost the earnings element of statutory maternity pay (SMP) as a result of the 1987 change in the qualifying week.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what guidance he will issue to local adjudicating officers on arrangements for care for claimants in former local authority homes who *(a)* are existing residents in a former local authority home, *(b)* are new residents nominated by the local authority entering the home after transfer, *(c)* are new residents not nominated by the local authority and *(d)* live in homes where (i) staff employment remains the local authority's responsibility, but the new provider manages the scheme, (ii) property is leased to fall-back provisions and (iii) a fund is made available by the local authority to cover necessary top-ups of fees;

(2) what guidance he will issue to local adjudicating officers to assist them in determining the eligibility of individual claimants to enhanced levels of income support when local authorities have transferred elderly residents' homes to independent trusts or voluntary bodies.

Miss Widdecombe: Eligibility for income support is defined by regulation. Decisions regarding claims to benefit will be made at local level by the independent adjudication officers, who are provided with guidance on the interpretation of the regulations by the chief adjudication officer in the published adjudication officers' guide.

No special arrangements have been made for when homes are transferred out of local authority control. The existing guidance issued to adjudication officers is available to assist in determining eligibility for income support in such cases.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance he will give to local adjudication officers about eligibility of claimants to income support when they are in nursing homes where arrangements made by health authorities rely on patients claiming income support and where *(a)* premises are transferred from health authorities to independent providers, *(b)* beds are reserved through health authority contracts, *(c)* health authorities have arranged with a third party for sums of money to be available for top-up of income support and *(d)* health authorities retain rights, or continue to employ staff directly.

Miss Widdecombe: Eligibility for income support is defined by regulation. Independent adjudication officers are provided with guidance on the interpretation of the regulations by the chief adjudication officer (rather than my right hon. Friend) in the published adjudication officers guide.

The NHS has a responsibility for providing medical and nursing care. This is mainly provided in NHS accommodation. Health authorities (HAs) can enter into contractual arrangements with independent nursing homes for the treatment of NHS patients. They cannot charge people when they do so. Patients in private homes under these arrangements are NHS in-patients and cannot be charged and therefore cannot receive income support as that benefit is designed to provide help with actual charges. HAs cannot make topping-up payments.

Property Identification

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether it is the policy of his Department to mark property with an indelible mark or similar means of identification.

Miss Widdecombe: General guidance on security matters recommends that portable equipment should be given an identification mark. In addition, standards laid down for the housing of IT equipment emphasise the need for it to be kept in secure accommodation.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the annual total saving to his Department derived from reducing the level of income support payment granted to asylum seekers.

Miss Widdecombe: Asylum seekers are entitled to 90 per cent. of the appropriate personal allowance. If the full allowances were paid, the estimated additional cost would be around £2·5 million per year.

Income Support

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people, excluding asylum seekers, are granted less than 100 per cent. of the normal rate of income support payments since the change in social security legislation in April 1988; and if he will outline the reason for not granting the full rate of income support in such cases.

Miss Widdecombe: Income support urgent cases payments are available to certain people from abroad, including asylum seekers, and to people who have not

received income which they are due and who would, in consequence, suffer hardship. The personal allowance for adults is reduced by 10 per cent. because recipients are not entitled to (or are entitled to less) income support under the normal rules. Allowances in respect of any children together with any premiums are paid in full. No information is available about the number of people receiving urgent cases payments.

State Earnings-related Pension Scheme

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average state earnings-related pension scheme payment for people retiring in the April of each year since 1979 who are in receipt of SERPS.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available in the precise form requested. The available figures are as follows:

People retiring in	*Gross additional pension payable*[1] £
8 months ending 30 November 1979	0·70
6 months ending 31 May 1980	0·83
13 months ending 30 June 1981	1·54
6 months ending 31 May 1982	2·43
6 months ending 31 March 1983	3·52
6 months ending 31 March 1984	4·47
12 months ending 31 March 1985	5·65
6 months ending 31 March 1986	7·37
12 months ending 30 September 1987	9·32
6 months ending 31 March 1988	10·43
6 months ending 31 March 1989	12·10

[1] Includes a notional amount which would have been paid to those who were contracted out of the state earnings related scheme.

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to which posts in public bodies he appoints individuals where the posts are *(a)* part-time and *(b)* remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State makes the following part-time appointments to public bodies:

Public Body	*Number of appointments*
Attendance Allowance Board	8
Industrial Injuries Advisory Council	17
Occupational Pensions Board	13
Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions	25
Social Security Research Policy Committee	8
Total	71

My right hon. Friend does not make any part-time appointments where remuneration is in excess of £50,000 per annum.

Local Offices

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the level of funding of community care loans and grants at his Department's offices in Greenock and Port Glasgow; what has been his response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: No representations have been received concerning either office. However, following a recent exercise to identify offices whose budgets were under severe pressure, an additional allocation of £30,000 for the loans budget at Greenock was made on 22 February.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what change there has been in the numbers of claims and the time involved in *(a)* the assessment of a claim and *(b)* the notification of the assessment to the claimant in Greenock and Port Glasgow, following the installation of computer systems.

Miss Widdecombe: The installation of the computer systems in Greenock and Port Glasgow local offices to assess and pay claims for income support and retirement pension was completed in August 1990.

From the latest information available, in January 1991, Port Glasgow local office received 341 claims for income support which were cleared in an average of 0·7 days. Prior to computerisation, in May 1989, the office received 327 claims for income support which were processed in an average of 1·7 days. In January 1991, the office also received 21 claims for retirement pension which were dealt with in five days. In May 1989, 25 claims for retirement pension were received which were also cleared in five days.

In January 1991, Greenock local office received 850 claims for income support which were cleared in an average of 0·7 days. Prior to computerisation, in March 1990, the office received 626 claims for income support which were processed in an average of 1·3 days. In January 1991, the office received 113 claims for retirement pension which were dealt with in 9·7 days. In October 1989, 112 claims for retirement pension were received which were cleared in 19·4 days.

In general, the time taken to receive notification of entitlement depends on the type of payment. If payment is due within three days a girocheque is issued automatically by the computer system and sent by first-class post, with the entitlement notice enclosed. Alternatively, if payment is by order book, the book is issued to the Post Office by first-class post, and the pick-up notice, with entitlement information are sent second class direct to the recipient.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to alter the operations, or relocate workloads, from or to his Department's offices in Greenock and Port Glasgow; what plans he has to reduce staffing levels in these two offices; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The management of the Department's local office network is being restructured because changes as a result of the operational strategy project and the setting up of the Contributions Agency meant that the existing offices no longer formed viable management units. This restructuring will result in a modest overall staff saving at managerial level, but there are no plans to reduce the number of offices open to the public. A voluntary redundancy scheme is in place for staff.

District managers will be responsible for drawing up detailed plans to provide the best possible service to local customers in the most effective way. These plans will be drawn up in consultation with interested parties, including constituency Members.

Medical Appeal Tribunals

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the total number of consultants to medical appeal tribunals in Scotland who are aged *(a)* under 40 years, *(b)* 40 to 50 years, *(c)* 50 to 65 years and *(d)* over 65 years;

(2) how many female consultants have been appointed to medical appeal tribunals in Scotland in each year since 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of medical appeal tribunals is the responsibility of the president of social security and medical appeal tribunals, His Honour Judge Derek Holden. The hon. Member may care to contact his office direct to obtain this information.

Child Benefit

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children are expected to be in receipt of the higher-rate child benefit from 1 April in the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow.

Mr. Jack: Information relating to child benefit is available only on a national basis and cannot be given for particular areas.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of those employed in his Department are disabled.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 22 November 1990 at column *214*.

Care Home Trusts

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has now made of the likely financial implications for his Department of the creation of local authority care home trusts.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 29 January 1991]:* Decisions on eligibility for income support are made individually for each case by local adjudication officers, and data on these decisions is not collated centrally.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what guidance he has issued to local adjudication officers with regard to the payment of income support to residents in local authority care home trusts;

(2) what guidance he has issued to local adjudication officers regarding the eligibility for income support of individuals suffering from senile dementia who are unable to exercise personal choice and are placed by a local authority in a care home trust.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answers 29 and 31 January 1991]:* Eligibility for income support is defined by regulation and is available in respect of fees, up to certain limits, to residents of registered residential care homes and in certain other types of homes. Independent adjudication officers are provided with guidance on the interpretation of the regulations by the chief adjudication officer (rather than my right hon. Friend) in the published adjudication officers guide. Where an individual suffering from senile dementia is unable to act for himself a suitable person would be appointed to act on his behalf and eligibility for income support would be determined in the usual way, taking account of all the relevant circumstances.

Income Support

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people claim income support at the local offices of his Department in *(a)* Leeds, West, *(b)* Leeds metropolitan district council area, *(c)* West Yorkshire and *(d)* England both as a figure and as a percentage of total population.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* Data are not available for the total adult population on the date and for the precise geographical areas to which the information relates. The number of claimants receiving income support is as follows:

	Number
Leeds West	10,830
Leeds Area	62,244
West, Yorkshire	181,528
England	3,693,297

Note:

All data derived from 30 November 1990 count of cases in action, which include a number of cases where payment has ceased but other action is continuing. Data are provisional and subject to amendment.

Claimants

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are dependent on *(a)* income support, *(b)* family credit and *(c)* housing benefit broken down into claimants, dependants and children for (i) Leeds, West, (ii) Leeds metropolitan district council area, (iii) West Yorkshire and (iv) England.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* Information for Leeds, West, Leeds metropolitan district council area and West Yorkshire is unavailable and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The information in respect of England is as follows:

	Income Support[1]	*Family Credit*[2]
Claimants	3,429,000	264,000
Dependants	599,000	164,000
Children	1,688,000	569,000
TOTAL	5,716,000	997,000

[1] Data derived from 1989 Annual Statistical Enquiry

[2] Data derived from 5 per cent. sample of Family Credit caseload at 31 July 1990.

Information for Leeds, West is unavailable and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The information in respect of the metropolitan borough of Leeds, West Yorkshire and England is as follows:

	Claimants[1]	Dependants[1]	Children	Total[1]
Metropolitan Borough of Leeds	63,700	18,000[2]	n/a	81,700
West Yorkshire	159,100	44,800[2]	n/a	163,900
England	3,153,000	902,000[2]	n/a	4,055,000

Income Support, Leeds

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many income support claims in the Leeds metropolitan district council area are from (i) pensioners, (ii) families, (iii) single parents and (iv) people with disabilities as a figure and as a percentage of all income support claims.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* The information is not available in the form requested. It is, however, possible to identify the number of current claims from pensioners and lone parents aged less than 60 in the five local offices in the Leeds metropolitan area. This information is in the table.

	Total number of claims	Percentage of claims in the Leeds area per cent.
Pensioners	23,198	38.5
Lone Parents	11,016	18.3

Note:
Data derived from 30 November 1990 count of cases in action, which include a number of cases where payment has ceased but other action is continuing. Data are provisional and subject to amendment.

WALES

Common Land

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make a statement on the progress made with the designation of common land in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the registration of common land in Wales.

Current information on the progress of registration is not held centrally as statutory responsibility for this function lies with local authorities.

The Arts

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the number of people attending events associated with the arts in Wales in each of the past five years; what was the total amount spent by the general public on arts events during the same period; what has been the total turnover of the arts in Wales over the past five years; and what are the total figures for employment in the arts over the past five years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not held centrally.

Local Authority Complaints

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each year since the establishment of the Commission for Local Administration in Wales (i) the number of complaints submitted against each local authority, (ii) the number of complaints investigated, (iii) the number of complaints of maladministration upheld and (iv) the number of (iii) as a ratio of the electorate of the local authority area.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The investigation of maladministration by local authorities in Wales is a matter for the Commissioner for Local Administration in Wales. Much of the information the hon. Gentleman requires can be obtained from a study of the annual reports of the Commissioner published each year since 1975.

Secure Accommodation (Juveniles)

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration he has given to the requirement for secure establishments in Wales for juveniles awaiting trial to be provided and operated by commercial companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: None. Private provision of secure accommodation for young people was ruled out during the passage of the then Children Bill; the Secure Accommodation Regulations 1991, to be made under the resulting Children Act 1989, will specifically prohibit the provision of secure accommodation in voluntary or registered children's homes.

Administrators

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each local authority in Wales, the number of administrators employed in *(a)* education departments and *(b)* social services departments.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information on the numbers of administrators employed in local authority education departments is not held centrally. The following staff, who are not directly employed in the delivery of services, were employed in local authority social service departments at 30 September 1990.

	Number	*Whole time equivalent*
Clwyd	167	156·0
Dyfed	139	127·9
Gwent	203	190·0
Gwynedd	111	105·0
Mid Glamorgan	339	319·0
Powys	52	48·5
South Glamorgan	240	225·6
West Glamorgan	183	178·1
Wales	1,434	1,350·1

Note: The following staff groups are included:
Senior directing, managing, professional and advisory staff who carry a high level of responsibility for particular areas of work (eg consultants, advisors, inspectors, etc.), senior staff concerned with administration, finance or resources and also telephonists and other administrative, clerical and secretarial staff based at headquarters, area offices and hospitals.

Multi-disabled Young People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many multi-disabled, visually impaired young people under the age of 20 years there are in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not held centrally.

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales to which posts in public bodies he appoints individuals where the posts are *(a)* part-time and *(b)* remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Mr. David Hunt: The chairmanship of the Welsh Development Agency—four days per week at a salary of £58,750.

Amputees

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will review the national health service contract with Vessa Ltd. for the supply of artificial limbs and appliances for amputees in Wales in the light of the proposed 30 per cent. rundown in local supply, fitting and manufacture at the ALAC centre at Rookwood hospital, Cardiff.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The terms of the contract with Vessa Ltd. and any issue of contract compliance are matters for the Welsh Health Common Services Authority.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from ex-service men's organisations and others regarding the artificial limb and applicance services available to amputees in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: None. Nor would I expect to since management and operational responsibility for the artificial limb and appliance service was transferred to the Welsh Health Common Services Authority on 1 April 1988.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy to restore the standard supply of one spare artificial limb to amputees requiring artificial limbs.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Decisions on such matters are for the management of the service taking account of the specialist clinical advice available to it. I understand that there has been no change of policy on the supply of spare artificial limbs.

Libraries and Information Services Council

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the reports produced by the Libraries and Information Services Council for Wales in each year from 1986 to 1990.

Sir Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 27 February 1991]:*
Year and publication.
1986
Annual Report 1985-86.
1987
Annual Report 1986-87.
1988
Annual Report 1987-88.
The Report of a Working Party on Public Library Services.
1989
Annual Report 1988-89.
A survey of Information Technology in Academic Libraries in Wales.
Into the 21st Century: A Plan for the Development of Library and Information Sevices in Wales.
1990
Annual Report 1989-90.
The Report of a Working Group on Libraries in Maintained Secondary Schools in Wales.

Coal and Steel

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the level of investment profitability and manpower in the coal and steel industries in Wales in 1990 and in 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* The information is given in the following table:

Industry	*Capital[5] investment £ million*	*Profitability[1] £ million*	*Manpower[2]*	*Output/man shift ('000 tonnes)*	*Output ('000 tonnes)*
1979					
Steel	[6]—	[6]—	[3]55,274	[6]—	6,935·7
British Coal (Deep Mines)	35·9	−15·9	[4]28,581	1·46	8,560
British Coal (Opencast)	1·5	10·2	[3]310	[6]—	156·822

Industry	Capital[1] investment £ million	Profitability[1] £ million	Manpower[2]	Output/man shift ('000 tonnes)	Output ('000 tonnes)
1990					
Steel	[8]—	[8]—	[3]18,000	[6]—	[7]5,792·6
British Coal (Deep Mines)	12·4	−7·09	[4]3,000	3·17	4,040
British Coal (Opencast)	4·2	20·5	[5]213	[6]—	92·862

[1] Details relate to the financial year 1978-79 and 1989-90.
[2] Details as at 31 December 1979 and 1990.
[3] Source: Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau.
[4] Figures relate to men on colliery books.
[5] Figures only include employees of British Coal Opencast Executive.
[6] Information on output/man shift not available.
[7] Latest figures from the Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau.
[8] The information on the level of investment and profitability of the steel industry in Wales is not separately available from that for the whole of the United Kingdom.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: After a number of regional pilot studies in the early 1980s the Department completed its survey in 1987 of the ethnic origins of staff by means of voluntary questionnaires. The database is kept up to date with the addition of information on new staff and leavers.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1-7) and overall in the Ministry are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Curry: The information requested, as at 1 April 1990, is set out in the table. Ethnic origin figures derive from a voluntary questionnaire which about 90 per cent. of staff completed. Programmes of action to achieve equality of opportunity for women and people of ethnic minority origin in the civil service are in place in the Department.

By grade and grade equivalent	Number of women	Women as percentage of total staff	Ethnic minority respondents to ethnic origin questionnaire	Ethnic minority respondents as percentage of total respondents
1	—	—	—	—
2	—	—	—	—
3	1	4·2	—	—
4	—	—	—	—
5	10	9·0	1	0·93
6	10	7·6	1	0·79
7	121	12·5	9	0·99
All staff	4,624	44·7	399	4·10

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Ministry.

Mr. Curry: The Department is committed to a policy of equal opportunities. Senior grades are recruited on the Department's behalf by the Civil Service Commission following the principles of fair and open competition. The Commission has taken a series of measures to aid recruitment of members of the ethnic minorities including action on publicity, training and selection policy.

Illegal Poisoning

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of reported incidents of poisoning of *(a)* birds, *(b)* wild animals and *(c)* household pets by illegal baits in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The current figures for England and Wales for 1990 are as follows:

Total number of incidents of suspected poisoning reported was 343

	Numbers reported	Confirmed involvement of pesticides	Illegal poisonings by pesticides
Birds	132	50	37
Wild animals	102	15	11
Household pets	96	40	31

Note: Animals from more than one category may be involved in a single incident.

In addition, there were 16 suspected illegal poison baits reported. Of these, nine were confirmed as illegal baits.

The hon. Member will be pleased to know that a long-term campaign against the illegal poisoning of wildlife has been launched today. It is a joint initiative by this Department together with the other Agriculture Departments, the Department of Environment, and many non-government organisations which have interests in farming, gamekeeping and conservation. It will give a clear message—that the practice is cruel, dangerous, a threat to wildlife, and unnecessary.

To back up the campaign we will be co-ordinating the efforts of enforcement agencies; ensuring that those landowners, gamekeepers and farmers with genuine pest control problems know where to go for advice; and keeping a careful check on the present statutory controls on those substances most abused.

The campaign is a long-term one aimed at changing permanently the attitudes of the minority who abuse pesticides, thereby safeguarding our wildlife against cruel and unnecessary suffering.

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to which posts in public bodies he appoints individuals where the posts are *(a)* part-time and *(b)* remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Mr. Curry: All ministerial appointments to public bodies are listed in "Public Bodies" published annually by

the Cabinet Office (OMCS), a copy of which is in the Library of the House. All such appointments by MAFF are part-time, but none is remunerated at more than £50,000 per annum.

Fruit Juices

Mr. Speed: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department has been carrying out quality and sample tests of fruit juices for domestic consumption; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: As stated in the reply of 8 February to my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), a report from the food safety directorate on "Comparison of Methods for the Detection of Added Substances in Orange Juice" indicated that a large proportion of samples of orange juice on retail sale did not fully match the description on the packaging. Ministry officials are now carrying out further investigations into the sources of these wrongly described products.

Agriculture Council

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council held in Brussels on 4 and 5 March.

Mr. Gummer: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting of the Council accompanied by my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon, the Parliamentary Secretary in my Department.

There was a first debate on the Commission's proposals for 1991-92 farm prices. I offered broad support for the Commission's proposals, but suggested a number of detailed ways in which they might be improved. I stressed in particular the need to adapt policies so that expenditure can be contained within the guideline in 1991 and the following years. I emphasised that proposals must be consistent with the need to increase agricultural efficiency and avoid discrimination between producers or member states.

The lack of realism among many member states in the face of the mounting budget overrun was particularly disappointing.

Veterinary Investigation Service

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the review of the veterinary investigation service.

Mr. Gummer: I set up a review team, led by Dr. P. S. Dawson, the assistant chief veterinary officer with responsibility for the veterinary investigation service (VIS), to examine ways of improving the quality, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the services provided by the VI centres. My concern was to ensure that the VIS is organised and equipped to provide the highest quality of diagnostic, advisory and consultancy services to Government and to the livestock industry generally.

I have now received the report of the review team and I have accepted its main conclusions.

The report recommends that the work of the VI service should be concentrated on a smaller number of centres where the facilities available and the level of expertise should be upgraded. The recommendation is that we should move from the present structure of 19 centres in England and Wales to one based on 13 centres. The centres at Wye, Truro, Bangor and Lincoln will, therefore, be closed. The VIS quality control unit at the Lincoln VIC will be relocated in new purpose-built facilities at another centre.

The statutory and policy work carried out at the centres to be closed will be transferred to one of the remaining centres. The work from Wye will go to the Winchester VIC, that from Truro to the Starcross VIC, that from Bangor to the Aberystwyth VIC and the Lincoln work to Sutton Bonington VIC. Private veterinary surgeons will be asked to submit samples for examination to these alternative centres.

The Cambridge and Norwich centres, both of which are inadequate for present-day needs, will close and their work will be amalgamated at a new purpose-built centre near Bury St. Edmonds. The existing centre at Worcester, which again is unsatisfactory, will be relocated at another new purpose-built centre in Warwickshire. This relocation and the enhancement of the facilities at the Winchester VIC will enable the Reading VIC to be closed.

The closures at Wye, Truro, Bangor and Lincoln will go ahead as soon as possible. The other changes, including the construction of the new centres at Bury St. Edmonds and in Warwickshire, will be completed over the next three to four years.

A programme of investment in new capital equipment and up-to-date technology is being carried forward to enable the VIS to achieve the highest quality standards as laid down in "The Principles of Good Laboratory Practice". Staffing levels will be increased in some centres to enable additional workloads to be handled. The reorganisation will involve the loss of some posts. Everything possible will be done to help staff find alternative jobs and to keep redundancies to a minimum.

I believe that the implementation of these recommendations from the review team will result in significant improvements in the quality, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the VI service. This is important if we are to have a VI service which is well equipped to meet our national needs over the years ahead.

I am placing a copy of the findings of the review team in the Library of the House.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to which posts in public bodies he appoints individuals where the posts are *(a)* part-time and *(b)* remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Mr. Chris Patten: I make appointments to part-time posts in the magistracy and shrievalty of Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside and to various educational bodies. None of the individuals appointed is remunerated.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Spelling and Grammar

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment his Department has made of the degree to which changed requirements for accuracy of spelling and grammar in the 1991 examination syllabuses may act as a discouragement for some children.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend's intention is to encourage pupils and teachers to pay greater attention to spelling. He sees no reason why this should discourage them from entering for GCSE examinations. The only significant group of pupils who might reasonably be discouraged are those suffering from dyslexia. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has therefore invited the three main dyslexia organisations to suggest what concessions might fairly be adopted to enable dyslexic candidates to compete on an equal basis with their peers when the change is introduced.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consultations took place between his Department and *(a)* the examination boards and *(b)* local education authorities concerning the policy of setting aside a proportion of examination grading for spelling and grammar before this policy was introduced.

Mr. Eggar: We have not considered it necessary, in view of the widespread public concern, to conduct formal consultations on the desirability of using GCSE examinations to improve spelling standards. The School Examinations and Assessment Council has, however, consulted the GCSE examining groups on the various policy options for effecting change in this area and is currently consulting the groups on the specific proposal, subsequently put to them by my right hon. and learned Friend, that up to 5 per cent. of marks should be deducted for poor spelling. The local education authorities have not been specifically consulted.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research his Department proposes to undertake or commission into fundamental causes of spelling difficulties in children.

Mr. Eggar: The Department is supporting a £250,000, three-year research project to study the problems of dyslexic children and how schools can tackle them, based at the Harris city technology college in Croydon. There are no immediate plans to commission research into causes of spelling difficulties unrelated to dyslexia. Teachers already have expertise in using a range of techniques for tackling spelling difficulties.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations his Department has received concerning the timing, relative to the 1991 examination cycle, of the introduction of the policy to set aside a proportion of examination grades for spelling and grammar from *(a)* parents, *(b)* examination boards and *(c)* local education authorities; and what response he has made.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend and I have received about 250 representations, concerned primarily with the timing of the introduction of this policy, from parents and pupils. None has been received from examination boards or local education authorities. We have responded by saying that we see no unfairness in introducing this change at an early date since what is proposed does not differ greatly from what the groups do at the moment, and examination candidates can hardly be unaware that they need to spell correctly in their GCSEs, just as they need to write legibly and present their work well generally.

Student Teachers

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what the average A-level scores of teacher recruits were in 1980, 1985 and 1990.

Mr. Fallon: Information is given in the table.

Initial teacher training in England
United Kingdom domiciled first-year undergraduate students with A-level entry qualifications

	Academic year		
	1980-81	*1985-86*	[1] *1989-90*
Total number[2]	4,220	6,005	6,201
Average A-level points score[3]	5·4	5·4	5·7

[1] Data for academic year 1990-91 are not yet available.
[2] Covers students studying BEd., Cert. ED and other undergraduate ITT with qualified teacher status.
[3] Refers to the average A-level points score of those recorded on USR and FESR as having A-level entry qualifications. A-level points scores have been calculated in the customary way, by allocating 5 points for an A grade, 4 points for a B grade, etc.

Source:
University Statistical Record for University Departments of Education.
Further Education Statistical Record for Polytechnics and Colleges.

Haberdashers' Aske's CTC

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) on what date the funding agreement for Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college was signed and executed on his behalf;

(2) what security will be provided by the Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham college trust to guarantee its capacity to make any repayments of capital grants that may fall due under the provisions of section 105(5) of the Education Reform Act 1988;

(3) whether the terms under which the land and buildings of the existing Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham schools will be leased for the purposes of establishing the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college have been agreed and approved by the Charity Commissioners.

Mr. Eggar: A funding agreement with the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college trust was signed on 21 December 1990. The entry into force of this agreement is conditional on the granting of a lease of the schools and their premises to the trust in a form agreed with the Secretary of State. Discussions on this subject between all concerned, including the Charity Commissioners, are currently taking place. Paragraph 24(A)iv of the funding agreement describes how repayment would have to be made.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the items of works and supplies on which he has determined the total amount of his contribution towards the capital costs of establishing

the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college, including his current estimate of the cost of each item; and in respect of the building works, whether they are planned to be carried out on the boys' or the girls' site of the city technology college.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has agreed to make available £5·5 million towards the capital costs of establishment of the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college, which may be apportioned as follows:

	£K
New Build	2,090
Repairs/refurbishment	1,420
External works	330
Furniture and Equipment	700
Fees	460
VAT	500
Total	5,500

An approximately equivalent amount is to be spent on refurbishment of both sites, although some additional 15,000 sq ft of new build is to be provided at the girls' site, but this will be for shared use.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of any overrun on initial capital costs of establishing the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college he has agreed to meet under the equivalent of paragraph 8(iv)(a) of the model CTC/CCTA funding agreement placed in the Library on 31 October 1990.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has agreed to meet up to 80 per cent. of any overrun of initial capital costs which, in accordance with paragraph 8(iv)(a) of the model funding agreement are deemed necessary and could not have been foreseen at the time the cash limit was set.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) under the funding agreement for the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college, what is the total cash limit that has been agreed for the capital expenditure necessary to establish the college; and how much of this capital expenditure will be borne by him and how much by the private sponsors of the city technology college;

(2) what account he has taken of the availability of cash in private sponsorship towards the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college in determining the amount of capital funding required from public sources to establish the college; and what part of this will be contributed toward the initial capital costs of the college;

(3) how the private contribution towards the capital costs of establishing the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college will be divided between *(a)* the value of the land and buildings of the existing Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham schools and *(b)* other capital costs of establishing the college; and on what basis the value attributed to the private sponsors under *(a)* has been varied from the earlier assessment of the district valuer referred to in his reply of the 13 November 1990, *Official Report*, column *101*.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has agreed a total cash limit for the project of £8·945 million, of which he will provide £5·5 million and the sponsors a 99-year lease of the sites and premises of the schools, currently valued at £3·445 million, for educational purposes. No further valuation has been sought from the district valuer since my reply of 13 November 1990, *Official Report*, col. *101*. In addition, the Haberdashers' Company has agreed to underwrite sponsorship of £1 million, which may be contributed towards capital costs.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements have been written into the funding agreement for the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college relating to the payment, including the timing of the payments, of capital costs for establishing the college.

Mr. Eggar: As stated in paragraph 8(iv) of the funding agreement, the arrangements, including the timing of capital payments, will be in accordance with annex 2 of the agreement.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has included any variations from the terms of paragraph 9 of the model CTC/CCTA funding agreement placed in the Library on 31 October 1990 in the funding agreement for the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college.

Mr. Eggar: There are several small amendments to the funding agreement to take account of the circumstances relating to this particular project.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the total number of pupils *(a)* under and *(b)* over school leaving age that he has agreed to fund at the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college from September 1991; and what is the total number of pupils in each age group that is planned for the college once it has reached its full capacity.

Mr. Eggar: It is intended that the college will open at capacity with 900 pupils under school leaving age and 200 pupils over school leaving age on roll. Actual numbers may vary slightly from these figures.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of those employed in his Department are disabled.

Mr. Eggar: Of the Department's staff, 2·7 per cent. are registered as disabled. There are other staff in the Department with disabilities who have chosen not to register and who are not included in this figure.

ENVIRONMENT

Labelling

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he will be making at the EC Environment Council on 18 March in respect of a Community-wide labelling scheme for environmentally friendly products.

Mr Baldry: My right hon. Friend will be welcoming the fact that the Commission has now tabled a draft proposal and will be calling for rapid progress. He will, however, be making a number of comments on the detail of the scheme designed to make it more effective and less bureaucratic.

The Gulf

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he will be making at the EC Environment Council on 18 March in respect of an international operation to alleviate the environmental effects of the Gulf conflict.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 27 February to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) at column *531*.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution Her Majesty's Government are making towards rescuing the natural environment in the Gulf region; what representations he will be making to allied coalition partners in respect of the clean-up operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* The actions taken as part of our initial response to the oil spillages in the Gulf were set out in my letter of 6 February to hon. Members, a copy of which is in the Library. I will continue to assess urgently any specific requests we receive from the Gulf states. The International Maritime Organisation has continued to co-ordinate offers of assistance from member states, including coalition members, and I welcome their establishment of a trust fund to facilitate further clean-up action in the Gulf.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further progress he has to report on combating oil pollution in the Gulf.

Mr. Heseltine: I set out some of the initial steps we have taken in response to oil spills in the Gulf in my letter to hon. Members of 6 February, copies of which are in the Library. Since then we have continued to look closely at how we can respond further to requests from the Gulf states and the international organisations seeking to co-ordinate assistance. These include the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), the specialised agency of the UN concerned with shipping and oil pollution issues, which has co-ordinated offers of assistance of expertise and equipment from Governments of member states.

Recently it has become clear that while deflection operations and protective booms have been successfully deployed, extensive damage has occurred and substantial quantities of oil remain at sea. On 1 March the Secretary General of the International Maritime Organisation called for establishment of a trust fund to facilitate provision of equipment and services to tackle oil pollution in the Gulf. Reports available to me indicate that there is now an urgent need to begin oil recovery operations if further damage to ecologically sensitive sites is to be minimised.

In order to assist the Governments of the Gulf states my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and I are together contributing £1 million to the International Maritime Organisation Gulf oil pollution disaster fund. Each Department is contributing £0·5 million.

With other contributions which the International Maritime Organisation is seeking from its members and the resources of the Gulf states this should enable those on the spot to put into operation the plans now being developed by the responsible national agencies assisted by international experts, including those from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his Department's latest estimate of the area of water in the Gulf that is currently affected by oil slicks;

(2) what is his Department's latest estimate of the length of coastline around the Gulf that is currently affected by oil slicks.

Mr. Heseltine: The reports available to us indicate that oil has affected most of the Saudi Arabian coastline between Khafji and the island of Abu Ali. This includes 400 km of coastline, with the worst damage occurring in the heavily indented southern part of the coast. Around 50,000 tonnes of oil in this area are estimated to remain at sea. In addition areas of light oil or sheen have been observed up to 70 miles offshore and up to 50° 20′ east and 29° 5′ north. No detailed information is yet available on coastal or offshore pollution within the former war zone in the northern Gulf.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: The Department undertook a voluntary survey of the ethnic origins of staff in post in 1987. This was supplemented by a series of follow-up surveys in 1990. A final survey is about to be carried out, in addition to a continuous survey of job applicants.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Heseltine: There are few top grade posts filled by direct recruitment. Where necessary, it is carried out through the Civil Service Commission; posts are advertised in the national press and relevant specialist publications on the basis of fair and open competition. Advertisements state that the Department is an equal opportunities employer.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1-7) and overall in the Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Heseltine: The latest available information on the numbers of *(a)* women and *(b)* ethnic minorities in grades 1 to 7 in my Department is:

(a) Women at 1 March 1991			(b) Ethnic minorities[2] at 1 February 1991		
Grade	Number of Women	Percentage of Women	Grade	Number of ethnic minorities	Percentage of ethnic minorities
1	0	0	1	0	0·0
2	1 (two from 30 April 1991)	13 (25 from 30 April 1991	2	0	0·0
3	[1]5	[1]13	3	0	0·0
4	0	0	4	0	0·0
5	24	16	5	2	1·4
6	19	7	6	2	0·7
7	122	16	7	5	0·7
Total	170	13	Total	9	0·8
All Grades	3,210	43	All Grades	450	7·1

[1] Changes at Grade 3 level consequent on promotion to Grade 2 not yet determined.
[2] Based on information gained from voluntary surveys of staff; non-respondents not included.

Antarctic

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what members of his Department were represented at the special consultative meeting of the Antarctic treaty parties in Chile, and if his Department will be represented at the April meeting of the Antarctic treaty parties which will discuss environmental protection for the Antarctic.

Mr. Heseltine: One official from my Department was a member of the United Kingdom delegation for the special consultative meeting in Chile. United Kingdom representation for the April meeting has not yet been decided.

Rent Arrears

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on *(a)* the reasons why individual council tenants fell into arrears with rent, *(b)* the number in arrears who are in receipt of housing rebate, *(c)* the level of income per household of tenants in arrears, and *(d)* the number of children per household of tenants in arrears; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The most recent available information on the characteristics of tenants in rent arrears asked about in the question was given in my Department's report "Preventing Rent Arrears", which was published by HMSO in 1983, when copies were placed in the Library. My Department is currently planning a repeat of this large-scale study, the results of which will be available towards the end of 1992.

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to which posts in public bodies he appoints individuals where the posts are *(a)* part-time and *(b)* remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Mr. Heseltine: This information is contained in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1990", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Responsibility for appointments to the Sports Council and the regional councils for sport and recreation was transferred to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science on 29 November 1990.

None of the appointments to public bodies created since 1 July 1990 for which I am responsible attracts remuneration of more than £50,000 per annum. The bodies are the Nature Conservancy Council for England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. All the appointments to these bodies are part-time.

Rechar

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those projects which have been or will be directly assisted by European moneys under the Rechar programme; and whether these payments have been classed as public expenditure as far as United Kingdom financial monitoring is concerned.

Mr. Yeo: No projects have been aided by the European Commission Rechar programme as the Commission has not yet approved the United Kingdom's proposals which are currently being considered, nor do we know, at this stage, which projects will be aided as they will have to be submitted to and approved by the relevant programme co-ordinating committee, once the programme itself has been approved.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those projects within South Yorkshire which have been assisted by the European Rechar programme.

Mr. Yeo: None, as the Rechar programme for South Yorkshire has not yet been approved by the European Commission.

Dearne Valley

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made in his assessment of funding levels for the local authorities of the annual cost which will be incurred by the current plan for regeneration of the Dearne valley; how many years he expects this project to take; and what central support he expects to provide during this period.

Mr. Key: We are today announcing a package of additional Government assistance for the Dearne valley including increased derelict land grant and urban programme allocations to the local authorities of Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham and two city grants to the private sector to stimulate economic regeneration in the area. Revenue support for local authorities is assessed

annually. This is based on a broad set of principles which take account of the social, demographic and physical characteristics of each area.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the toxic waste held at Wath upon Dearne, Rotherham which arrived in the summer of 1989 to be removed; and if he maintains contact with the appropriate agencies and Rotherham borough council in regard to the problem.

Mr. Baldry: There is no immediate prospect of the waste being removed by agreement, for the reasons we have explained in correspondence. The Department is no longer in contact with those previously involved in discusssions about the waste but we are, of course, prepared to consider any further initiatives that they and the local authorities might wish to offer.

Leeds Development Corporation

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many compulsory purchase orders have been issued by Leeds development corporation in each financial year of its existence.

Mr. Portillo: Sixteen compulsory purchase orders have been promoted by Leeds development corporation; three in 1988-89, seven in 1989-90, and six in 1990-91. Of these, decisions have been issued on six of the orders, five orders were withdrawn by the development corporation prior to determination and five orders are currently proceeding to inquiry.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment of the sites affected by compulsory purchase orders issued by Leeds development corporation; how many have been subject to redevelopment; and if he will list them.

Mr. Portillo: Land at Lowfold, South has been redeveloped. Work on three sites at Skelton Grange road, Goodman street and Sardinia street is currently under way and work will shortly be commencing on two sites at Knostrop and at Beza road.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those firms which have been relocated by Leeds development corporation and the sites to which they have been moved.

Mr. Portillo: Some of this information was provided to the Leeds development corporation on a commercial-in-confidence basis. I advise the hon. Member to discuss with the chairman of the development corporation what information he is free to divulge.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those firms, and the numbers employed, which have been moved since the inception of the Leeds development corporation because of development plans initiated by that corporation.

Mr. Portillo: The list of the relevant firms is as follows:

LIST OF FIRMS RELOCATED

Name of Firm	Relocated to:
Flight 451	13/15 Hunslet Road, Leeds
J. Ingham	Lower Briggate, Leeds
Waldene Card Co	Canal Wharf, Wyther Lane, Leeds
E. Farrell trading as Highgate Motors	Goodman Street, Leeds
WP Design for Print	Stourton, Leeds
Leeds Graphic Press	Balm Road, Leeds
Moore Signs Ltd	Harrogate
Crosby Windows	Hampshire
Impact Insulation (UK) Ltd	Castleford
The Beetle People	Morley, Leeds
Mr. A. Sellers	Goodman Street, Leeds
L. Bainbridge and Sons	Swinnow View, Leeds
D. Cherrington Slates Ltd	Cross Green, Leeds
Leeds Trailers	Snaith
Tudorgrade	Stourton, Leeds
Stanton Roofing	Rotherwell, Leeds.

Local Authority Dwellings

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many local authority dwellings *(a)* were vacant and available for letting on 1 April 1989 and *(b)* became available for letting between 1 April 1989 and 31 March 1990 (i) through new build, (ii) through acquisition, modernisation or conversion and (iii) through other means in (1) inner London, (2) outer London, (3) non-metropolitan areas of the south-east, (4) non-metropolitan areas outside the south-east, (5) metropolitan areas outside London and (6) England as a whole;

(2) how many households local authorities accepted between 1 April 1989 and 31 March 1990 *(a)* as homeless and *(b)* as homeless and in priority need, in (1) inner London, (2) outer London, (3) non-metropolitan areas of the south-east, (4) non-metropolitan areas outside the south-east, (5) metropolitan areas outside London and (6) England as a whole;

(3) how many households were registered on the local authority housing waiting lists on 1 April 1990 in *(a)* inner London, *(b)* outer London, *(c)* non-metropolitan areas of the south-east, *(d)* non-metropolitan areas outside the south-east, *(e)* metropolitan areas outside London and *(f)* England as a whole;

(4) how many dwellings were let by local authorities between 1 April 1989 and 31 March 1990 *(a)* to new secure tenants and *(b)* to new secure tenants who were homeless households in (1) inner London, (2) outer London, (3) non-metropolitan areas of the south-east, (4) non-metropolitan areas outside the south-east, (5) metropolitan areas outside London and (6) England as a whole;

(5) how many dwellings were let by local authorities between 1 April 1989 and 31 March 1990 *(a)* to new non-secure tenants and *(b)* to new non-secure tenants who were homeless households in (1) inner London, (2) outer London, (3) non-metropolitan areas of the south-east, (4) non-metropolitan areas outside the south-east, (5) metropolitan areas outside London and (6) England as a a whole;

(6) how many households and how many homeless households took up nominations by local authorities to housing association dwellings between 1 April 1989 and 31 March 1990 in *(a)* inner London, *(b)* outer London, *(c)* non-metropolitan areas of the south-east, *(d)* non-metropolitan areas outside the south-east, *(e)* metropolitan areas outside London and *(f)* England as a whole;

(7) how many dwellings were let between 1 April 1989 and 31 March 1990 *(c)* in total and *(b)* to homeless

households (i) through the national mobility scheme, (ii) through HALO and (iii) through other mobility schemes in (1) inner London, (2) outer London, (3) non-metropolitan areas of the south-east, (4) non-metropolitan areas outside the south-east, (5) metropolitan areas outside London and (6) England as a whole.

Mr. Yeo: Following are estimates from local authorities' annual housing investment programme returns (HIP1) for April 1990:

Local authority lettings 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990

	Inner London	*Outer London*	*Non-metropolitan areas in South East*	*Non-metropolitan areas outside South East*	*Metropolitan areas outside London*	*England*
Dwellings let to:						
New secure tenants	13,500	11,500	23,700	73,100	85,000	206,800
of which homeless households	8,300	7,200	7,400	20,200	20,500	63,600
New non-secure tenants[1]	5,500	4,200	4,600	4,000	2,400	20,700
of which homeless households[2]	5,200	2,100	4,000	3,200	1,300	15,800
Dwellings let through:						
National mobility or local authority mobility scheme (NMS/LAMS)	2,500	1,000	1,100	1,900	1,800	8,300
of which homeless households	1,000	100	—	—	—	1,200
Housing association liaison office (HALO)	—	—	—	—	—	100
of which homeless households	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other mobility schemes	100	100	200	200	100	500
of which homeless households	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dwellings let to homeless households referred by other local authorities under section 68, Housing Act 1985 between 1 April 1989 and 31 March 1990	400	100	100	200	100	1,000
Nominations to housing associations	2,800	1,400	2,000	7,200	7,500	21,000
of which homeless households	1,200	600	500	800	1,200	4,300
Total households accepted as homeless[3] 1989-90	21,600	12,800	17,900	37,900	42,700	153,000
of which in priority need	19,200	12,500	17,300	36,600	35,300	120,900
Households on waiting lists at 1 April 1990	136,900	92,200	192,500	494,000	340,000	1,255,500
Dwellings vacant and available for letting on 1 April 1989	2,900	1,500	3,500	7,200	9,700	24,800
Dwellings coming into management during 1989-90 which were:						
(a) Newly built	1,100	900	4,900	6,300	1,200	14,300
(b) Acquisition etc.	1,900	700	1,700	4,000	4,400	12,700
(c) Acquired on short leases	3,400	2,700	1,000	400	—	7,500
Other dwellings which became available for letting	26,600	23,300	53,600	130,000	147,200	380,600
Total dwellings available for letting 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990	35,900	29,100	64,600	147,800	162,400	440,000

Note: — = less than 50.
[1] Many of these are lettings of dwellings held on short-term leases.
[2] Mainly accommodated temporarily.
[3] For whom local authorities accepted the duty to secure accommodation.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of those employed in his Department are disabled.

Mr. Heseltine: The Department employs 68 staff who are known to be registered disabled and a further 86 who are known to have a disability without being registered. The total represents some 2·5 per cent. of the DOE work force.

Waste

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish advice to local authorities on the separation of their functions as waste regulators and as waste disposers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Trippier: We have today issued a draft circular which gives guidance on the new arrangements under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 for the separation of waste disposal and waste regulation functions in local authorities which are both waste regulation authorities and waste disposal authorities under the Act.

The draft circular gives guidance on the functions assigned to waste regulation and waste disposal authorities under the Act and on the extent of separation that will be required.

From May this year, local authorities will have to arrange for the administrative separation of the two functions so that the waste regulation authority can set the highest practicable environmental standards free from pressures arising from the local authority's role as a waste disposer. It is vital that waste regulation decisions are fair to all waste disposers and seen to be fair.

These changes with other provisions of the Act, particularly those on the transfer of local authority waste disposal operations to arm's length companies or to the private sector announced on 22 February, will help provide the basis for higher standards and fair competition.

Wrecks

Sir Gerrard Neale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the payment of commission to receivers of wreck in respect of historic material recovered from wrecks.

Sir George Young: I am pleased to be able to announce that further to the measures announced in the Government's response to the "Heritage at Sea" report on 20 December, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has agreed that receivers of wreck will no longer charge a commission of 7·5 per cent. of the value of any property delivered to them. It has also been decided that museums purchasing coins over 100 years old from receivers will not be required to pay that proportion of the price which has until now been retained by the Crown. Both these changes will be introduced for items recovered from wreck sites on or after 1 April next.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grant per poll tax payer is received by *(a)* Salford, *(b)* Wigan and *(c)* Westminster.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* Government grants in 1990-91 consist of revenue support grant, special grants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge benefit grant and transitional relief grant. Government grants per head of relevant population in 1990-91 are £565 in Salford, £306 in Wigan and £980 in Westminster.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

COCOM

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals were put by the United Kingdom delegation to the most recent COCOM meeting; and what decisions were agreed at the meeting.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The main United Kingdom objective for the COCOM meeting held at executive committee level on 27 to 28 February was to achieve as much progress as possible in the exercise to reform the COCOM controls by drawing up a new "core list" of industrial dual-use equipment and technologies.

Much progress was made. Agreement was reached on new control parameters in most sectors. Work continues to solve remaining issues so that the next COCOM high-level meeting can establish the core list.

The executive committee meeting also agreed to extend to Poland the provisions of a procedure under which greater access to dual-use items is allowed on the basis of safeguards against diversion. Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic have already had the procedure extended to them.

The Gulf

Sir Richard Luce: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Hong Kong Government have agreed to make a contribution to Her Majesty's Government for the purpose of general work in the Gulf following the liberation of Kuwait; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Hong Kong Government announced on 8 February 1991 a contribution to the United Kingdom of approximately £15 million towards the cost of the Gulf operation. We very much appreciate this generous gesture.

News Department

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the number of staff working in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's news department and the expenditure on that department for each year since 1983.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Staffing levels, including administration, clerical and secretarial support, in, and expenditure for, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office diplomatic wing news department and the aid wing press office are as follows:

Year	*Staff*	*Running costs £ million*
1983-84	26	·43
1984-85	26	·43
1985-86	26·5	·53
1986-87	25·5	·53
1987-88	19	·45
1988-89	18	·45
1989-90	18	·56
1990-91	18	·56

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussion he has had with the Secretary General of the United Nations on the ongoing occupation by the Turkish army of northern Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We maintain regular high-level contacts with the UN Secretary-General and all parties involved in the intercommunal dispute and actively support the Secretary-General's efforts to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement.

Soviet Union

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made in respect of Mikhail Lidsky of Kiev who has been unsuccessfully applying to leave the Soviet Union.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can certainly raise Mr. Lidsky's case with the Soviet authorities, but to make our representations most effective we shall need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made in respect of Iosef Meerson who has been unsuccessfully applying to leave the Soviet Union.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can certainly raise Mr. Meerson's case with the Soviet authorities, but to make our representations most effective we shall need further details.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's expenditure on *(a)* advertising and *(b)* press and public relations for each year from 1979.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Total expenditure by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on advertising from 1979-80 to 1989-90 and estimates for 1990-91 are:

	FCO (Dip Wing)	*FCO (ODA Wing)*
1979-80	110,226	214,739
1980-81	116,532	145,697
1981-82	162,988	207,964
1982-83	229,711	135,506
1983-84	205,247	252,691
1984-85	149,932	234,050
1985-86	160,535	271,084
1986-87	335,754	228,347
1987-88	195,000	351,000
1988-89	289,184	714,000
1989-90	395,782	1,048,000
1990-91	948,000	972,000

Expenditure on press and public relations from 1983-84 to 1989-90 and the estimate for the current year are as follows:

£ million

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Payments to Central Office of Information for Overseas information material and related activities	17·4	18·8	18·3	18·7	19·2	18·3	18·1	15·6
Other information services	0·9	0·8	0·9	0·7	0·9	0·9	3·3	6·4
Running costs of Diplomatic Wing Information/News Department	1·8	1·4	1·9	1·9	2·0	1·8	2·4	3·6
Running costs of ODA Wing Information Department	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·4	0·4
Costs of information staff at overseas posts	12·4	12·8	13·6	14·6	17·6	17·5	18·8	20·7
Total	32·8	34·1	35·0	36·1	39·9	38·8	43·0	46·7

Figures for the period before 1983-84 are not available on a comparable basis.

Kuwait

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the British Government will be taking to protect Palestinians who are currently in Kuwait; and if he will discuss in the United Nations the future of Palestinian workers who fled Kuwait during the invasion and who now wish to return.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are seriously concerned at these reports. We have urged the Kuwait authorities at a high level to ensure that law and order is restored in Kuwait as quickly as possible and at all costs to avoid a witch-hunt against suspected collaborators.

Information Department

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the number of staff working in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's information department and the expenditure of the information department for each year since 1983; and if he will break down these figures into (i) guidance and verbatims, (ii) publications, (iii) overseas press, (iv) information policy and administration, (v) overseas visitors and London correspondents' service (vi) BBC World Service and Wilton Park (vii) exhibitions and (viii) films, television and radio.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The number of staff working in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's information department since 1983 have been:

Year	*Number*
1983	66
1984	59
1985	59
1986	57
1987	58
1988	55
1989	52½
1990	52½
1991	[1]128

Information Department expenditure since 1984-85 has been:

£ million

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*[2]
Publications	2·5	2·4	2·2	2·1	2·2	2·7	2·9
Overseas Press including Guidance and Verbatims	5·4	5·3	4·2	3·9	3·5	3·2	3·5
Information Policy and Administration	2·3	2·4	2·2	2·9	2·6	2·3	2·3
Overseas Visitors and London Correspondents' Service	4·1	4·3	4·9	5·1	4·8	5·3	5·6
Wilton Park	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	[3]0·6	[3]0·6	[3]0·4
Exhibitions	2·0	1·9	1·8	2·0	1·8	2·8	3·2
Films, Television and Radio	3·2	2·8	4·0	4·0	3·7	4·5	4·1
Sub Total	19·6	19·2	19·4	20·1	19·2	21·4	22·0
BBC World Service	81·0	90·0	102·4	102·0	121·1	126·0	147·3
Total	100·6	109·2	121·8	122·1	140·3	147·4	169·3

[1]Includes Overseas Visitors and London Correspondents' Service staff transferred from COI to Information Department on 1 October 1990.
[2]Forecast Outturn.
[3]Includes expenditure on major refurbishment programme.

Research Department

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the number of staff working in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's research department and the expenditure on the research department; and if he will list the functions of the research department, for each year since 1983.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Staffing levels, including administration, clerical and secretarial support, and expenditure for research and analysis department are as follows:

Year	*Staff*	*Running costs £ million*
1983-84	89	1·8
1984-85	89	1·8
1985-86	89	2·0
1986-87	90	2·1
1987-88	91	2·3
1988-89	93	2·5
1989-90	92	3·1
1990-91	90	3·4

The function of the department is to contribute to the formulation of overseas policy through the provision of assessments and advice based on specialist experience.

Kashmir

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the Government have made to the Indian and Pakistan Governments concerning the situation in Kashmir.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As I told the House on 14 February, in our regular contacts with the Indian and Pakistani Governments, we have made clear our belief that their dispute over Kashmir should be settled by peaceful agreement between them. At the same time we have condemned the use of violence for political ends and emphasised our concern that human rights must be respected.

Public Bodies Appointments)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to which posts in public bodies he appoints individuals where the posts are *(a)* part-time and *(b)* remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The most recent information available for part-time public appointments for which the diplomatic and aid wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are responsible is as follows:

Public body	*Number of appointments*
Imperial War Museum (Board of Trustees)	2
British Council Board	2
Imperial College of Science and Technology (Governing Body)	1
Great Britain China Centre	1
Great Britain East Europe Centre	1
Great Britain USSR Association	1
Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission	10
Universities China Committee	1
School of Oriental and African Studies (Governing Body)	3
Advisory Board to the Wilson Chair of International Politics, University College of Wales, Aberystwyth	1
Irish Pensions Appeal Tribunal	2
Commonwealth Institute: Chairman of the Scottish Committee	1
Commonwealth Institute: Board of Governors	12
Sightsavers	2
Commonwealth Foundation	1
Diplomatic Service Appeal Boards	8
Wilton Park Academic Council	17
Commonwealth Institute: Chairman of the Board of Governors	1
Lloyd Foundation	1
Advisory Committee on Economic and Social Resources Overseas	18
Commonwealth Scholarship Commission	15
Bureau of Hygiene and Tropical Diseases	6
Overseas Service Pension Scheme	4
Indian Family Pension Scheme	8
Institute of Development Studies	21
Commonwealth Development Corporation	8
Crown Agents	7
Advisory Committee for the Purchase of Wine	2

No part-time appointments are remunerated at more than £50,000 a year. This figure applies to only one full-time appointment—the managing director of the Crown Agents, who in 1989 received a salary of £63,000.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of those employed in his Department are disabled.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The proportion of registered disabled staff currently employed in the diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is 0·38 per cent. The proportion in the aid wing is 1·4 per cent.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office also employs a number of non-registered disabled staff but holds no statistics on them.

Global Technical and Management Services International

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department has on the activities of the firm Global Technical and Management Services International in Iraq prior to 29 March 1990.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not—and never has been—the practice to reveal details of our contacts with individual companies.

Military Equipment Experts

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which international forum the export of lethal and non-lethal military equipment is discussed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are several forums including the co-ordinating committee for multilateral export controls, the missile technology control regime, groupings of nuclear suppliers and the Australia group, whose aim is to strengthen export controls on chemical and biological weapons. The subject is also discussed in the United Nations.

EC Political Union

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement on the outcome of the ministerial meeting of the intergovernmental conference on political union on 4 March.

Mr. Hurd: The ministerial meeting of the intergovernmental conference on political union on 4 March, which my hon. Friend the Minister of State and I attended, discussed democratic legitimacy and the powers of the European Parliament. Both democratic legitimacy and a common foreign and security policy were also discussed at an inter-institutional conference between the European Parliament and the member states on 5 March.

At the IGC, my hon. Friend the Minister of State took the opportunity to emphasise the importance we attach to the role of national Parliaments. Following consultation on both sides of this House and in another place, he outlined ideas for recognising the role played by national Parliaments and reinforcing the links between them and the European Parliament.

The Minister of State suggested a recognition of the importance of national scrutiny procedures for EC legislation and the desirability of encouraging their application in all member states; an undertaking that Council procedures should provide adequate opportunity for national scrutiny in advance of final decisions; improving the flow of information about Community business to national Parliaments; encouraging closer contacts between European and national Parliaments.

Foreign Ministers will consider common foreign and security policy in detail later this month. The United Kingdom has put forward proposals on this, building on the success of European political co-operation and the provisions of title III of the Single European Act. Our proposals would strengthen the obligation on the Twelve to formulate and implement a common foreign and security policy.

In the increasing number of areas where our interests converge, the Twelve should play a more active role on the international scene, but member states should not be obliged to accept policies contrary to their national interests. We are therefore insisting on retention of the principle of consensus.

Our proposals also set out the Twelve's relationship with NATO and the Western European Union. We favour intensifying discussion among the Twelve on security issues such as non-proliferation. We also think it right that Europe should take on greater responsibility for its own defence, but without in any way undermining the collective security provided by NATO and the WEU. The mutual defence commitments undertaken in these organisations will continue to make an essential contribution to Europe's security. We believe the right way forward to be through strengthening the WEU which, by developing links with the Twelve, can act as a bridge between the Twelve and NATO. We do not envisage the Twelve taking on a defence role.

Finally, our proposals would improve the efficiency and speed of the machinery by which the Twelve conduct foreign and security policy.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council on 4 March.

Mr. Hurd: A meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council took place in Brussels on 4 March. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and I represented the United Kingdom.

Ministers reviewed the situation in the Soviet Union and approved in principle measures to provide some £177 million food assistance and £350 million as a credit for food purchases for the Soviet Union, subject to strict monitoring to ensure that the food went to those in need. The Council asked the Commission to resume preparatory work for a proposal to give technical assistance to the Soviet Union. A decision on whether to implement this proposal will be taken by the Council later in the light of the prevailing political and economic situation. Ministers also approved in principle £70 million food and medical assistance for Romania and Bulgaria.

Ministers discussed EC assistance to Israel and the occupied territories to counter the effects of the Gulf war. They agreed in principle that the Community should guarantee a loan of some £110 million to Israel, to be raised commercially with £19 million interest rate subsidy from the Community budget, and should provide the occupied territories with £42 million in grants.

The Commission reported progress in the GATT Uruguay round. The United Kingdom and most other member states welcomed the resumption of negotiations and called for an early and successful outcome.

The Commission reported on the negotiations with EFTA and identified the outstanding issues. It was agreed that work on this dossier should be intensified.

Over lunch, Ministers discussed the need to strengthen EC-Turkey relations. They also discussed Yugoslavia and agreed that the presidency would appeal to all Yugoslav parties to continue their dialogue.

Ministers discussed the situation in the Gulf and middle east following the suspension of hostilities. Ministers agreed to a Commission proposal to remove Kuwait from the scope of the EC embargo. They confirmed their support for the efforts of the countries of the region to ensure its future stability.

They agreed on the importance of maintaining close contact with those countries and with the United States and the Soviet Union. In this connection, the presidency is arranging ministerial troika visits to the middle east. Ministers confirmed their support for an international peace conference at an appropriate time, but agreed that

the present situation called for urgent, quick diplomatic efforts within a visible framework of contacts and discussions.

Ministers discussed the situation in the Baltic states. They noted that the results of the referendums held in these states could not be ignored and their satisfaction that they had taken place in peace and without interference. They called for an early opening of a serious and constructive dialogue between the Soviet and Baltic authorities.

SCOTLAND

Public Expenditure

10. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much is public expenditure per head in Scotland in the current year.

Mr. Lang: In 1989-90, the latest year for which a figure is available, identifiable public expenditure per head in Scotland was £2,962.

M8 Motorway

21. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has made any assessment of the environmental impact of increased usage of the M8 motorway.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: An assessment of future traffic growth on the M8 motorway is being carried out as part of the trunk and key principal road network review. Should plans for any major improvement schemes on the M8 be adopted in the light of the review's findings these would be the subject of detailed environmental assessments in the usual way.

Drinking Water

22. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when all Scottish drinking water sources will conform to European Community safety standards for aluminium.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The EC standard for aluminium in drinking water is based on aesthetic considerations and is not a safety standard. Most of the 129 supply zones for which improvement undertakings have been given by water authorities are programmed to meet the standard before the end of 1994.

NHS Trusts

23. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy not to approve applications for national health service trust status which are not supported by the majority of the relevant medical staff.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Neither this nor previous Governments have made decisions on major changes in the national health service dependent on this criterion.

37. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which hospitals in Scotland have now expressed an interest in trust status.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Six expressions of interest have been received from South Ayrshire, Foresterhill (Aberdeen), RSNH (Larbert), Forfar, Victoria Infirmary (Glasgow) and the west Grampian group of hospitals.

A77

24. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the progress being made in upgrading the A77.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Considerable progress is being made in upgrading the A77. The Balsalloch-Balcreuchan realignment scheme was completed in December 1990 and the adjoining Benane Hill bypass is at present under construction. Extensive safety fencing work has been undertaken on central reserves. Six further major schemes are in preparation. My right hon. Friend has recently allocated Strathclyde regional council an additional £1·4 million capital consent, to enable the council to make early progress on advance earth works on the local road section of the Ayr road route between the M77 and the Glasgow city boundary.

Right to Buy

26. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the number of homes sold under the right-to-buy legislation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Almost 205,000 homes in Scotland were sold under the right-to-buy legislation from October 1980 to end December 1990. Some of the Scottish Homes properties were sold under voluntary arrangements. The total level of sales demonstrates clearly the success of the Government's policy of extending the level of home-ownership in response to the aspirations of a large percentage of the population in Scotland.

Scottish Homes

27. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends meeting the chairman of Scottish Homes to discuss its budget.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I met the chairman of Scottish Homes on 4 March to discuss Scottish Homes budget.

28. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will approve the regional allocation of the budget for Scottish Homes for 1990-91.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In approving Scottish Homes programme for any year, my right hon. Friend agrees the amounts which Scottish Homes proposes should be spent on particular functions. The allocation of funds to specific areas is then a matter for Scottish Homes.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what proportion of Scottish Homes grant-in-aid allocations has been spent in Dundee in 1989-90 and 1990-91, giving both the percentage figure and the actual cash sums spent.

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* Tayside district's share of the allocation to the north region of grant-in-aid to Scottish Homes for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92, where those figures are available;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the bids made by north region for its share of the grant-in-aid allocations to Scottish Homes in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92, and the actual allocations to north region in each of those years for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* The information sought is not held by the Scottish

Office Environment Department as allocations to Scottish Homes regions or districts are a matter for Scottish Homes itself.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider giving Scottish Homes grant-in-aid allocations for three years to enable longer-term planning between Scottish Homes, local authorities, housing associations and communities in peripheral estates.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* No. The present system permits sufficient flexibility. In preparing its strategic plan, Scottish Homes is given planning indicators of Government funding for the forward year. This itself gives an indication of the future funding levels since Scottish Homes has the ability to forward commit up to 80 per cent. of its current year programme into the next. This enables the agency to plan for future years, but allows sufficient funding for new priorities or projects emerging in the following year.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the grant-in-aid to Scottish Homes in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what was the allocation to north region in each of those years for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* The grant-in-aid for Scottish Homes is set out in the table:

	£ million
1989-90 (Actual; including £36 million National Loans Fund repayments)	229·1
1990-91 (Estimates Provision; including £7·7 million National Loans Fund repayments)	266·4
1991-92 (Estimates Provision; including £169 million National Loans Fund repayments)	443·2

The allocation of these totals to Scottish Homes regions is a matter for Scottish Homes.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the estimated figures for capital receipts in the capital allocations to Scottish Homes in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what were the actual outturn capital receipts in those years for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* The information requested is set out the the table:

	Estimated £ million	*Outturn £ million*
1989-90	110	115
1990-91	110	[1]
1991-92	100	—

[1] Not yet available.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the capital allocations to Scottish Homes in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92, showing both budget and outturn figures where those are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* The information in relation to Scottish Homes total gross expenditure is set out in the table:

	Planned £ million	*Outturn £ million*
1989-90	349	348
1990-91	357	[1]
1991-92	543	—

[1] Not yet available.

Tourism

29. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the Scottish tourist board on joint promotions with the Northern Ireland tourist board of both regions.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I have had no such discussions.

Steel Industry

30. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to meet the chairman of British Steel to discuss future steel investment in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has, at present, no plans to meet the chairman of British Steel. My right hon. Friend met the company's chief executive on 21 February, when he was informed of the decision to reduce Ravenscraig to single furnace working. The Scottish Development Agency's study of the prospects for the steel industry in Scotland has identified two potential opportunities and these will be discussed further with British Steel.

Local Government Finance

31. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of the poll tax review.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is continuing to discuss with colleagues a wide range of options concerned with the financing and structure of local government.

35. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the representations he has received on the case for abolishing or reviewing the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about different aspects of the community charge arrangements. These are being considered carefully as part of the current review of the community charge.

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the qualifying date relating to residence in a property for eligibility for the community charge reduction scheme in Scotland in 1991-92.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The community charge reduction scheme will operate with backdated effect from 1 April 1990. Reductions to personal community charge liabilities will be calculated on the basis of the difference between a person's or a household's former rates liability and their actual personal community charge (not including water) at 1 April 1989. One of the criteria for eligibility, therefore, will be that the charge payer is resident in the same

property as he or she was solely or mainly resident on 1 April 1989. If the person moves after 1 April 1990, the date from which the new scheme is effective, entitlement will normally cease on the day of moving.

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the maximum number of assumed poll tax charges that will be used per household for the purposes of calculating help under the community charge reduction scheme in Scotland in 1991-92.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The community charge reduction scheme is to be based on actual community charges (less water charges) set by local authorities in 1989-90 and will operate with backdated effect to 1 April 1990. A maximum of two charges per household will be used for calculating entitlement. Additional assistance is available for the elderly and the disabled who were not former ratepayers.

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people benefited from the poll tax transitional relief scheme in Scotland; and what was the average annual payment to each person who qualified.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Regional and islands councils are required to provide information on the numbers of people who have received relief under the original and the enhanced transitional relief schemes together with information on the total amounts of relief disbursed when making their claims for reimbursement to the Department. Final claims have not yet been received from all local authorities and the information requested is therefore not yet available centrally.

Red Deer

32. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to increase the number of red deer in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have no proposals to increase the number of red deer in Scotland. The Red Deer Commission has the general function of furthering the control and conservation of red deer. The Commission has recommended that the hind population of around 160,000 should be reduced by approximately 50,000 to achieve a hind/stag ratio of no more than 1·3 to 1.

Erythropoetin

33. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many renal patients in Ninewells hospital, Dundee, receiving treatment with erythropoetin, had the drug withdrawn because of lack of funds.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. Everyone involved recognises that clinical judgments about which drugs to prescribe for patients should not be inhibited by financial considerations. That has always been the case and has not changed. Of course, health boards are entitled to debate with clinicians whether the treatments that they propose to offer patients are the most cost-effective or whether there are better and more economical alternatives that could be considered. And many hospitals have drug and therapeutic committees and subject prescription practices to peer review. But, if ultimately a clinician's judgment is that a particular drug is the only suitable treatment for a patient, the board's responsibility then becomes finding the resources necessary to enable that treatment to be offered.

The drug erythropoetin (EPO) was the subject of trials being conducted in Tayside health board. Those trials have now been completed. However, Tayside health board has confirmed that it is to find the resources to provide EPO when prescribed to all who require it.

Labour Statistics

34. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to reduce unemployment in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: There has been a fall of 6,600 in seasonally adjusted unemployment in Scotland over the past year. The Government will continue to pursue sound monetary, fiscal and exchange rate policies to reduce inflation, and to promote investment, enterprise and the recovery of economic growth. This is the best means of reducing unemployment. Moreover, for those without a job, there is a wide range of employment and training measures available, particularly for the young and long-term unemployed, to help them back into employment.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the number of job losses in the period 1 June 1990 to 1 February 1991 in *(a)* the Greenock travel-to-work area, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Information in the form requested is not available. There are no comprehensive statistics on redundancies. The following table shows the number of confirmed redundancies involving 10 or more workers notified to the Employment Department from June 1990 to January 1991 for the areas requested.

Confirmed redundancies[1,2]
June 1990 to January 1991

	Greenock TTWA	*Strathclyde region*	*Scotland*
1990			
June	Nil	383	1,007
July	Nil	533	981
August	Nil	111	560
September	Nil	281	683
October	Nil	615	1,115
November	Nil	326	1,439
December	Nil	244	1,086
1991			
January	Nil	113	370
TOTAL	Nil	2,606	7,241

[1] All figures are provisional.
[2] For a variety of reasons, not all redundancies are notified to the Employment Department, and not all those that are notified are eventually confirmed.

Job losses, however, should not be viewed in isolation: in any dynamic economy, jobs are also being continually created. Over the latest year for which figures are available (to September 1990), the civilian work force in employment in Scotland increased by 48,000, or by over 900 per week.

Representative Office, Brussels

36. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had calling for his Department to establish a representative office in Brussels.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I am aware of the views that some hon. Members and others have expressed. The Scottish Office is already represented very effectively in Brussels by the United Kingdom permanent representation and we have no proposals for change.

Interest Rates

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the impact of the Government's interest rate policy on the levels of unemployment in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The reduction in United Kingdom inflation seen over the last few months is the result of the Government's firm commitment to a prudent interest rate policy.

Reducing inflation is the best means of promoting investment, enterprise and economic growth in Scotland. Only in this way can Scottish unemployment be set on a sustainable downward trend.

Personal Disposable Incomes

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the trends of personal disposable incomes in Scotland over the past 15-years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Over the 15-year period between 1973 and 1988, personal disposable income per head in Scotland increased by over a third in real terms, to £5,236 per head by 1988. Personal disposable income per head in Scotland grew slightly faster than in the United Kingdom as a whole—from 94·6 per cent. of the United Kingdom average in 1973 to 97·3 per cent. in 1988. In 1988, personal disposable income per head in Scotland was higher than in all parts of the United Kingdom except the south-east and south-west.

Property Identification

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether it is the policy of his Department to mark property with an indelible mark or similar means of identification.

Mr. Lang: The methods used to protect official property are kept under constant review and measures are taken as appropriate.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether it is the policy of the Lord Advocate's departments to mark property with an indelible mark or similar means of identification.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is not the policy of the Lord Advocate's departments to mark property with an indelible mark. Where appropriate, property is identified with a discreet security marking.

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how statistical data are collated in respect of the employment and training of people with disabilities in Scotland by his Department or other Government offices or agencies; and if he will publish the most recent statistics.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Statistics on the employment and training of people with disabilities in Scotland are available in a number of different formats from various sources. The main sources of information on the employment and training of disabled people in Scotland are described as follows.

Data on those on Government training programmes who have disabilities are based on information supplied by the training provider about each trainee starting a training programme. Providers are asked to identify disabled trainees on the basis of

"those who on account of injury, disease or congenital deformity are substantially handicapped in obtaining or keeping employment or undertaking work on their own account of a kind which apart from that injury, disease or deformity would be suited to their age, experience and qualifications".

The latest information for Scotland is that, between April and December 1990, some 1·2 per cent. of those who started on YT and 5·6 per cent. of those who started on ET were recorded as disabled by their training provider.

Some data are collected about registration as disabled under the terms of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Acts 1944 and 1958, and on the extent to which employers are complying with the provisions of the quota scheme —which was established by the 1944 Act.

This Act places a duty on employers who have 20 or more workers to employ a quota of registered disabled people. The standard quota is at present 3 per cent. of an employer's total work force. It is not an offence to be below quota. However, when in this situation an employer has a further duty, under the Act, to engage suitable registered disabled people if any are available when vacancies arise. An employer who is below quota must not engage anyone other than a registered disabled person without first obtaining a permit to do so from the employment service's local disablement resettlement officer, and must not discharge a registered disabled worker without reasonable cause. The provisions of the Act are not legally binding on the Crown, but Government Departments and the national health service have undertaken to accept the same responsibilities as other employers.

The disabled persons register is kept at the employment service's local offices and local education authority careers offices. The numbers registered are counted annually in April to provide local, regional and national totals.

The employment service's local offices, which also monitor compliance with the provisions of the quota scheme, conduct an annual inquiry, which takes place in May and is concluded on 1 June, into the extent to which employers in their areas who are subject to quota are employing registered disabled people.

In April 1990 there were 34,082 registered disabled people in Scotland; and on 1 June that year, the average percentage of registered disabled people in the work forces of Scottish-based employers subject to the quota provisions was 0·7 per cent. This latter figure compares with 0·8 per cent. for Great Britain as a whole.

However, data about registered disabled people and their employment under the quota scheme do not provide an accurate picture of the employment position of people with disabilities. Registration as disabled is voluntary, and it has been established by recent research commissioned by the employment service—"Employment and Handicap", SCPR 1990, a copy of which is in the Library—that the majority of people with disabilities who would be eligible

to register choose not to so so. Data on compliance with the quota relates only to registered disabled people and to employers with 20 or more workers.

There is a further complication, in that the quota responsibilities are placed on employers in respect of their total work forces, not separately for individual branches or establishments. In the case of employers with more than one branch, compliance is monitored by the employment service's local office in which the employer's headquarters is located. As a consequence, statistics provided from local office records in Scotland do not take account of registered disabled people working in Scotland for employers whose headquarters is elsewhere in Great Britain, but will include data in respect of those working elsewhere in Great Britain for employers based in Scotland.

In the spring of each year, the Department of Employment publishes an article in the *Employment Gazette* showing the number and proportion of registered disabled people employed by a range of public sector employers. Information is given for the main central and local government employers including those in Scotland. The latest article, which gives information for May 1990, was published in the February 1991 edition.

Until January 1990, the employment service maintained information on the number of disabled people registered for work at jobcentres and careers offices. However, this information needs to be treated with considerable caution because, from October 1982, it has not been compulsory to register for employment as a condition for the receipt of unemployment benefit. Because of their limited value, the collection of these figures was discontinued in January 1990. At that date, there were 1,928 unemployed registered disabled also registered for work at jobcentres and careers offices in Scotland, and an additional 4,521 unemployed people with disabilities registered at jobcentres and careers offices who were not also registered as disabled.

The annual "Labour Force Survey" collects a wide range of information about the United Kingdom labour market. This is a sample survey of households which can provide analyses for the Scottish labour market. Some information is collected in the survey about those with health problems or disabilities in response to the question

"Do you have any health problems or disabilities which limit the kind of paid work you can do?"

This covers a much wider range of people than those recorded as disabled on Government training programmes and than those registered as disabled under the 1944 Act. It should also be noted that, since the "Labour Force Survey" is a household survey, disabled people living in hostel or institutional accommodation will not be included in the survey.

The latest information from this survey is that of an estimated 444,000 people of working age in Scotland in spring 1989 with health problems or disabilities which limit the kind of paid work they can do, 34 per cent. were in employment, 10 per cent. were unemployed and 56 per cent. were economically inactive.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many assisted places pupils attended each of the schools involved in the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

School	*Number of assisted pupils in 1989-90 school year*[1]
Aberlour House School, Moray	5
Albyn School for Girls, Aberdeen	20
Ardvreck School, Crieff	1
Beaconhurst Grange School, Bridge of Allan	3
Belhaven Hill School, Dunbar	4
Belmont House School, Newton Mearns	21
Blairmore School, Huntly	2
Butterstone House School, Dunkeld	2
Cargilfield School, Edinburgh	3
Clifton Hall School, Midlothian	6
Craigclowan Preparatory School, Perth	6
Craigholme School for Girls, Glasgow	38
Crawfordton House School, Dumfriesshire	8
Croftinloan School, Pitlochry	4
Daniel Stewart's and Melville College, Edinburgh The Mary Erskine School, Edinburgh	288
Dollar Academy	63
Drumley House School, Ayrshire	6
Edinburgh Academy	46
Fernhill School, Glasgow	28
Fettes College, Edinburgh	31
Fort Augustus Abbey School	34
George Heriot's School, Edinburgh	237
George Watson's College, Edinburgh	240
Glasgow Academy	42
Glenalmond College, Perthshire	34
Gordonstoun School, Morayshire	24
Hamilton College	11
The High School of Dundee	177
The High School of Glasgow	40
Hutchesons' Grammar School, Glasgow	135
Keil School, Dumbarton	71
Kelvinside Academy, Glasgow	58
Kilgraston School, Perthshire	52
Kilquhanity House School, Castle Douglas	18
Lathallan School, Montrose	6
Laurel Bank School, Glasgow	58
Lomond School, Helensburgh	43
Loretto School, Musselburgh	29
Merchiston Castle School, Edinburgh	56
Morrison's Academy Crieff	179
New Park School, St. Andrews	3
Oxenfoord Castle School, Midlothian	5
Park School, Glasgow	59
Park Lodge School, Helensburgh	1
Rannoch School, Perthshire	27
Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen	59
Rudolf Steiner School of Edinburgh	61
St. Aloysius' College, Glasgow	154
St. Columba's School, Kilmacolm	40
St. Denis and Cranley School, Edinburgh	28
St. George's School for Girls, Edinburgh	17
St. Leonard's School, St. Andrews	24
St. Margaret's School for Girls, Aberdeen	18
St. Margaret's School for Girls, Edinburgh	65
St. Mary's School, Melrose	2
Strathallan School, Forgandenny, Perthshire	41
Wellington School, Ayr	47
Westbourne School, Glasgow	54

[1] provisional figures

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to which posts in public bodies he appoints individuals where the posts are *(a)* part-time and *(b)* remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Mr. Lang: The posts in public bodies to which I appointed individuals as at 1 July 1990 are set out in pages 77 to 88 and 113 of the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1990", a copy of which is available in the Library.

The majority of these appointments are on a part-time basis, none of which is remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Strathclyde Police

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many additional uniformed police officers have been authorised to be added to the strength of the Strathclyde police force in each year from 1975 to 1990.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None. Strathclyde regional council made only one application—in 1983—during this period for the Secretary of State's consent to an increase in the authorised police establishment of Strathclyde police. Consent was withheld on the ground that the force was being required by the council to operate substantially below its existing authorised establishment.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many crimes were *(a)* recorded and *(b)* detected by the Strathclyde police force in each year from 1975 to 1990.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Statistics of crimes and offences recorded and cleared up in each police force area are published annually in the reports of Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary for Scotland, copies of which are available in the Library. Figures for 1990 are not yet available.

Cervical Cancer

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many women have died from cervical cancer in each of the past 10 years; and if he will give the figures by health board area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of deaths in each health board area with malignant neoplasm of the cervix uteri (ICD[1] 180) recorded as the underlying cause of death is shown in the following table.

Deaths from cervical cancer in each health board area in Scotland 1980 to 1989

Health board area	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
SCOTLAND	187	201	208	213	227	214	199	188	191	205
Borders	1	2	0	3	4	8	10	3	4	4
Forth Valley	13	8	6	8	14	17	8	12	11	6
Dumfries and Galloway	10	2	6	8	6	5	11	10	6	4
Fife	17	15	19	23	22	18	12	11	12	17
Grampian	16	19	12	14	21	16	15	13	12	20
Highland	5	8	6	10	10	3	10	8	7	10
Lothian	17	37	29	30	31	28	25	25	31	27
Tayside	15	16	13	10	13	19	12	17	13	12
Orkney	2	3	1	2	0	1	0	2	0	0
Shetland	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Western Isles	1	0	2	0	2	0	4	2	0	1
Argyll and Clyde	17	15	19	19	19	19	17	14	27	24
Ayrshire and Arran	15	13	25	10	20	13	20	13	18	21
Greater Glasgow	44	45	43	43	49	34	33	42	37	37
Lanarkshire	14	17	25	33	16	32	22	15	13	22

[1] International Classification of Diseases, Ninth revision.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cervical smear tests have been carried out on women for each year since 1980 in each of the health board areas; and by health board area how many have yet to be dealt with by the appropriate medical agencies.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of tests carried out from 1980 to 1989, the latest available year, is shown in the table. Information is not collected centrally about the number of smears outstanding. Since December 1990 health boards have been set a target of 14 days maximum for reporting of test results, which is to be achieved no later than 31 May 1991.

Number of cervical smears examined in each health board in Scotland: 1980-89

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Scotland	282,510	[1]293,105	285,105	315,044	322,484	356,747	361,626	420,361	448,752	[2]441,287
Argyll and Clyde	25,243	25,990	23,829	27,151	28,946	35,195	33,554	33,180	40,985	38,517
Ayrshire and Arran	19,946	19,753	18,497	21,218	22,827	29,219	30,098	31,139	34,452	34,359
Borders	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	11,250	11,653	11,710	12,235	12,164	13,661	14,331	15,015	15,019	14,300
Fife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	16,327	18,050
Forth Valley	12,316	14,002	12,784	15,074	15,925	19,509	19,353	19,600	21,904	23,863
Grampian	30,603	33,014	32,726	35,164	37,783	43,539	45,077	53,603	51,146	53,708
Greater Glasgow	51,860	53,143	49,752	54,276	51,916	59,990	56,068	84,460	80,682	[2]68,749
Highland	16,585	16,656	17,094	19,174	18,671	21,577	21,016	22,127	21,720	22,256
Lanarkshire	23,631	[1]25,766	25,949	28,423	27,174	34,250	33,966	35,820	38,981	40,672
Lothian	63,857	65,070	64,408	70,713	74,668	63,272	72,122	88,922	90,032	87,927
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tayside	28,219	28,823	28,356	31,616	32,310	36,535	36,041	36,495	37,504	38,886
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

[1] Estimated.
[2] Provisional.

Notes:
These figures relate to smears analysed by laboratories in each health board area.
Smears taken from women in one health board area may be analysed in laboratories in other health board areas.

Bankruptcies

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many companies have gone into liquidation or have declared bankruptcy in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Scotland as a whole in each of the past three years; and in which areas of economic activity they were to be found.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The table gives the available information on Scottish registered companies for the past three years. There is no information on company liquidations for areas within Scotland. The term bankruptcy does not apply to companies.

Notified liquidations of Scottish registered companies:

Year	Number
1988	651
1989	674
1990	689

Industrial analysis[1]

	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Agriculture and horticulture	3	7	2
Manufacturing	103	95	116
Construction	72	75	75
Transport and communication	15	19	16
Wholesaling	17	11	12
Retailing	90	73	79
Financial institutions	1	5	6
Business services	42	38	41
Hotels and catering	17	17	22
All other industries and businesses	85	69	51
Total	445	409	420

Source: Register of companies

[1] Compulsory liquidations and creditors' voluntary liquidations only. Members' liquidations are excluded from the analysis.

Surplus School Places

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the current level of surplus places in each education authority in both primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The current level of surplus places in schools in Scotland is substantial. It is for education authorities to assess the scale of the problems in their area and to seek to achieve rationalisation of their school provision accordingly.

Community Charge

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has held recent discussions with local authorities concerning the subject of the reimbursement of poll tax income forgone by those service men and service women serving in the Gulf war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 19 February in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) a special scheme to compensate local authorities for community charge income forgone where service personnel normally resident in their area have been posted to the Gulf. The announcement made it clear that the scheme would apply in Scotland and my Department wrote to all Scottish authorities about the matter on 26 February. I am arranging for a copy of their letter to be placed in the House Library.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the current waiting list for each specialty in *(a)* the catchment area for the Argyll and Clyde health board and *(b)* the Greater Glasgow health board; and what is the number of people in each area who have waited (i) for one year and (ii) for more than two years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Figures are currently available as at 31 March 1990. These are set out in the tables. The figures relate to each health board area and not to area of residence of patient.

Specialty	Total	In-patient waiting list, waiting for 1 to 2 years	More than 2 years	Total	Day case waiting list, waiting for 1 to 2 years	More than 2 years
Argyl and Clyde Health Board						
General surgery	1,232	131	60	705	7	13
Orthopaedic surgery	547	103	58	83	10	4
ENT surgery	977	83	34	21	—	—
Ophthalmology	533	1	—	31	—	—
Oral surgery and oral medicine	48	1	—	17	1	—
General medicine	—	—	—	9	—	—
Dermatology	2	—	—	—	—	—
Gynaecology	489	20	10	91	4	1
Plastic surgery	2	—	—	84	—	—
Geriatric assessment	6	—	—	—	—	—
Geriatric long stay	13	—	—	—	—	—
Young chronic sick	1	—	—	—	—	—
Geriatric psychiatry	13	—	—	—	—	—
Total	3,863	339	162	1,041	22	18
Greater Glasgow Health Board						
General surgery	2,128	126	8	836	25	1
Orthopaedic surgery	2,023	214	9	124	14	3
ENT surgery	1,782	109	1	72	3	—
Ophthalmology	1,832	125	5	133	4	—
Urology	1,287	170	22	508	12	2

Specialty	Total	In-patient waiting list, waiting for 1 to 2 years	More than 2 years	Total	Day case waiting list, waiting for 1 to 2 years	More than 2 years
Oral surgery and oral medicine	1,015	148	125	68	1	1
General medicine	494	1	—	—	—	—
Dermatology	22	—	—	—	—	—
Respiratory medicine	4	—	—	1	—	—
Surgical paediatrics	335	17	—	115	—	—
Gynaecology	1,386	31	1	137	3	—
Neurosurgery	114	18	10	—	—	—
Cardiothoracic surgery	792	79	1	—	—	—
Plastic surgery	1,708	373	685	2,311	509	1,126
Neurology	40	—	—	—	—	—
Radiotherapy (consultive)	9	—	—	—	—	—
Geriatric long stay	135	11	10	—	—	—
Young chronic sick	5	3	1	—	—	—
Mental illness	143	30	5	—	—	—
Geriatric psychiatry	181	43	16	—	—	—
Total	15,435	1,498	899	4,305	571	1,133

Inverclyde

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his most up-to-date estimate of the number of jobs that have been created by the Inverclyde initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The latest information available shows that the total number of jobs created by projects which have been assisted by the Inverclyde initiative between March 1985 and May 1990 is approximately 3,840. The initiative's period of operation officially expired in March 1990.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his most up-to-date estimate of the jobs that have been created by the Inverclyde enterprise zone; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The latest information available on jobs in the Inverclyde enterprise zone shows that at September 1990, 356 new jobs had been created with 362 existing jobs secured. In addition, 1,083 new jobs were forecast in companies locating in the zone.

Private Care Homes

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provisions are made to recompense social work departments for the cost implications of administering private care homes which are struck off the register.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no specific statutory provisions relating to these circumstances. Local authority functions relating to the registration and inspection of such homes are financed by a combination of charges on owners of homes and provision in aggregate external finance.

Ambulance Service

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the present established strength of officer, control assistant grades and ambulance crews of the ambulance service; and what plans there are for changes.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The current establishment is 149 officers, 79 control assistants, 1,347 accident and emergency and 587 non-emergency crew staff. From the additional £8 million which I have made available to the ambulance service for 1991-92, plans are being formulated to improve the service by increasing double manning and the number of staff with extended training skills.

Industrial Development

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the chief executive of the Scottish Development Agency to discuss industrial development.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to meet the chief executive of the Scottish Development Agency; but he did meet the chairman of the agency informally last week to discuss a range of matters of mutual interest.

Forestry

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans the Government have to improve the delivery of their forestry policies and to reorganise the Forestry Commission.

Mr. Lang: The Government's forestry policies have been developed and refined over recent years. We are encouraging more planting on better quality land than hitherto and the creation of forests close to major centres of population. As noted in the Environment White Paper, the Government have also taken steps to build environmental objectives into forestry policy. A much greater emphasis is being placed, for instance, on the planting of broadleaves and on the conservation of existing forests and woodlands. At the same time, the value of forestry output is increasing in line with the steady rise in timber production and processing. We are committed to the concept of multi-purpose forests, with all that they can offer in economic, social and environmental terms.

Against that background, we have been concerned to ensure that the Forestry Commission is organised to take full advantage of the new opportunities now opening up for forestry. This will require a strong and flexible Commission, which can focus its resources to deliver our policies for the development of forestry as cost-effectively as possible. To this end, we see advantage in changes being made to the Commission's management structure to

achieve a clearer administrative distinction between those staff concerned with its regulatory and advisory duties as a Government Department and those engaged in the management of its forests. We have therefore endorsed a proposal by the Forestry Commissioners that the commission should be reorganised along these lines.

The commission's staff will be given more precisely defined responsibilities and goals. This will improve the effectiveness of the authority, which will have a responsibility to oversee the work of the enterprise as well as the private sector. Enterprise managers will be free to concentrate on the efficient management of the commission's forest estate, with clear commercial, environmental and social objectives.

I emphasise that this will be an internal reorganisation. Last year, in responding to its report "Land Use and Forestry", we rejected a recommendation by the Agriculture Committee that the commission should be split up. This reorganisation fully accords with that decision.

The implementation of the reorganisation will now be put in hand by the Forestry Commissioners.

Residential Properties

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what is the estimate of the number of empty residential properties in the private sector; and what is the estimate of the percentage this represents of the total number of residential properties in the private sector.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 28 February 1991]:* Information is not collected on the private sector alone. It is estimated that at 30 June 1990, some 99,000 dwellings in Scotland were vacant: this represented 4·7 per cent. of the total housing stock. In addition, it is estimated that there are about 29,000 second or holiday homes; a total of some 127,500 houses may be vacant all or part of the time.

DEFENCE

The Gulf

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about the postal service to troops serving in the Gulf; and what further measures his Department has taken to ensure the provision of a low-cost and efficient postal service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A number of representations have been received about the postal service to troops serving in the Gulf.

Forces concessionary rate mail, in addition to the forces free airletter facility, provides a low-cost and efficient postal service to the Gulf. I also welcome the initiative by United Parcels in helping to deliver parcels at low cost or free of charge to the defence postal and courier service depot in London. All forces mail to the Gulf is being carried by RAF aircraft which depart daily.

Over 1 million kilograms of mail has been moved to the Gulf from the United Kingdom, as well as over 100,000 kilograms from Germany. I believe that the postal service has performed well, often in difficult circumstances. The situation is regularly monitored, but at present I have no plans to introduce any change to current arrangements.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the United States armed forces contingency hospitals based at RAF Feltwell, Bicester, Little Rissington, Nocton Hall, Upwood, Kemble, Bordan, Newton and Waterbeach will be available for the treatment of United Kingdom armed forces casualties returning from the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United States armed forces have activated their contingency hospitals at RAF Little Rissington, Bicester and Nocton Hall. Although these contingency hospitals are primarily designed for the treatment of United States military personnel, casualties from any allied nation would be admitted in an emergency.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many troops there are in the Gulf from each allied country; and how many tanks and armed personnel carriers from each allied country are in the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) on 25 February at column 389. The United Kingdom committed about 43,000 personnel to the operation in the Gulf.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the targets of British aircraft during each of the last three days of the war.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: RAF aircraft continued to attack military targets and facilities supporting Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, particularly in support of coalition ground forces.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if Her Majesty's Government will offer United Kingdom medical facilities in the Gulf to Iraqi non-prisoner wounded where capacity is available.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No injured or wounded person of any nationality would be refused emergency medical treatment in United Kingdom medical facilities in the Gulf.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if studies undertaken by the National Radiological Protection Board on the morbidity rate of service personnel involved in nuclear tests on Christmas Island have been subject to independent review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The NRPB/Imperial Cancer Research Fund study covered mortality and cancer incidence in United Kingdom participants in nuclear tests in both Australia and Christmas Island. It was based on mortality rather than morbidity rates, though incomplete data on cancer incidence (morbidity plus mortality) for the limited period over which United Kingdom records exist were not at variance with the main conclusions. The report was subject to stringent peer review before it was accepted for publication in the *British Medical Journal*.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make available to hon. Members the records of the environmental monitoring studies relating to British nuclear tests.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence holds extensive records of raw environmental monitoring data. Some records of environmental monitoring were published in 1985 by the Australian royal commission into United Kingdom nuclear tests in Australia. Further monitoring around Maralinga was carried out by the Australian technical advisory group (TAG) which reported in November 1990. We have no plans to prepare and publish a compilation of these extensive data.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what unpublished records of nuclear tests are held by his Department; and what plans he has to publish them.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The MOD holds a very large amount of unpublished, classified information on the United Kingdom nuclear tests. This is reviewed for possible release to the Public Record Office 30 years after creation, as is the practice for all other classified MOD reports. Decisions on publication are based soley on consideration of national security.

There are no plans to review and publish all these reports though all available information on exposures of test participants to ionising radiation has been released to NRPB and was analysed in their report published in 1985.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements have existed for veterans of British nuclear tests to undergo medical examination.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During their service, test participants would have had access to medical examination whenever it was required. Civilian test veterans, including ex-service personnel, would no doubt seek advice from their general practitioner when appropriate.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what published records for which his Department is responsible are available of previous nuclear tests; where they are held; and when were they published.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Records of previous nuclear tests, compiled for the Australian royal commission into United Kingdom nuclear tests in 1985, are at the Public Record Office at Kew, class description DEFE 16. Other documents are lodged in the British Library. A comprehensive list of such documents could not be compiled without disproportionate cost.

Mr McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to arrange for the medical examination of the children and grandchildren of British nuclear test veterans; whether such tests have been carried out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no current plans to arrange for the medical examination of the children and grandchildren of British participants in the nuclear test programme, nor have such tests been carried out in the past.

Property Marking

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is the policy of his Department to mark property with an indelible mark or similar means of identification.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It would not be practicable or necessary to mark every item of MOD property, but many are readily identifiable. Stores and equipment are protected by a range of security measures.

HMS Endurance

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what duties are performed in the south Atlantic by HMS Endurance.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: HMS Endurance undertakes a range of representational, scientific and support duties, including assistance and support to the British Antarctic survey on an ad hoc basis.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to withdraw HMS Endurance from her station in the south Atlantic.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my answer of 19 February at col. 138 to my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field).

RAF Fairford

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures are taken to inform the local fire brigade when bomb-laden aircraft take off from RAF Fairford.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A close working relationship exists between the local fire brigade and the United States Air Force fire department at RAF Fairford, but advance notification of operations is not given to civil agencies for operational security reasons.

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to which posts in public bodies he appoints individuals where the posts are *(a)* part-time and *(b)* remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Mr. Alan Clark: None. I refer the hon. Member to "Public Bodies 1990" issued by the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service; pages 12 to 14 list Ministry of Defence appointments.

Walter Somers Ltd.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will now state the nature of the two telephone conversations between Walter Somers Ltd. and a Ministry of Defence metallurgical expert in 1988, referred to in his reply of 2 May 1990, *Official Report*, column *601*.

Mr. Alan Clark: The conversations were concerned with technical aspects of the steel tubes which Walter Somers Ltd. proposed to export to Iraq.

Equipment

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his NATO counterparts regarding the distinction between lethal and non-lethal defence equipment.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the financial effect on his equipment procurement budget of the export of British defence equipment.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is not possible accurately to quantify the full effect.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made of the activities of the Space Research Corporation that relate to the actual or possible export of non-lethal or lethal defence equipment, referred to in his answer of 2 May 1990, *Official Report*, column *602*.

Mr. Alan Clark: The assessment of my Department is that SRC was not directly involved in the production and export of the equipment referred to. This was undertaken by another firm, ATI, which was controlled by SRC's founder, Dr. G. V. Bull. It is believed that the equipment consisted of large calibre gun parts destined for Iraq.

Arms Sales

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is his policy to discuss arms sales to non-NATO countries with other NATO countries.

Mr. Alan Clark: As the need arises, I discuss the sale to non-NATO countries of collaboratively developed defence equipment with participating NATO partners. Defence officials are involved in discussions with appropriate NATO and other countries, bilaterally and multilaterally, on matters relating to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, missile technology control regime and measures to prevent chemical and biological weapon proliferation.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the conference of national armaments directors has discussed arms sales to non-NATO countries; and whether there are any plans for the conference of national armaments directors to discuss arms sales to non-NATO countries.

Mr. Alan Clark: No substantive discussion of this subject has taken place in the conference of national armaments directors and we have no plans to raise the subject in this forum.

Iraq

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his assessment of the effect that the activities of the Matrix Churchill Company have had on the development of the Iraqi defence industry;

(2) what is his assessment of the effect that the activities of the Ali Arabi Trading Co. have had on the development of the Iraqi defence industry.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ali Arabi Trading Company was the ultimate holding company for the British Company, Matrix Churchill. In the light of charges laid against individuals and continuing investigations being carried out by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise it would not be appropriate to comment further.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the source of the technology used by the Iraqi defence industry to manufacture 155mm artillery shells.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Iraq has acquired technology for its defence industry from a large number of countries.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information was supplied to the commanders of British forces in the Gulf region relating to British exports of non-lethal defence equipment to Iraq.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The commander of the British forces in the Gulf region was fully briefed on the known composition of enemy forces.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information has been supplied to his Department by foreign Governments regarding their exports to Iraq of defence equipment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Her Majesty's Government have been in contact with allied and other Governments about their past defence exports to Iraq. Details of any information received remain confidential.

Middle East

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his NATO counterparts regarding the development of defence industries in the middle east region.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of those employed in his Department are disabled.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Some 0·9 per cent. of staff in the MOD are registered disabled. In addition, there are a number of staff with disabilities working in the MOD who have not formally registered themselves as disabled.

Defence Quality Assurance

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will consider 14MU RAF Carlisle for the relocation of the directorate general of defence quality assurance.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We are considering a number of options for the relocation of DGDQA and will come to a decision as soon as possible.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 7 March 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment in the Law Officers Department.

The Attorney-General: Recruitment at senior grades in the civil service is carried out by the Civil Service Commission. The Commission has taken various steps to aid recruitment of members of the ethnic minorities.

ER

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1-7) and overall in the Law Officers Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

The Attorney-General: In the Departments for which I am responsible the number and percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall who are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities respectively as at 1 April 1990 (4 March 1991 in the case of the Crown prosecution service) are as follows:

Grade	(a) Women		(b) Ethnic minorities	
	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	Percentage
Legal Secretariat to the Law Officers				
3	1	100·0	0	0·0
4	0	0·0	0	0·0
5	2	50·0	1	25·0
6	0	0·0	0	0·0
7	0	0·0	0	0·0
Overall	6	32·0	3	16·0
Treasury Solicitor's Department				
1	0	0·0	0	0·0
2	0	0·0	0	0·0
3	0	0·0	0	0·0
4		No post holders		
5	5	13·0	0	0·0
6	14	23·0	4	7·0
7	12	23·0	8	15·0
Overall	173	39·0	96	21·0
Crown Prosecution Service				
1	0	0·0	Figures on ethnic minorities do not cover all staff as they are derived from a voluntary questionnaire. Current records indicate that about 5 per cent. of staff in grades 1 to 7 are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Overall, records indicate that about 5·5 per cent are from ethnic minorities	
2	0	0·0		
3	0	0·0		
4	0	0·0		
5	2	4·0		
6	24	13·0		
7	583	38·0		
Overall	3,245	59·0		
Serious Fraud Office				
1	0	0·0	0	0·0
2	0	0·0	0	0·0
3	0	0·0	0	0·0
4	0	0·0	0	0·0
5	2	20·0	0	0·0
6	3	21·0	1	7·0
7	0	0·0	0	0·0
Overall	83	38·5	7	8·4

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General when the Law Officers Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Departments for which I am responsible, other than the Crown prosecution service and the Serious Fraud Office, took part in the nationwide survey of non-industrial civil servants which was completed in 1988.

The Crown prosecution service conducted a survey in January 1990.

The Serious Fraud Office has not previously undertaken a monitoring exercise because the origins of the individuals have been known to management, due to the small size of the Department. In the Serious Fraud Office the setting up of an equal opportunities review will be undertaken by the recently appointed grade 7 head of finance and establishment officer. As a result, it is expected that a formal monitoring and review system will be in place by the summer of this year.

In the other Departments, information on the ethnic origins of staff has been kept up to date.

Mortgage Repossessions

Mr. Battle: To ask the Attorney-General how many court actions relating to mortgage repossessions occurred in the Selby and York county court in each year since 1979.

The Attorney-General: The number of mortgage actions for possession entered and orders made for possession in York county court in each year since 1986, the first year for which figures are available, are shown in the table.

Year	*Number of mortgage possession actions entered*	*Number of mortgage possession orders entered*
1986	452	299
1987	335	269
1988	327	238
1989	368	193
1990	505	145

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Loans

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the total number of students attending all designated courses for student loans who are potentially eligible for student loans in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Separate figures for England and for Wales are not available. The Department recently estimated that 547,000 students domiciled in England and Wales are eligible for a loan in the academic year 1990-91. The estimate may be revised as further data become available.

Grant-maintained schools

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what would be the total cost in payment of capital grants, assuming that the present average payment was maintained, if every local education authority school opted for grant-maintained status;

(2) what would be the total cost in payment of special purpose grants, assuming that the present average payment was maintained, if every local education authority school opted for grant-maintained status;

(3) what would be the total cost in payment of transitional grants, assuming that the present average payment was maintained, if every local education authority school opted for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Eggar: The levels of these grants are reviewed annually in the light of the Government's spending priorities for education and other services. It is not therefore possible to project a figure for the total cost if every local authority school opted for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average amount paid per school in *(a)* transitional grants, *(b)* special purpose grants and *(c)* capital grants for those schools that have opted for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Eggar: The table sets out the total amount of these grants paid to grant-maintained schools in 1989-90, the only year in respect of which final figures are available.

	£K
Transitional grants	746
Special purpose grants	455
Capital grants	2,013

The actual grants paid to each GM school reflect the particular circumstance of an individual school, including its size, and the date within the financial year on which it became grant-maintained.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the amount paid in capital grants for each school that has opted for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Eggar: Final figures are only available in respect of the 1989-90 financial year. The total amount paid in capital grants in that year to GM schools was as follows:

Schools incorporated in September 1989	*£K*
London Oratory School	1,039·7
Old Swinford Hospital	750·1
Skegness Grammar School	180·2
Wilson's School	42·8

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the amount paid in transitional grants to each school that has opted for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Eggar: Transitional grants are available to help with preparing for and taking on grant-maintained status. The transitional grants paid to grant-maintained schools incorporated on or before September 1990 are as follows:

	£ thousands
Schools incorporated in September 1989	
Audenshaw High School	25·9
Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School	26·1
Baverstock Grant-Maintained School	29·7
Castle Hall Grant-Maintained School	21·0
Colyton Grammar School	21·5
Heckmondwike Grammar School	23·5
Hendon School	27·5
London Oratory School	30·0
Old Swinford Hospital	23·2
Queen Elizabeth's Grant-Maintained Grammar School	19·9
Queen Elizabeth's Grant-Maintained School for Boys	30·0
Queensbury School	24·6
Skegness Grammar School	23·5
Small Heath School	26·5
St. James' Church of England School, Bolton	24·9
The Grammar School for Girls, Wilmington	21·8
The Kings School, Grantham	26·2
Wilsons School	25·9
Schools incorporated in January 1990	
Bankfield High School	21·5
St. Francis Xavier's College	30·0
Schools incorporated in April 1990	
Beechen Cliff School	28·0
Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School	23·9
Claremont High School	28·5
Lancaster Royal Grammar School	27·7
London Nautical School	20·9
Netherthorpe School	23·2

	£ thousands
Ribston Hall High School	25·3
Southfield School for Girls	24·2
Southlands School	23·1
Schools incorporated in August/September 1990	
Adams' Grammar School	21·7
Bishopshalt School	28·8
Bournemouth Grammar School	28·0
Bridgewater Hall School	30·0
Brindley Hall School	30·0
Carre's Grammar School	20·7
Ecclesbourne School	30·0
Guildford County School	26·0
Long Field High School	17·1
Marling School	25·9
Pate's Grammar School	30·0
Rickmansworth School	29·0
Stroud High School	25·5
Watford Boys Grammar School	30·0
Wolverhampton High School for Girls	23·4

Notes:

1. A further 20 schools have yet to submit their final bids for transitional grant. Of these, six schools were incorporated as grant-maintained schools on 1 January 1991, 12 schools will be incorporated in April 1991 and two schools will be incorporated on 1 September 1991.
2. Schools incorporated as grant-maintained schools on or before September 1990 were eligible to apply for transitional grant of £15,000 plus £15 per pupil up to a ceiling of £30,000. This grant could only be paid prior to the date of incorporation.
3. It was announced on 10 October 1990 that all secondary schools and primary schools with 200 or more pupils incorporated from 1 January 1991 would be eligible to apply for £30,000 plus £30 per pupil in transitional grant. Smaller primary schools will be eligible to receive £20,000 plus £30 per pupil. Financial regulations have now been laid before the House allowing schools to spend grant after incorporation.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the amount paid in special purpose grants to each school that has opted for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Eggar: Final figures are available only in respect of the 1989-90 financial year. The total amount paid in special purpose grants in that year to GM schools was as follows:

	£'000
Schools incorporated in September 1989	
Audenshaw High School	19·1
Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School	22·3
Baverstock Grant-Maintained School	20·9
Castle Hall Grant-Maintained School	6·7
Colyton Grammar School	12·4
Heckmondwike Grammar School	16·5
Hendon School	32·2
London Oratory School	71·0
Old Swinford Hospital	24·7
Queen Elizabeth's GM Grammar School	13·7
Queen Elizabeth's GM School For Boys	36·7
Queensbury School	9·1
Skegness Grammar School	19·3
Small Heath School	14·2
St. James' CE School Bolton	25·6
The Grammar School For Girls Wilmington	10·6
The Kings School Grantham	33·6
Wilsons School	42·0
Schools incorporated in January 1990	
Bankfield High School	5·4
St. Francis Xavier's College	18·8

Higher Education

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with the chairman of the Universities Funding Council about future capital expenditure programmes on academic buildings and student accommodation for the expansion of higher education up to the year 2000.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend and I meet the chairmen of both funding councils from time to time to discuss a range of higher education issues, including capital funding for teaching and research in higher education. Provision of student accommodation is a matter for institutions.

Standard Assessment Test

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he is giving to local education authorities and to schools in England regarding those pupils whose parents are refusing to allow them to take the standard assessment test at key stage 1.

Mr. Eggar: Parents do not have a right to withdraw their children from any part of the national curriculum, including the standard assessment tasks at key stage 1.

If children are absent from school without leave, local education authorities may need to investigate, through their established procedures, whether a breach of the parental duty to secure regular attendance is taking place.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Palestinians

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid Her Majesty's Government are giving, and proposing to give, to the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Mrs. Chalker: In 1990-91 we are providing about £1·2 million in support of United Kingdom voluntary agency activities in the west bank and Gaza strip and for training awards in the United Kingdom for Palestinians. We hope to maintain at least the same level of support in 1991-92. In addition we are contributing to UNRWA's activities in the occupied territories—United Kingdom contribution of £5·5 million in 1990 and £6·0 million in 1991—and through the EC budget which in 1991 has provision for 102 million ecu for food aid, project assistance, and emergency relief to the Palestinians. The United Kingdom share of this will be around £12 million.

WALES

The Arts

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the level of arts services budgets in each local authority in Wales for each year between 1980 and 1990.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Available expenditure information is given in the following tables. It is not possible to give figures separately for theatres and civic halls.

Local Authority gross expenditure on theatres and civic halls

£000

	1981-82 (a)		1982-83 (a)		1983-84 (a)		1984-85 (a)		1985-86 (a)		1986-87 (a)		1987-88 (b)		1988-89 (b)	
	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current
Alyn and Deeside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Colwyn	0	65	0	60	3	66	0	80	39	83	10	101	0	95	0	102
Delyn	30	0	19	88	33	90	191	82	198	81	12	75	0	63	0	76
Glyndwr	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	56	0	64	0	105	0	120	0	171
Rhuddlan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wrexham Maelor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Carmarthen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48	0	54	0
Ceredigion	0	85	41	50	12	33	43	52	9	65	21	70	0	80	0	85
Dinefwr	0	34	0	33	5	43	7	40	0	35	20	42	0	32	0	26
Llanelli	1	294	0	315	0	293	0	266	0	287	1	320	10	333	0	369
Preseli Pembrokeshire	0	33	1	35	1	36	31	40	0	46	0	51	0	51	0	57
South Pembroke	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Blaenau Gwent	8	243	0	225	0	206	0	248	0	255	0	299	0	331	0	312
Islwyn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Monmouth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Newport	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Torfaen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	10	0	13
Aberconwy	799	0	113	92	312	423	20	423	6	459	11	363	3	498	0	649
Arfon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dwyfor	23	61	61	53	41	71	0	53	0	63	1	72	5	80	0	71
Meirionnydd	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ynys Mon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cynon Valley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Merthyr Tydfil	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ogwr	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rhondda	0	149	10	155	128	173	31	160	11	182	6	192	10	225	173	198
Rhymney Valley	215	259	0	220	0	278	0	248	0	289	0	299	0	286	0	247
Taff Ely	69	31	174	30	324	38	31	49	14	70	0	63	0	61	69	91
Brecknock	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Montgomeryshire	0	0	0	0	27	13	4	14	0	15	0	11	0	14	0	14
Radnorshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cardiff	4,128	252	0	2,147	542	3,405	814	3,499	186	3,361	84	5,297	3,494	4,648	506	6,305
Vale of Glamorgan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llŵ Valley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Port Talbot	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neath	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Swansea	181	869	826	849	2,025	710	1,469	1,286	408	1,547	2,087	1,227	408	1,731	211	1,908
Clwyd	8	1,105	4	1,167	10	1,249	40	1,458	223	1,729	211	1,973	249	2,306	177	2,346
Dyfed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	47	0	0	0
Gwent	0	27	0	50	0	55	0	42	0	49	0	27	0	26	0	24
Gwynedd	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mid Glamorgan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Powys	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Glamorgan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Glamorgan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Wales	5,462	3,508	1,250	5,570	3,479	7,183	2,681	8,097	1,095	8,659	2,464	10,595	4,274	10,990	1,190	13,114

(a) Theatres, civic halls and restaurants.
(b) Theatres only.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at the Welsh Office.

Mr. David Hunt: The Civil Service Commission is responsible for most recruitment into senior grades in the Welsh Office. It has introduced a number of initiatives to encourage applications from members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1-7) and overall in the Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. David Hunt: The details are as follows:

	Women[1]	
	Number	Percentage
Grade 1	—	—
Grade 2	—	—
Grade 3	1·0	9
Grade 4	1·0	17
Grade 5	7·5	13
Grade 6	15·0	17
Grade 7	15·0	10
Department	1,042·0	48

[1] Total as at April 1990.

	Members of Ethnic Minorities	
	Number	Percentage
Grades 1—6	—	—
Grade 7	2	1·4
Departmental Total	24	1·1

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department carried out a survey of the ethnic origin of its employees in May 1988. The

ethnic origin of all new entrants and leavers is monitored and I have no plans for another survey. Since 1990 my Department has been concentrating on the implementation of a programme of action to consolidate the equality of opportunity offered to people of ethnic minority origin.

Housing Repairs, Merthyr

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a list of local authority properties surveyed under the Welsh housing conditions survey to determine the level of repair costs to Merthyr borough council.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I have today placed a copy of the list in the Library of the House.

Corlan Housing Association

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the inquiry commissioned by Tai Cymru into the affairs of the Corlan housing association.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: On 25 May 1990, and exercising its powers under section 28 of the Housing Associations Act 1985, Tai Cymru asked the Housing Association Consultancy and Advisory Service (HACAS) to conduct an inquiry into the affairs of Corlan housing association. Tai Cymru had already established by that date that Corlan faced significant difficulty. The HACAS report expresses concern in four main areas. First, it points to instances of what appear to have been overvaluations of site work and premature claims for housing association grants. Secondly, the report suggests that Corlan's internal administrative and other arrangements were not sufficiently robust to ensure that a development programme of the scale and nature undertaken by the association could be managed with appropriate care and thoroughness. Thirdly, shortcomings in the management of development projects were apparently compounded by deficiencies of financial control. Lastly, it is suggested that the association allowed uncertainties to arise over establishing the delegated responsibilities and development control mechanisms essential to good management in any organisation.

The report concludes that the committee of management believed that management mechanisms needed to be consolidated and were making efforts to bring this about. It also makes it clear that the Committee was completely unaware of any overvaluation or overclaiming—and would not in any circumstances have approved if such proposals had been put to it. The inquiry found no evidence to suggest that any individual staff member had sought to benefit financially from what occurred. The report has been prepared for issue by Tai Cymru, notably to chairmen and committees of management; and I understand that copies are being placed in the Library of the House.

With the help of Wales and West housing association, Tai Cymru was able to devise arrangements to secure the position of all Corlan's tenants, and to retain the association's housing stock, including those sites under development. Tai Cymru also set out to ensure that the relevant lessons had been learnt from what took place at Corlan. Following its creation in April 1989, Tai Cymru had already taken steps to introduce performance monitoring procedures for housing associations of greater breadth than those associated with conventional financial audit. After it became clear that Corlan faced serious difficulties, Tai Cymru took the following further measures. In addition to submitting audited annual accounts, all housing associations were required to present management accounts, balance sheets and 12-month cashflow forecasts on a quarterly basis. Special arrangements were made to scrutinise these new submissions from housing associations: as an additional safeguard, Tai Cymru made it clear that grant payments could be automatically suspended if the submissions were not returned to timetable. The procedures for validating grant claims and for preventing overclaiming were strengthened. New technical guidance was issued on the treatment of valuations. In addition, and following detailed discussions with the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations, a fixed charge is to be applied to all new schemes in order to provide additional security for public assets.

As for committees of management, Tai Cymru is to organise a programme of seminars this year to help members in tackling their financial and management responsibilities. In the light of discussion at those seminars they will make recommendations on whether any other support, such as the provision of special training, might be of assistance to members. Officials of Tai Cymru and the Welsh Office will set up a joint working group to review those new measures and consider whether any additional steps need to be taken in the light of what happened at Corlan. I am confident that the measures already taken by Tai Cymru will strengthen the capacity and performance of housing associations in Wales to the considerable benefit of the movement, now and for the future.

Operations (Statistics)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list *(a)* for each health district in Wales and *(b)* for each of the last three years (i) the number of scheduled sessions held in operating theatres, (ii) the number of scheduled sessions that were cancelled, (iii) the number of cases operated on in scheduled sessions, (iv) the number of cases operated on outside scheduled sessions and (v) the total number of cases operated on.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Leybucht Bay

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with *(a)* the National Rivers Authority and *(b)* the Countryside Council for Wales concerning the decision in the Leybucht bay case determined by the European Court of Justice on 28 February.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

ENVIRONMENT

Homelessness

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many additional units of accommodation have been provided for homeless households under

the homeless initiative for housing associations in 1990-91 by *(a)* the local authority area in which they have been provided, *(b)* the number of units provided through repairs to empty housing association homes, *(c)* the number of units provided through off the shelf purchasing by housing associations and *(d)* the number of homes becoming available through tenants incentive scheme payments.

Sir George Young: This is a matter for the Housing Corporation. I have therefore asked the corporation to respond to the hon. Member direct.

Yorkshire, Humberside and Leeds

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *196*, if he will provide a breakdown by programme of his Department's expenditure in (i) Yorkshire and Humberside and (ii) the metropolitan district of Leeds at *(a)* 1990-91 prices and *(b)* as a percentage of the 1990-91 expenditure.

Mr. Key: A breakdown of the Department's main programmes is given in the table for the years 1986-87 to date, at 1990-91 prices, *(a)* for Yorkshire and Humberside region and *(b)* for the metropolitan district of Leeds. The figures are also expressed as a percentage of the 1990-91 expenditure. Changes in programme definition and the introduction of new capital and revenue support systems mean that figures for individual years may not be directly comparable.

Breakdown (by programme) of DOE Expenditure in Y & H Region (£ million) at 1990-91 prices

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*[1]1990-91 forecast outturn*	*1991-92 estimated*
Rate Support Grant/ Revenue Support	1,529·0	1,575·6	1,522·6	1,410·3	888·1	n/a
Percentage	172	177	171	159	100	
Housing Investment Programme Allocations	162·9	153·2	142·1	114·8	186·7	178·2
Percentage	87	82	76	61	100	95
Housing Subsidies	0·38	0·33	nil	nil	[2]56·73	n/a
Percentage	0·7	0·5			100	
UDG/URG/City Grant (grant approvals)	2·72	4·52	38·28	8·14	[3]7·74	n/a
Percentage	35	58	494	105	100	
Urban Programme	n/a	29·68	27·69	29·03	27·96	27·66
Percentage					100	99
Urban Development Corporation	n/a	n/a	12·18	19·71	33·0	23·59
Percentage			37	60	10	71
Gypsy Grants	0·89	0·38	0·80	0·28	1·45	1·89
Percentage	61	26	55	19	100	130
City Action Team	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0·76	0·80
Percentage					100	105
Derelict Land Grant (DLG)	4·29	10·97	11·12	11·38	14·11	14·70
Percentage	30	78	79	81	100	104
Private Sector DLG	1·74	1·02	4·69	1·76	0·55	1·14
Percentage	316	185	852	320	100	207

[1]1990-91 saw the introduction of a new capital control system and new financial regime.
[2]This is the Housing element of the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy.
[3]City Grant approvals to date.

Breakdown (by programme) of DoE expenditure in Leeds metropolitan district (£ million) at 1990-91 prices

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*[1]1990-91 forecast outturn*	*1991-92 estimated*
Rate Support Grant/ Revenue Support	176·0 (128 per cent.)	178·5 (130 per cent.)	167·5 (122 per cent.)	149·9 (109 per cent.)	137·7 (100 per cent.)	N.A.
Housing Investment Programme Allocations	29·1 (86 per cent.)	26·9 (80 per cent.)	23·9 (71 per cent.)	18·3 (54 per cent.)	33·6 (100 per cent.)	30·1 (90 per cent.)
Housing Subsidies	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	[2]8·35 (100 per cent.)	N.A.
UDG/URG/City Grant (grant approvals)	1·04 (2,080 per cent.)	2·96 (5,920 per cent.)	0·23 (460 per cent.)	0·08 (160 per cent.)	0·05 (100 per cent.)	N.A.
Urban Programme	N.A.	4·7 (89 per cent.)	5·4 (102 per cent.)	5·1 (96 per cent.)	5·3 (100 per cent.)	5·1 (96 per cent.)
Urban Development Corporation	N.A.	N.A.	2·99 (21 per cent)	9·45 (68 per cent.)	14·0 (100 per cent.)	11·3 (28 per cent.
Gypsy Grants	Nil	Nil	0·47 (62 per cent.)	0·038 (5 per cent.)	0·76 (100 per cent.)	0·16 (21 per cent.)
City Action Team	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	0·37 (100 per cent.)	0·38 (103 per cent.)
Derelict Land Grant (DLG)	0·048 (6 per cent.)	0·163 (22 per cent.)	0·194 (25 per cent.)	0·245 (33 per cent.)	0·750 (100 per cent.)	0·708 (94 per cent.)
Private Sector DLG	Nil	Nil	0·34	0·36	[3]Nil	Nil

Notes:
[1] 1990-91 saw the introduction of a new capital control system and new financial regime.
[2] This is the Housing element of the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy.
[3] PRIVATE SECTOR DLG no longer available in Leeds following the introduction of City Grant.

Hostel Deficit Grant

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether new hostel deficit grant approvals will be issued after 1 April in respect of any eligible schemes in respect of hostel deficit grant receiving project approval before that date but not having been processed due to Housing Corporation delays; and whether he will keep the situation under review and issue a further progress report in March;

(2) what is the current backlog of schemes awaiting budget approval from the Housing Corporation in respect of hostel deficit grant; and when the backlog will be cleared;

(3) what monthly target the Housing Corporation would need to meet to eliminate the backlog of schemes awaiting budget approval in respect of hostel deficit grant by the due date; what performance is currently being maintained against this target; and how many schemes have been approved and how many rejected in each of the last three calendar months.

Mr. Yeo: The Housing Corporation does not have a backlog of new projects awaiting HDG budget approval and it will be able to give in principle budget approval, as appropriate, for all schemes which receive project approval during 1990-91.

In the last three months the corporation has dealt with the following new HDG budget applications:

Month	*Approved*	*Rejected*
December	14	11
January	20	17
February	13	8

Council Land

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of applications submitted in each of the years since 1980 by Walsall metropolitan borough council, for the sale of council land, under section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972; and how many of these were approved, rejected or withdrawn.

Mr. Yeo: Since 1980, Walsall metropolitan borough council has applied twice to the Secretary of State for his consent under section 123(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 to dispose of land at less than the best consideration that can reasonably be obtained. Both applications were in 1985: one was withdrawn; and, in the second case, consent was granted for disposal of land for a community centre.

EC Environment Research Budget

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment has been made of the benefits accruing to the United Kingdom from the allocation to the European Commission's joint research centre at Ispra as a supplement to the EC's environment research budget 1990 to 1994.

Mr. Baldry: The activities of the joint research centre under the third framework programme on research and technological development (1990 to 1994), including those relating to environmental matters, will be the subject of a Council decision later in the year. The Government will assess the merits of the Commission's proposal when this becomes available and will make a full contribution to the decision-making process relating to it.

Derelict Land

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the annual amount of grant given to local authorities in Nottinghamshire and Sherwood constituency during the past 10 years for regeneration and cleaning up derelict land.

Mr. Yeo: Records of derelict land grant payments to local authorities in Nottinghamshire and the Sherwood constituency are not available for the full period covered by the question. However, the expenditure incurred by those authorities on derelict land grant-approved schemes in the same period was as follows:

Derelict land grant: Nottinghamshire and the Sherwood constituency
Local authority expenditure on approved derelict land grant schemes 1980-81 to 1989-90

£million

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*Total*
Ashfield	—	—	0·08	0·06	—	—	0·04	0·04	—	0·10	0·32
Bassetlaw	0·03	—	—	—	0£01	—	—	—	—	—	0·04
Broxtowe	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·00
Gedling	0·01	0·01	0·18	0·31	0·08	0·07	0·04	—	—	—	0·70
Mansfield	—	—	0·16	0·10	0·05	0·31	0·40	0·53	0·21	0·09	1·85
Newark and Sherwood	—	—	0·03	0·06	0·04	0·08	0·07	—	0·25	0·36	0·89
Nottingham City	0·47	0·19	0·18	0·11	0·01	0·10	0·20	0·80	—	—	2·06
Nottinghamshire	1·25	0·51	1·25	1·47	1·53	1·06	1·62	1·25	2·07	1·89	13·90
Rushcliffe	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·00
Total	1·76	0·71	1·88	2·11	1·72	1·62	2·37	2·62	2·53	2·44	19·76

Note: Expenditure lower than £10,000 is not shown.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has of the number of domestic heriditaments in the London borough of Hackney in which the rates payable in 1989-90 were less than £720.

Mr. Key: No information is available centrally on the number of domestic hereditaments in the London borough of Hackney in which the rates payable in 1989-90 were less than £720.

Street Lighting

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will include a provision specifically for street lighting in the urban programme.

Mr. Key: Urban programme resources are not allocated to particular project types. It is for each local authority to decide whether it wishes to include projects involving street lighting improvements in its individual programme. However, the recently published guidance for urban programmes for 1992-93 indicates that UP resources may be used to good effect to support lighting schemes in residential areas.

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the relationship between the quality of urban living and the effectiveness of street lighting.

Mr. Key: Our action for cities objectives acknowledge the relationship between the quality of life in inner cities and reducing crime in these areas. Current research commissioned and being carried out by the Home Office is assessing the effect of improved street lighting on crime and the fear of crime. Additionally, this Department is currently undertaking a review of known research and information about a wide range of housing-related crime prevention measures. This includes a more detailed analysis of the effects of street lighting improvements on the incidence of robbery and autocrime in inner urban areas.

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will include an assessment of the energy efficiency savings of new public street lighting when considering applications under the inner area programme.

Mr. Key: Applications for urban programme funding are considered on their merits in the light of the policy framework set out in annual programme guidance. Projects will only be approved for funding which have direct benefits for those who live and work in inner city areas.

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will include an assessment of the impact of improved street lighting on the reduction of the fear of crime and actual crime when considering bids under the inner area programme.

Mr. Key: Applications for urban programme funding are considered on their merits in the light of the policy framework set out in annual programme guidance. Projects will only be approved for funding which have direct benefits for those who live and work in inner city areas. The Home Office are currently considering the results of research undertaken by the university of Southampton to assess the impact of improved street lighting on crime and the fear of crime in the London borough of Wandsworth. In addition, they are monitoring the link between lighting improvements and crime in four other urban programme areas in England.

Guidance Notes

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those companies which have been contracted to work for Her Majesty's inspectors of pollution on the preparation of guidance notes for implementation of part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Trippier: No companies have been specifically contracted to work on the production of guidance notes. However, the following companies have been contracted to undertake research which will be of use in the preparation of the notes:

DTI Warren Spring Laboratory
UKAEA
Cremer & Warner Ltd
Clayton Environmental Consultants
Ove Arup & Partners
Dames & Moore International
ECOTEC Research & Consultancy Ltd
Environmental Resources Ltd
Aspinwall & Company
W. S. Atkins Consultants Ltd
Chemex International
Gibb Environmental Sciences
Sir William Halcrow & Partners
PA Consulting Group
March Consulting Group

Sulphur Dioxide

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give figures for sulphur dioxide emissions from Formalloys and Metals Ltd., Glossop, for each month since June 1990.

Mr. Trippier: Figures for sulphur dioxide emissions are shown in the table:

	Tonnes of sulphur dioxide
June 1990	212
July 1990	217
August 1990	179
September 1990	126
October 1990	163
November 1990	227
December 1990	151
January 1991	0
February 1991	0

During January and February 1991 the plant did not operate.

Badgers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has given to planning authorities concerning the conservation of badger setts during the consideration of planning applications.

Mr. Trippier: Advice to planning authorities on all aspects of nature conservation is contained in DOE circular 27/87, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning the

number of badgers and the current number of active badger setts in England; how many such setts have been destroyed during the last three years; and for what reasons.

Mr. Trippier: The Nature Conservancy Council has recently published a book entitled "The History, Distribution, Status, and Habitat Requirements of the Badger in Britain" which gives these figures for England, as well as for Scotland and Wales. A copy of this book is in the Library.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of sites of special scientific interest which were originally notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the number awaiting re-notification under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Trippier: The numbers are 4,026 and 119 respectively.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what assessment he has made of the impact of the Leybucht Bay judgment of the European Court of Justice on 28 February on the economic and recreational development proposals affecting sites of special scientific interest in the United Kingdom;

(2) what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council regarding the Leybucht Bay judgment in the European Court of Justice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: An official English translation of the judgment is not yet available. Careful consideration will be given to its implications in due course. No consultations have taken place with the chairman of NCC regarding the judgment.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of sites of special scientific interest which have been damaged by operations granted planning permission in each of the last three years.

Mr. Trippier: This information is set out in the NCC's annual reports, copies of which are in the Library.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total number of staff who were employed by the Nature Conservancy Council on a contract basis since 1981 in order to assist with the re-notification of sites of special scientific interest.

Mr. Trippier: The information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Game Birds

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to secure the future survival and status of the red grouse and other game birds in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: The Nature Conservancy Council undertakes research into the populations of all game birds on an annual basis. In addition, they are involved in several studies relating to the survival of the red grouse and other game bird species, and to the effective management of their habitats. The results of the studies will be made available to the Department.

Blackpool Beach

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether European Court action against the United Kingdom over Blackpool beach is still active.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) on 13 February, *Official Report*, columns *471-72*.

London Zoo

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to increase the financial reserves available to London Zoo; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: No. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) on 7 February, *Official Report*, columns *223-24*.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about communications and discussions between his Department and London zoo about the zoo's future.

Sir George Young: No. The future of London zoo is a matter for the Zoological Society of London.

Business Rates

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will explain how parish councils receive income from the unified business rates; if he will publish the formula; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Under the new system of local government finance, business rates are paid into the national non-domestic rates pool and redistributed on the basis of adult population. Together with revenue support grant, special grants and community charges, the amounts of business rates received from the pool are paid into charging authorities' collection funds, out of which are met precepts and the charging authorities' own demands for revenue. To the extent that the precept of a parish and the demand of the charging authority on its collection fund are together equal to or less than the charging authority's standard spending assessment (SSA) per head, that expenditure is met in part from redistributed business rates. Spending above SSA is met entirely from community charges.

Leeds Development Corporation

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much of the Leeds development corporation budget has been spent in every year since its establishment in (1) west Leeds, (2) south Leeds and (3) Leeds central *(a)* in total and *(b)* broken down into (i) grants to existing employees, (ii) assistance with relocation, (iii) development of land, (iv) development of property, (v) environmental improvements, (vi) administration, (vii) publicity, (viii) job creation at 1991 prices and (ix) other.

Mr. Key: Information is not available in this form. Urban development corporations produce annual reports of their activities and copies of these are placed in the House of Commons Library. The hon. Member may also wish to speak to the chairman of the Leeds development corporation.

Dereliction

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what sum will be provided from central funds to assist the clearance of dereliction in 1991-92.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning on 7 February 1991 to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell), *Official Report*, column *226*. Further resources for the clearance of dereliction will be available through city grant, but it is not possible accurately to identify the proportion devoted to the reclamation of derelict land. It is estimated that £23 million will be spent under the urban programme on derelict and vacant land improvement and £48 million is earmarked to be spent in the urban development corporations on land reclamation and site preparation.

Water Research Centre

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has reviewed the arrangements by which copies of reports produced by the Water Research Centre for his Department are placed in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: In an answer given to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 16 February 1984, an undertaking was given to place in the Library of the House copies of reports of studies commissioned by the Department from the Water Research Centre (WRC). The usefulness of this arrangement was to be reviewed.

A review rather later than envisaged discloses that there does not seen to be sufficient interest shown in the Water Research Centre's reports to warrant the continuation of this special arrangement. In addition the Water Research Centre has since become a private company and it would not be equitable for their reports to be treated differently from those of their competitors.

For these reasons, I propose to terminate this arrangement and I have today written to the hon. Member accordingly.

Effluent Discharges

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress the National Rivers Authority has made towards introducing a scheme of charges for consents to discharge effluent to water.

Mr. Baldry: The National Rivers Authority introduced charges for applications for discharge consents from 1 October last year. It has now put forward proposals for annual charges to be levied on consent holders from 1 July this year. Copies of the proposals have been placed in the Library. Interested parties have until 30 April to comment on the proposals, which can be put into effect only if approved by my right hon. Friend.

Rural Housing

Mr. Patrick Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce the allocation of resources to local authorities under his Department's rural housing programme for 1991-92.

Sir George Young: Local authorities which have been successful in bidding for resources under my Department's rural housing programme for 1991-92 are being informed today.

The response from authorities has been excellent, and the £50 million of supplementary credit approvals are being targeted on those local authorities in rural areas with the greatest need for low-cost rented housing. All the schemes will be undertaken by housing associations, and this programme will complement the Housing Corporation's own programmes for shared ownership and rented housing in rural areas.

The allocations which I am announcing today should result in the creation of 1,422 new housing units in 1991-92, from 187 schemes in 119 local authorities.

A schedule of allocations has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

European Political Union

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals the United Kingdom will be putting forward to the inter-governmental conference on European political union for strengthening the environmental dimension of European Community policy.

Mr. Heseltine: The United Kingdom has made two proposals designed to strengthen the link between the Community's environmental policy and its other policies. First, we have proposed an amendment to article 2 of the treaty of Rome which sets out the Community's fundamental objectives. Those objectives derive from an era when environmental considerations were not seen as a constraint on economic activity, and currently take no account of the subsequent development of EC environmental policy. We have therefore proposed adding a new objective of

"promoting throughout the Community sustainable growth which respects the environment."

Secondly, we have called for an agreement that in future new proposals for Community legislation or action, in whatever field, should include a statement on the environmental effects of the proposed measures. This is intended to ensure that environmental requirements and implications are taken properly into account in the formulation of all areas of Community policy.

In our White Paper "This Common Inheritance" we stressed the need to improve Community environment policies. We believe these ideas would be of important practical value in ensuring that different areas of Community policy do not act in conflict, and that environmental considerations are given the priority they require.

Woodlands (Disposal)

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his present policy in respect of the disposal of woodlands by the Forestry Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply.

Our policy on the disposal of Forestry Commission woodlands was set out by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for Scotland on 16 June 1989, *Official Report*, columns *544-45*.

PRIME MINISTER

The Gulf

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government have made any assessment of the number of *(a)* Iraqi military, *(b)* Kuwaitis, *(c)* Palestinians and *(d)* other nationals who were killed by Allied forces on the Kuwait to Basra road in the retreating convoy before a ceasefire was declared.

The Prime Minister: Allied forces had instructions to attack retreating Iraqi units which could continue to pose a threat. We have no information on casualties sustained in these attacks.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister when he expects all prisoners of war held in *(a)* Iraq and *(b)* the United Kingdom to be released.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* Further coalition prisoners of war were handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross yesterday and we hope that all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals will be released as soon as possible. Arrangements are being made with the International Committee of the Red Cross for those Iraqis being held in the United Kingdom to be released as soon as possible.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister what consideration Her Majesty's Government gave to securing the release of prisoners of war before agreeing to a ceasefire in the Gulf conflict.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* Allied offensive operations in the Gulf are currently suspended. The release of all prisoners of war remains a top priority before a formal ceasefire is declared. In adopting resolution 686, the United Nations Security Council has called on Iraq immediately to arrange access to and release of all prisoners of war and detainees, under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for 7 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Missile Technology Control Regime

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his statement on the commitment to be sought from Iraq to destroy its ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction, *Official Report*, 28 February, column 1117, if he will make available to the United Nations appropriate resources and technical expertise to permit the supervision to which he refers.

The Prime Minister: We are considering what type of international supervision would be necessary for the destruction of such weapons. We would be willing to consider making available appropriate resources and technical expertise if necessary.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to his statement of 28 February, *Official Report*, column 1117, he will make it his policy to give consideration to inviting Iraq to join the missile technology control regime.

The Prime Minister: We have no plans to do so.

Immigrant Workers, Kuwait

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what steps Her Majesty's Government intend to take to alleviate economic hardship of immigrant workers in Kuwait made redundant by the Gulf war.

The Prime Minister: British nationals returning to the United Kingdom from Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion were eligible to receive travel grants and loans, and where appropriate, other assistance from the Department of Social Security. Assistance for those returning to their homes in other countries is a matter for their own Governments.

Gulf Casualties

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will appoint a Minister, with special responsibility for co-ordinating the provision of essentials services to service personnel disabled in the Gulf including counselling, psychiatric care, rehabilitation, social services, jobs and adapted housing.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* No. There are well-established arrangements for providing advice and assistance to personnel disabled in the course of their military service.

Economic and Political Union

Mr. Cash: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on progress on the intergovernmental conferences on *(a)* economic and monetary union and *(b)* political union; and if he will make it his policy to place the submissions made by each member state or the European Commission on *(a)* and *(b)* in the Library within one week of their being available to Her Majesty's Government.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 6 March 1991]:* My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer reported to the House on 1 March on progress in the EMU intergovernmental conference, and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary reported to the House yesterday on the progress in the political union intergovernmental conference. The proceedings and documents of these conferences are confidential as was the case for the intergovernmental conference that resulted in the Single European Act.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what checks are made to ensure that car dealers who advertise special discounts to people in

receipt of mobility allowance grant these discounts in addition to those generally available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: No official checks are made by the Department with regard to the advertising of special discounts to people in receipt of a mobility allowance.

If an advertisement is suspected of being misleading under part III of the Consumer Protection Act 1987, which deals with misleading price indications, it should be referred to the local trading standards department.

In addition, the Advertising Standards Authority, which regulates advertising in the United Kingdom for the print, cinema, poster and direct mail media, stipulates in its code of practice that all advertisements should be legal, decent, honest and truthful. Any complaint against an advertiser may also be brought to the attention of the ASA.

Regional Development

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has yet considered the business plans of the English regional development organisations; and what level of financial support he proposes for 1991-92.

Mr. Leigh: I have studied the current performance and future plans of the five English regional development organisations. I am pleased to say that they continue to make a significant contribution to the overall success of the United Kingdom in attracting inward investment. In recognition of this, I have today offered the five English regional development organisations the full allocation of £4·5 million of grant aid for their inward investment promotion activities for 1991-92, £500,000 more than in 1990-91. This increase in funding, added to the extra £1 million allocated last year, is to enable the United Kingdom to remain competitive in promoting its locational advantages in the face of competition from the rest of Europe for mobile inward investment in the single European market. I have allocated the grant aid as follows:

RDO	*1991-92 Grant £'000*	*Per cent. share of total grant*
Northern Development Company (NDC)	1,330	29·5
INWARD Ltd. (in the North West)	990	22
Yorkshire and Humberside Development Association	970	21·5
West Midlands Development Agency (WMDA)	670	15
Devon and Cornwall Development Bureau (DCDB)	540	12

Grant is offered on an annual basis according to past performance and ability to absorb additional funding effectively, and for an agreed programme of future activities, with proper regard to value for money. It is Government policy to encourage direct inward investment to the United Kingdom because it contributes significantly to economic growth. Inward investment brings benefits to the country as a whole and more specifically to the assisted areas.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of those employed in his Department are disabled.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 6 March 1991]:* The proportion of the Department's staff who are known to be disabled is 1·5 per cent. This figure includes both registered and unregistered disabled officers.

TRANSPORT

British Rail

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total amount of public money spent on British Rail in the period 1961 to 1990.

Mr. Freeman: The total of external finance required by British Rail, from 1976-77 to 1990-91 inclusive, was some £11·2 billion in cash, equivalent to around £18·8 billion in current prices. There are no readily available figures for earlier years which cover Government grants and net borrowing.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the British Rail establishments which have been closed since 1961 broken down by *(a)* size of establishment and *(b)* number of employees.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not held by the Department and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Roads Expenditure

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total amount of public money spent on *(a)* roads and *(b)* motorways from 1961 to the present date.

Mr. Chope: The total amount spent on all public roads in England from 1961-62 to 1989-90 was £39 billion—£96 billion at 1989-90 prices. It is not possible, except at disproportionate cost, to produce a comparable figure for motorways.

Motorways

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to remove litter from and clean up the motorways.

Mr. Chope: We are reviewing current practices to ensure that the standards set out in the code of practice for litter and refuse are achieved and that the duties placed on the Department of Transport by the Environmental Protection Act 1990 are fully discharged.

BR, Swinton

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received any proposals from BR to close the railway station at Swinton near Rotherham; and if he will meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss means of securing its future.

Mr. McLoughlin: No proposals have been received concerning Swinton. My right hon. and learned Friend has regular meetings with the chairman of BR.

A1-M1 Link

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what date he expects the A1-M1 link road to be completed, and what type of road he considers to be appropriate in this case.

Mr. Chope: I understand that the hon. Member is referring to the A635 Dearne towns link road proposed by Barnsley metropolitan borough council. I have recently made resources available which will enable the council to begin construction of one phase of this scheme in September 1991. The council hopes to complete the scheme by 1996 and progress would depend on the whole scheme being accepted for transport supplementary grant. The council has proposed that the road should be a 7·3 m single carriageway with local widenings at junctions and crawler lanes.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet his French counterpart to discuss freight transport facilities from the United Kingdom to the continent through the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: I plan to have discussions with the French Ministry in April.

War Risk Re-insurance

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the war risk re-insurance he has been providing for British aircraft under the Marine and Aviation (War Risks) Act 1952.

Mr. Rifkind: Copies of agreements concluded under section 1 of the Marine and Aviation (War Risks) Act 1952, covering aircraft owned by British Airways plc and Magec Aviation Ltd. have been laid before each House of Parliament. The agreement in respect of British Airways facilitated the maintenance of scheduled flights to the Gulf area before and during the recent hostilities. With the improvement in the situation in the Gulf, it is no longer necessary for the Government to reinsure aircraft, and the two agreements were accordingly terminated on 5 March. No claims have arisen in respect of aircraft reinsured.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

The Gulf

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what additional costs were incurred by the United Kingdom missions to the United Nations in *(a)* New York and *(b)* Geneva, since 2 August as a result of the invasion and liberation of Kuwait; and what consideration has been given to increasing the resources available to United Kingdom diplomatic missions to the United Nations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Increases in local costs at the two posts have been offset by savings made elsewhere in their local budgets. Additional staff have been provided on a temporary basis to the missions to help them deal with short-term increases in work load, and we have improved security and communications facilities where necessary.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to offer economic assistance to the families of men from the Indian sub-continent killed accidentally by allied military activity in the Gulf war, where evidence exists that the dead civilians were the sole economic provider for the families in Kuwait or the sub-continent.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No, although we naturally regret all civilian casualties resulting from the recent hostilities in the

Gulf. Security Council resolution 674, which has now been accepted by the Government of Iraq, reminded Iraq of its liability for any loss, damage or injury ensuing in regard to Kuwait and third states and their nationals as a result of its invasion and illegal occupation of Kuwait.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives the United Kingdom intends to take at the United Nations arising from the Gulf war.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are working to ensure the restoration of international peace and security in the area in keeping with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Arms Sales

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list *(a)* all resolutions initiated by the United Kingdom, *(b)* all resolutions supported by the United Kingdom and *(c)* all resolutions put forward at the General Assembly of the United Nations since 1979, on the restriction or prohibition of arms sales and military equipment; and if he will indicate, where applicable, the reasons why the United Kingdom did not support resolutions on arms sales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: *(a)* No resolutions on the restrictions or prohibition of arms sales have been initiated by the United Kingdom since 1979.

(b) The United Kingdom has voted in favour of:

(i) UNGA 43 first committee resolution 43/751 of 7 December 1988 entitled "International Arms Transfers" which the United Kingdom also co-sponsored.

(ii) UNGA 44 first committee resolution 44/116N of 15 December 1989 entitled "International Arms Transfers".

(iii) UNGA 45 first committee decision 45/415 of 4 December 1990 entitled "International Arms Transfers".

(iv) The three resolutions above are all those brought to a vote at the United Nations General Assembly on the restriction or prohibition of arms sales since 1979.

Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his answer on Iraqi nuclear capability to the hon. Member for Bradford, South, (Mr. Cryer) *Official Report*, 28 February, column 582, he will set out the occasions on which Her Majesty's Government made representations to *(a)* the Iraqi Government, *(b)* the United Nations and *(c)* the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency concerning Iraqi violations of its non-proliferation treaty commitments.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have made clear our concern about possible violations by non-nuclear weapon states of their non-proliferation treaty commitments.

Somalia

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has for improving relations with the Government and people of Somalia.

Mrs. Chalker: There is at present no established nationwide Government in Somalia, but Britain's record there is a good one. We took a lead in denouncing human rights violations by the previous regime and have given refuge to large numbers of Somalis.

Bananas

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what agreement Britain has to buy Windward Island bananas.

Mr. Curry: I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom has a long-standing commitment reflected in protocols of successive Lomé conventions to give preferential access to the United Kingdom banana market for our traditional African, Caribbean and Pacific suppliers, which include the Windward Islands.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Interest Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average level of real interest rates, mimimum lending rate, in each year since 1978.

Mr. Maples: There is no agreed definition of the real interest rate, nor is mimimum lending rate any longer in continuous use. The table shows the annual average of the three-month interbank rate since 1978 and the average three-month interbank rate deflated by the 12-month all-items retail price index for each year.

	Average three-month interbank rate	*'Real' interest rate*
1978	9·24	+0·9
1979	13·67	+0·2
1980	16·62	−1·0
1981	13·92	+1·8
1982	12·28	+3·4
1983	10·13	+5·3
1984	9·95	+4·7
1985	12·24	+5·8
1986	10·95	+7·3
1987	9·70	+5·3
1988	10·31	+5·2
1989	13·89	+5·6
1990	14·77	+4·8

Labour Statistics

202. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average number of employees per establishment in industrial firms in the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1980, *(c)* 1970 and *(d)* 1961.

Mr. Maples: Changes in the definition of the establishment and in the coverage of statistical registers inhibit valid long-term comparisons. The table provides the available information from the censuses of production.

	Manufacturing industry[2]
	Employees per establishment[1]
1963	89·5
1970	91·4
1980	59·7

	Employees per establishment[1]
1983	49·6
[3]1984	37·2
1988	33·4

Note: A comparison of the above series with alternative information on larger manufacturing sites corroborates the significant fall in employees per unit.

[1] Employment includes both employees and working proprietors, and the self employed.

[2] Figures for 1988 and 1980 cover manufacturing industry as defined by Divisions 2-4 of the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification. Figures for 1970 cover manufacturing industry as defined by Orders III-XIX of the 1968 Standard Industrial Classification. Figures for 1963 cover manufacturing industry as defined by Orders III-XIX of the 1958 Standard Industrial Classification. There have been minor changes in the coverage of the census with the adoption of each new Standard Industrial Classification.

[3] Figures for 1984 based upon new register with more complete coverage of smaller businesses.

The Gulf

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) of 26 February, *Official Report*, column *442*, he is in a position to update his estimates of the costs of Britain's contribution to the Gulf war in the light of the cessation of hostilities; and if he has any information to add about assistance promised from other countries towards the meeting of Britain's costs.

Mr. Mellor: At this stage I have nothing further to add to the information given in my right hon. Friend's reply of 26 February to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), and mine to the hon. Members for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 4 March.

Official Visits

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many overseas visits were made in an official capacity in 1990 by *(a)* the Chancellor, *(b)* the Chief Secretary, *(c)* the Financial Secretary, *(d)* the Paymaster General and *(e)* the Economic Secretary including, in each case, those visits made in connection with European Community matters.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Following is the information requested for the calendar year 1990:

(a) Twenty, of which 16 were related to European Community matters;
(b) Nil;
(c) Thirteen, of which 12 were related to European Community matters;
(d) and *(e)* Five and three respectively, all of which were related to European Community matters.

Beneficial Loans

Dr. Bray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what assumed rate of interest employees of banks and building societies who are in receipt of beneficial loans are currently paying tax on the difference between the rate of interest on beneficial loans and that rate; and what considerations are taken into account in deciding against which rate to assess this benefit.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 6 March 1991]:* The taxable benefit, if any, of a loan made by an employer to an employee is determined using the "official rate" of interest which is 14·5 per cent. from 6 March 1991. The statutory formula which governs the "official rate" of interest is contained in Treasury regulations and is, broadly, the average base rate of six named banks plus 1·5 per cent.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give for each year since 1979 the level of investment in United Kingdom manufacturing industry expressed as a percentage of the amount required to cover depreciation of existing capital stock.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 6 March 1991]:* Available estimates of gross fixed capital formation as a percentage of capital consumption for the manufacturing industries, including assets leased from the financial industries, are as follows:

	per cent.
1979	130
1980	111
1981	86
1982	84
1983	83
1984	97
1985	111
1986	103
1987	108
1988	118
1989	127

Estimates of capital consumption, and hence these percentages, must be interpreted with some caution. Capital consumption is not directly observable and so the estimates made are based on a series of assumptions.

Autumn Statement

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library the statistics supporting his chart number 2.10 in the autumn statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 1 March 1991]:* The figures are as follows:

United Kingdom share of world trade in manufactures

	Volume per cent.	Value per cent.
1970	9·3	9·1
1971	9·4	9·3
1972	8·4	8·2
1973	8·6	8·7
1974	8·3	7·4
1975	8·3	7·6
1976	8·1	7·1
1977	8·2	7·5
1978	7·6	7·3
1979	7·1	7·4
1980	7·0	8·0
1981	6·3	7·0
1982	6·5	6·8
1983	6·1	6·2
1984	6·0	5·9
1985	6·1	6·1
1986	6·1	5·8
1987	6·1	6·1
1988	5·9	6·1

	Volume per cent.	Value per cent.
1989	6·0	6·0
[1]1990	6·2	6·2
[2]1991	6·1	6·2

[1] Estimate.
[2] Forecast.

Sources: World trade: Based on data published in United Nations Monthly Bulletin of Statistics.
United Kingdom exports: Central Statistical Office.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many outbreaks of sheep scab have been confirmed this year to date; and what was the corresponding figure for 1990 and 1989.

Mr. Maclean: There have been 26 confirmed outbreaks of sheep scab so far this year, compared with 20 in 1990 and 16 in 1989.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the Association of County Councils concerning the enforcement of compulsory sheep dipping; and what is his estimate of the number of farmers who have not complied with the latest regulations.

Mr. Maclean: Comments have been received from some county councils which show that there have been enforcement difficulties, but no formal representations have been made by the Association of County Councils. The review of the 1990 dip is not yet complete and until the various responses have been analysed it is not possible to assess the level of compliance.

Badgers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many live tests for bovine tuberculosis in badgers have now been conducted; what were the results of such tests; how long the current pilot study will continue; if any non-tested badgers have been killed during the duration of the tests; and if he will make a statement on his preliminary findings of the study.

Mr. Maclean: Field trials on the live test have only just started, having been delayed by bad weather. The trial is expected to last 12 months. Not all badger removal operations will be included and therefore some badgers killed will not have been tested.

Harvest Returns

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the size of the United Kingdom harvest in *(a)* tonnes and *(b)* value, at actual and at 1990 prices in each year since 1979.

Mr. Curry: The size of the cereals harvest and the value of cereal sales off farms are shown below.

Year	Cereal harvest (000 tonnes)	Value of output (£ million)	Value of output at constant 1985 prices (£ million)
1979	17,416	1,184	1,302
1980	19,472	1,463	1,550
1981	19,621	1,693	1,649
1982	21,913	2,062	1,890
1983	21,307	1,996	1,671
1984	26,602	2,420	2,321
1985	22,466	2,281	2,281
1986	24,489	2,184	2,171
1987	21,675	2,038	2,042
1988	21,028	1,881	1,979
1989	22,685	2,061	2,145
[1]1990	22,533	2,062	2,068

[1] Forecast.

It should be noted that the size of the harvest does not correspond exactly to the value of output—sales off farms—even when this is measured at constant prices. This is partly because some of the harvest is used on farms for animal feed and because some of each year's harvest is sold off farms in the next calendar year. Valuations at constant 1985 prices have been used in the third column since these are more readily available and comparable with other published figures, than valuations at 1990 prices.

Bananas

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the quantities and cost of bananas imported from the Windward Islands each year since 1980.

Mr. Curry: The quantities and cost of bananas imported from the Windward Islands each year since 1980 are as follows:

	Tonnes	Value (£)
1980	69,909	20,249,027
1981	103,389	32,849,653
1982	104,287	37,758,070
1983	114,932	48,006,383
1984	130,091	58,712,038
1985	163,168	85,285,560
1986	204,920	108,315,977
1987	183,456	97,820,191
1988	231,338	104,866,452
1989	218,222	100,833,517
1990	244,785	117,153,927

Source: Her Majesty's Customs General Trade Statistics.

ENERGY

Hydro-electric Generators

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will undertake an efficiency and effectiveness survey of the Office of Electricity Regulation, the Non-Fossil Fuel Purchasing Agency Ltd. and Her Majesty's Government in encouraging small and medium hydro-electric generators.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The non-fossil fuel obligation has proved an effective vehicle for stimulating a variety of renewables technologies. Twenty-six hydro-electric projects, with a declared net capacity of 12 MW, contracted with the regional electricity companies under the 1990 renewables order. My right hon. Friend has announced

that he has it in mind to introduce a reserved tranche for hydro projects under the 1991 renewables order. In these circumstances, I do not consider an efficiency and effectiveness survey of the kind proposed by the hon. Member to be necessary.

Electricity

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the effect on competition in the electricity generation market of the increase in bulk gas prices for electricity generating purposes announced by British Gas on 1 March.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is too early to say what the implications of the new bulk gas prices may be for competition in the electricity generation market in the longer term.

THE ARTS

Arts Council

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he plans to meet the chair of the Welsh Arts Council to discuss the funding of the Association of Artists and Designers in Wales.

Mr. Renton: I have no plans to do so, as this is very much a matter for the Welsh Arts Council to determine in the light of its artistic policies and priorities.

HEALTH

Waiting Lists, Leicester

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the current waiting list for each specialty in Leicester health authority and the number of people who have waited *(a)* for over one year and *(b)* for more than two years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest available information, at 31 March 1990, is given in the table. It is the time people wait which is important, not total numbers on the list. The number of patients waiting over one year for in-patient treatment in Leicester health authority has fallen by 61 per cent. since 1979 and by 14 per cent. in the 12 months to March 1990. In addition, the number of in-patients treated in Leicester in 1989-90 has increased by 49 per cent. since 1979.

Waiting lists Leicester health district—March 1989-90

Specialty	*Number waiting*[1]	*Waiting over one year*	*Waiting over two years*
Ordinary admissions			
General Surgery	1,135	29	8
Urology	330	4	0
Trauma and Orthopaedics	1,601	152	57
ENT	1,950	249	33
Ophthalmology	438	1	1
Oral Surgery	508	14	0
Neurosurgery	14	0	0
Plastic Surgery	874	480	271
Cardiothoracic Surgery	560	71	21
Accident and Emergency	24	0	0
General Medicine	5	0	0
Gastroenterology	0	0	0
Cardiology	336	16	4
Dermatology	0	0	0
Nephrology	5	0	0
Neurology	8	8	8
Rheumatology	16	0	0
Paedriatrics	2	0	0
Geriatric Medicine	10	0	0
Gynaecology	1,082	47	12
GP other than Maternity	147	0	0
Mental Handicap	30	24	20
Mental Illness	18	5	2
Forensic Psychiatry	0	1	1
Radiology	5	0	0
Total	9,098	1,101	438
Day cases			
General Surgery	840	64	27
Urology	130	4	1
Trauma and Orthopaedics	41	3	2
ENT	48	0	0
Ophthalmology	328	0	0
Oral Surgery	23	0	0
Neurosurgery	14	0	0
Plastic Surgery	766	319	298
Cardiothoracic Surgery	0	0	0
Accident and Emergency	15	0	0
General Medicine	0	0	0
Gastroenterology	62	0	0
Cardiology	0	0	0
Nephrology	0	0	0
Neurology	0	0	0
Rheumatology	3	0	0
Paedriatrics	0	0	0
Gynaecology	0	0	0
GP other than Maternity	41	0	0
Radiotherapy	7	0	0
Community Medicine	30	0	0
Total	2,438	390	318

[1]Gross less self-deferred
Source: KHO6, KHO7, KHO7A

Mental Health Services

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest available figures of cost per patient per week of in-patients at each mental handicap and mental illness hospital in the Northern region.

Mr. Dorrell: As a result of the implementation of the recommendations of the steering group on national health services information—the Korner committee—the costing information submitted by authorities from 1987-88 is no longer compiled on the basis of type of hospital but focuses on district-based treatment costs by specialty/specialty groups within all hospitals.

Information relating to the Northern region for the financial year 1988-89, the latest currently available, is shown in the table.

Average specialty costs per patient day—patients using a bed 1988-89

District	Mental handicap £ (cash)	Other psychiatric specialties[1] £ (cash)
Hartlepool	39·98	49·01
North Tees	80·94	62·52
South Tees	65·21	50·67
East Cumbria	41·92	29·08
South Cumbria	42·80	35·43
West Cumbria	30·98	46·05
Darlington	23·56	59·78
Durham	33·21	34·72
North West Durham	—	34·88
South West Durham	—	29·93
Northumberland	28·11	30·63
Gateshead	52·15	26·94
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	57·04	46·05
North Tyneside	—	53·48
South Tyneside	25·85	27·47
Sunderland	64·42	28·75

[1] Includes, where applicable, mental illness, child and adolescent psychiatry, forensic psychiatry, psychotherapy and old-age psychiatry.

Notes:

1. The figures may include treatments provided both to in-patients and day cases (those who occupy a bed for at least a period of time but do not stay overnight) under the recommended Korner definition "patients using a bed".
2. The figures cover direct treatment costs only. Expenditure incurred on general services, overheads and capital is excluded.

Liverpool AHA

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many operations and operating sessions were cancelled during 1990 by Liverpool area health authority; how many hospital beds are available *(a)* currently and *(b)* in 1980; and how many hospitals are open (i) currently and (ii) in 1980.

Mr. Dorrell: We do not collect centrally information about the number of cancelled operations. In the year ending March 1990, 582—4 per cent. of the total—scheduled theatre sessions were cancelled in the Liverpool health authority. These sessions may have been taken up by other consultant specialties.

Details of the number of beds available and the number of hospitals open are given in the table.

	1980	*1989-90*
Number of available beds	5,443	2,990
Number of hospitals	18	15
Number of day cases	15,272	18,900
Number of in-patients treated	85,674	103,911

Source: SH3 return 1980.
KHO3 return 1989-90.

Note:
Due to restructuring of the Health Service in 1981, information prior to 1982 is not directly comparable with subsequent years.

Health Authorities (Capital Valuations)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the dates and amounts of the latest capital valuation for each district health authority and national health service trust in England and Wales.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest capital valuation of land and buildings occupied by district health authorities in England and Wales was carried out as at 31 December 1989. A concurrent exercise was carried out in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The totals of worth for existing use were:

	£
England	23,256,449,000
Wales	1,089,041,000

These figures have been provided by the chief valuer, Inland Revenue, from centrally held returns. A summary by regions and districts is expected to be placed in the Library by 15 March 1991 and will include figures for Scotland.

At the date of this valuation (December 1989) there were no national health service trusts and property which would in due course be vested in NHSTs was not separately identified. It is included in the figures for district health authorities.

Prescriptions

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many domiciliary deliveries of prescriptions are made annually on average by pharmacists in the United Kingdom; and what arrangements exist to compensate pharmacists for these additional service costs and to encourage domiciliary deliveries of prescriptions to the elderly and disabled when necessary.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is not available. Only those providing a domiciliary oxygen service are specifically remunerated for the service.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to allow doctors to indicate on prescription forms that the pharmacist can supply a therapeutically equivalent product in place of a brand name product.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We encourage general practitioners to prescribe drugs by their generic name because it is good professional practice and because of the opportunities for savings such prescribing creates. Many hospitals already routinely supply generic products against prescriptions.

Census

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information will be available to the public from the 1991 census, additional to that available to the public from the 1981 census.

Mr. Dorrell: Results from the 1991 census, like those from the 1981 census, will be available as published statistical reports to be laid before Parliament and as abstracts of statistical information supplied on request, as authorised under section 4 of the Census Act 1920.

The results will include statistical information from new questions on ethnic group, limiting long-term illness, term-time address of students and schoolchildren, hours worked weekly, availability of central heating and a count of dwellings by geographical area and type. Statistical information will be available, for the first time in England and Wales, for geographical areas specified as groups of postcodes.

Two new types of abstract are in preparation. The Registrars-General have agreed in principle to supply the

Economic and Social Research Council with two samples of anonymised records from the 1991 census, as announced in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), on 19 July 1990, column 707. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys is also planning to produce a directory showing which postcodes are located in each census enumeration district.

All census output will be designed to guard against disclosing information about identifiable people or households. Information on the plans for the production of reports and abstracts is given in census newsletters, copies of which are in the Library. Further details will be available in prospectuses issued by OPCS.

Cervical Smear Tests

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will identify those district health authorities which contract out the processing of cervical smear tests to private laboratories; and the number of tests involved for each district;

(2) if he will give the average cost of processing each cervical smear test within the National Health Service; and the average cost for the smear test contracted out to laboratories outside the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Hospitals, Bradford

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on how many days in January and February hospitals within the Bradford hospitals trust were refusing to admit patients requiring cold surgery; on whose authority or instructions these decisions were taken; are those patients requiring non-emergency, long-stay operations being admitted now; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Until 1 April 1991, the hospitals in the Bradford hospitals National Health Service trust are under health authority management. Bradford health authority was required as part of contingency plans for the Gulf war to make beds available in the event of casualties. Throughout this period short-stay cases were admitted and throughput went up. Long-stay patients are now being admitted as usual for treatment.

Retired People

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the number of persons over retirement age in each of the last 10 years; and what were the number of *(a)* local authority care home places, *(b)* private residential home places and *(c)* private nursing home places in each of those years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of persons aged 65 or over in each of the years 1979-89, together with the numbers of places in local authority, voluntary and private residential accommodation catering primarily for elderly people are set out in the following table. The table also shows the number of independent sector nursing beds for elderly patients for the years 1982-89.

Thousands

Year	*Population aged 65 or more*[2]	*Residential care places*[3]			*Independent sector nursing beds*[4]
		Local authority	*Voluntary*	*Private*	
1979	6,978·0	113·6	33·9	32·0	—
1980	7,067·2	114·1	35·0	35·8	—
1981	7,107·7	114·9	36·9	39·3	—
1982	7,107·5	115·5	36·7	44·3	18·2
1983	7,061·2	115·9	37·6	51·8	22·5
1984	7,033·9	116·4	38·2	63·1	27·3
[1]1985	7,184·4	102·5	26·4	73·6	33·9
1986	7,294·9	101·5	25·6	86·9	41·6
1987	7,407·4	112·4	28·4	105·8	—
1988	7,463·4	110·6	28·5	115·9	57·0
1989	7,522·6	107·4	28·6	134·6	73·6

Note: All figures are rounded to one decimal place.

[1] Figures for places in residential care from 1985 are for elderly people only. Earlier years include places for younger physically handicaped.
[2] Mid-year OPCS figures.
[3] Figures are for year-ending 31 March.
[4] The numbers of beds in private hospitals and clinics and private and voluntary nursing homes are not collected separately. Figures are for calendar year ending up till 31 December 1986, and for year-ending 31 March from 1987-88. Figures before 1982 are not available.

Christie Hospital, Manchester

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the names of the board of directors for the Christie hospital trust in south Manchester.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Trust boards are made up of equal numbers of executive and non-executive directors and a chairman. Non-executive directors are chosen for the personal contribution they can make to the effective management of the trust. Two are drawn from the local community and the remainder appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Executive directors include the chief executive, director of finance and, in the majority of cases, a medical and nursing director. Following is a list of the chairman and non-executive membership for the Christie hospital national health service trust:

Sir John Page
Professor Roger Green
Mrs. Rayna Dean
Sir Richard Baker-Wilbraham
Mrs. June Rosen
Mr. Robert Shepherd

Social Services Inspectorate

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the reasons for the decision to reduce the salary level of the post of head of his social services inspectorate.

Mr. Dorrell: The chief inspector, social services inspectorate, post was advertised recently at a salary level up to the top of the grade 3 pay scale with the possibility of a higher amount for an exceptionally well qualified candidate. The new grade reflects the findings of an internal review of the Department's senior posts which included an examination of the duties of the chief inspector post. It does not affect in any way the postholder's reporting arrangements within the Department or his—or her—access to Ministers.

Salmonella

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to introduce new measures to combat the incidence of salmonellosis.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gave my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) on 14 January, columns *392-4*.

The Chief Medical Officer has also issued public advice that everybody should avoid eating raw eggs or uncooked dishes made from them, and that vulnerable groups should cook eggs until the white and yolk are solid. Copies of the advice are in the Library.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice is given by his Department to health authorities with regard to the maximum number of beds that may be permitted in a nursing home.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is a statutory requirement that each nursing home patient has adequate accommodation and space. The maximum number of beds in any one home is constrained by the needs of the residents. Guidance issued by the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts and endorsed by the Department provides that all long-stay patients should enjoy a lifestyle as non-institutional as possible, and sets out certain minimum standards for bedroom, sitting or day room areas.

Abortion

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he is yet in a position to announce the date for the implementation of section 37 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The changes to the Abortion Act 1967 contained in section 37 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 will be implemented on 1 April 1991. The Secretary of State for Health has made an order, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 (Commencement No. 2 and Transitional Provision) Order 1991, SI 480 C. 10, to bring into force section 37 of the Act and to make transitional provision for a period of one month, and laid before the House the Abortion Regulations 1991, SI 499. The Secretary of State for Scotland has simultaneously laid the Abortion (Scotland) Regulations 1991, SI 460 S. 41.

Copies are available in the Vote Office and Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Landfill Site, Carrickfergus

Mr Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the conditions of approval for the land fill site at Sullatober Mill, Marshalltown road, Carrickfergus have been complied with; what monitoring has taken place on site since approval was granted; whether the present condition of the site merits revocation of the licence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The site has been monitored frequently since 1984, when planning permission was first granted. In the period between 1985 and 1987, three breaches were detected and remedied. No further breach was detected until March 1990 and it, too, was remedied. Two further breaches have been detected and enforcement action has commenced. The question of revocation of the site licence is one for consideration by Carrickfergus borough council.

Slatt Crossing Inquiry

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the inquiry into the railway accident at the Slatt crossing is to be resumed.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the inspector. I understand that he will make an announcement shortly.

Housing Developments

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he is taking in *(a)* the Antrim borough council area and *(b)* the Newtownabbey borough council area to tidy up and maintain green areas provided in private and public housing developments at the insistence of the Department of Environment planning service.

Mr. Hanley: It is not the practice of the Department of Environment for Northern Ireland, as planning authority, when granting planning permission for housing developments, to impose conditions requiring the provision of open space areas for public use. Where a developer provides open space at his own initiative the responsibility for maintenance would rest with him. He is normally advised to make maintenance arrangements with the local council. The Department of Environment for Northern Ireland therefore does not take action to tidy up areas such as this. The responsibility for maintaining any open space areas in public housing estates lies with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Census Enumerators (Donaghadee)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications were received for the position of census enumerators in the Donaghadee district by the closing date of 22 February; how many appointments will be made for the Donaghadee district; and how many of these appointees were selected prior to the closing date for applications on 22 February.

Mr. Hanley: Eighty applications were received by the closing date of 22 February and 52 appointments will be

made. Thirty-four appointments were made from the first phase of the recruitment campaign, which ran from 1 November to 14 December 1990. No appointments have yet been made from the second phase, which ran from 3 January to 22 February. Interviews are being held to fill the remaining 18 vacancies.

Departmental Policies (Environmental Implications)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what actions have been taken since the appointment of a Minister in his Department to consider the environmental implications of his Department's policies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 1 March 1991]:* The Northern Ireland Departments, like all others, have been active in implementing and developing the commitments made in the Environment White Paper, "This Common Inheritance", since its publication in September 1990.

The Northern Ireland departmental report, published on 15 February, recorded progress with a wide range of initiatives, reflecting the White Paper's comprehensive review of policy affecting the environment. Additional resources have been secured substantially to extend water quality monitoring and to carry out estuarine studies in environmentally sensitive coastal waters; to extend smoke control areas; to accelerate the survey and declaration of areas of special scientific interest; and to expand the environment service of the Department of Environment for Northern Ireland. The report also records the Department of Agriculture's commitment to the implementation of the countryside management strategy, giving particular emphasis to the prevention of farm sourced pollution and the encouragement of environmentally sensitive farming. The Department of Economic Development has published a consultative paper on energy efficiency with a view to implementing an extensive programme of energy conservation measures outlined in that paper. The Department of Education is taking steps to ensure that environmental issues are given sufficient weight in the programmes of study for the compulsory subjects of the Northern Ireland curriculum.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Overseas Voters

3. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on overseas registration of voters.

Mrs. Rumbold: Figures published on 13 February showed that 31,001 overseas electors were included in the draft electoral register for 1991-92. This figure does not include valid applications which were received too late for inclusion in the draft register. Final figures for the 1991-92 register, which will be higher, will be published in the summer.

Teenage Crime

15. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to reduce the amounts of crime carried out by teenagers.

Mr. John Patten: The Government are continuously developing their programmes to divert young people from crime. The Home Office safer cities programme includes schemes directed at reducing young people's involvement in criminal activity. Local activities for young people will be an important feature of the national crime prevention week to be held in April. We are also working with the Department of Education and Science who are considering measures to reduce truancy. However, some parents could do more to influence and control their children's behaviour, and the emphasis on parental responsibility in the Criminal Justice Bill will encourage them to do so.

Merseyside Police

16. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the chief constable for Merseyside on the present manning levels of the Merseyside police force.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Merseyside police authority made an application for 49 additional police posts in 1991-92. On the advice of Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary, I have approved five extra police posts from 1 October 1991.

19. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the implications of the 1991-92 Merseyside police authority budget settlement on the police establishment.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The establishment of the Merseyside police, as I authorised, will not be affected by the police authority's budget settlement. It is for the authority to decide how many posts in the establishment should be filled.

Racial Attacks

17. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is being taken to reduce racially motivated attacks.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Racially motivated attacks are wholly unacceptable in a civilised society. The Government are urging the police and other agencies to tackle such attacks vigorously and has issued detailed guidance to those involved. Ethnic minority communities can have full confidence in the police's determination to prosecute the perpetrators of racial attacks.

Nottingham Police

18. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what request he has received for funding to enable the Nottingham police force to be brought up to strength; and what response he has made.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Nottinghamshire police authority did not seek an increase in establishment for 1991-92 following the 26 posts which my right hon. Friend approved for 1990-91. At the end of December the strength of the Nottinghamshire constabulary was 2,342, which is only two short of the authorised establishment.

Shoplifting

20. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many men and how many women have been acquitted of shoplifting charges during the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested can be found in the relevant "Criminal Statistics for England and Wales, Supplementary Volumes I and II", copies of which are in the Library. Table 1.1A deals with magistrates courts and shows that in 1989 a total of 3,594 males and 1,788 females of all ages were either found not guilty or, for various reasons, the case was not proceeded with. Table 2.1A gives equivalent figures in the Crown court of 410 males and 235 females. I am arranging for the statistics for 1985-88 to be sent to the hon. and learned Member.

Police (Inner Cities)

21. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will next meet the president of the Association of Chief Police Officers to discuss inner city areas.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend meets chief officers of police on a regular basis to discuss a wide range of policing matters, but he has no present plans for a meeting with the president of the Association of Chief Police Officers to discuss inner-city areas.

Electorates

22. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the size of constituency electorates in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Rumbold: In the past 12 months, we have seen three letters on this subject from hon. Members. A question was asked in the House in January 1989.

Model Guns

23. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the sale of model guns which are outside the Firearms Act.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None recently.

Alcohol Licensing

24. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to bring forward the reform of the licensing system.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans to introduce any further legislation on liquor licensing in England and Wales for the time being. I see a good case, in due course, for reviewing the liquor licensing laws as a whole with a view to its reform and modernisation.

Northumbria Police Force

25. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the funding and establishment of the Northumbria police force.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The establishment of the Northumbria police is 3,552. Following an application for 87 additional police posts in 1991-92, my right hon. Friend has approved 26 with effect from 10 October 1991 provided that the police authority is prepared to meet its share of the cost of these posts.

Community Radio

26. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to extend community radio.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since 1 January 1991 the development of all forms of independent local radio, including community radio, has been the responsibility of the new Radio Authority established under the Broadcasting Act 1990. I understand that the authority aims to issue licences for 20 to 30 new independent local radio stations each year.

Immigration

27. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the implications of the 1992 programme for the national control of immigration and visitors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Discussions on the movement of people within the Community after 1992 are continuing. We have made it clear that we intend to continue to exercise immigration controls at our frontiers.

Crime, Leicestershire

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what percentage reported crime has increased in Leicestershire since 1 January 1990.

Mr. John Patten: In the first nine months of 1990 recorded crime in Leicestershire increased by 32 per cent. over the corresponding period in 1989.

Police Budgets

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provisions are made by the Home Office to reimburse local police forces for unbudgeted security operations or for exceptional investigations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Home Office meets 51 per cent. of police authority expenditure on revenue costs through specific grant, whatever the origin of the expenditure.

Wrongful Imprisonment

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many grants of compensation for wrongful imprisonment were made in each of the last two years *(a)* under section 133 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and *(b)* under the ex-gratia scheme.

Mr. John Patten: The following information relates to payments of compensation in respect of imprisonment as a result of wrongful conviction, and is based on the date upon which the final payment of compensation was made. A number of interim payments, pending final assessment of compensation, have also been made during the period.

Year	*Ex-gratia payment*	*Section 133 payment*	*Total number of payments*
1989	8	–	8
1990	4	1	5

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what amounts were paid in compensation for wrongful imprisonment in each of the last two years.

Mr. John Patten: The following information relates to payments of compensation in respect of imprisonment as a result of wrongful conviction and is based upon the date on which the final payment of compensation was made. A number of interim payments, pending final assessment of compensation, have also been made during this period.

Amount of compensation paid in resolved cases

Year	£
1989	27,477
1990	73,121

Prisoners

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were put into canvas restraint jackets in each of the years from 1986 to 1990.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information on the number of applications of loose canvas jackets to male prisoners in the years 1986 to 1989 was published in table 10.3 of "Prison Statistics England and Wales" (Cm. 1221), a copy of which is in the Library.

According to the records held centrally, the number of different inmates who were so restrained was four in 1987, two in 1988 and one in 1989.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners in each of the years 1986-1990 were held in segregation units for (i) over six months, (ii) over a year and (iii) over two years;

(2) how many prisoners were kept in segregation units for a continuous period of over 13 weeks in each of the years 1986-1990.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information is not available in the form requested. The available data relate to the population of inmates removed from association with other inmates under prison rule 43 and young offender institution rule 46. Figures for 30 June 1989 were published in table 10.1 of "Prison Statistics England and Wales 1989" (Cm. 1221), a copy of which is in the Library. Provisional figures for 30 June 1990 are given in the table.

Persons in prison service establishments in England and Wales on prison rule 43 and young offender institution rule 46 on 30 June 1990: by type of prisoner, period of segregation, age group and sex

Type of prisoner	All persons	Males		Females	
		Aged under 21	Adults	Aged under 21	Adults
All held on prison rule 43 or young offender institution rule 46	2,282	220	2,036	3	23
Own interest (own protection)	1,980	152	1,805	2	21
Current period of segregation					
Up to 1 month	408	57	347	1	3
Over 1 month up to 3 months	451	43	403	—	5
Over 3 months up to 12 months	885	48	831	1	5
Over 12 months	236	4	224	—	8
Good order or discipline	302	68	231	1	2
Current period of segregation					
Up to 1 month	222	59	160	1	2
Over 1 month up to 3 months	59	3	56	—	—
Over 3 months	21	6	15	—	—

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners experienced more than one 10/74 transfer in each year for 1986 to 1990;

(2) how many prisoners experienced in each year from 1986 to 1990, (i) more than three 10/74 transfers (ii) more than three transfers under good order and discipline procedures and (iii) more than three transfers for other reasons, including Home Office directives;

(3) how many 10/74 transfers were authorised by governors in each year from 1986 to 1990.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were kept in a body belt for over 24 hours in each of the years from 1986 to 1990, and in which prisons.

Mrs. Rumbold: The readily available information is given in the table.

Prisoners in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales restrained by means of a body belt for periods over 24 hours: by establishment, 1988 and 1989

Establishment	1988	1989
Local prisons		
Birmingham	2	—
Durham	1	—
Hull	—	2
Leicester	1	—
Wandsworth	1	—
Training prisons		
Cookham Wood	—	1
Frankland	1	—
Full Sutton	1	—
Young offender institution		
Dover	—	1

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were put into segregation in each year between 1986 and 1990 (i) under good order and discipline, (ii) pending adjudication, (iii) on punishment, (iv) for any other reason and (v) on rule 43(a).

Mrs. Rumbold: An inmate may be removed from association with other inmates where this appears desirable for the maintenance of good order or discipline or in his own interests, under prison rule 43 or young offender institution rule 46. The readily available information is that the following numbers of prisoners were removed from association under these rules on 30 June:

	1989	*1990*
Good order and discipline	238	302
Own interests	2,213	1,980

Information is not recorded centrally on the number of inmates who, under prison rule 48(2) or young offender institution rule 51(2), are kept apart from other inmates pending adjudication.

Inmates were awarded cellular or room confinement following adjudication or disciplinary offences on the following number of occasions:

Year	*Number*
1986	7,342
1987	6,904
1988	6,317
1989	6,269

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria were used for deciding which cases involving allegations of assault by prison officers should be settled by ex-gratia payments and which should be contested.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are no standard criteria and the decision about whether to contest a civil claim must reflect all the circumstances of the case. A decision to make an ex-gratia payment will not necessarily reflect doubts about the conduct of the member of staff concerned or a belief that the allegation is true.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions and in which prisons, a body belt was used in Her Majesty's prisons in each year from 1986 to 1990; and on how many prisoners was the body belt used in each year from 1986 to 1990.

Mrs. Rumbold: The readily available information is given in the table.

Body belts applied to violent or refractory prisoners in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales: by establishment, 1987 to 1989

Establishment	*1987*		*1988*		*1989*	
	Applications	*Prisoners*	*Applications*	*Prisoners*	*Applications*	*Prisoners*
Local prisons and remand centres						
Ashford	—	—	—	—	1	1
Bedford	1	1	1	1	1	1
Birmingham	—	—	8	5	2	2
Brixton	—	—	—	—	2	2
Camp Hill	—	—	—	—	5	5
Canterbury	2	2	—	—	—	—
Cardiff	—	—	1	1	2	2
Chelmsford	1	1	1	1	1	1
Durham	—	—	1	1	—	—
Hull	7	7	4	4	9	9
Leeds	1	1	1	1	—	—
Leicester	6	6	14	11	2	1
Lewes	—	—	1	1	3	2
Lincoln	—	—	4	4	3	3
Oxford	1	1	1	1	—	—
Pentonville	2	2	1	1	—	—
Reading	1	1	1	1	2	2
Rochester	—	—	—	—	1	1
Wandsworth	6	5	10	8	6	6
Wormwood Scrubs	3	3	1	1	2	2
Training prisons						
Acklington	—	—	—	—	2	2
Albany	1	1	—	—	1	1
Blundeston	1	1	—	—	—	—
Camp Hill	—	—	4	3	—	—
Chelmsford	1	1	—	—	—	—
Cookham Wood	—	—	—	—	1	1
Frankland	6	5	6	5	3	2
Full Sutton	—	—	7	6	9	8
Garth	—	—	1	1	—	—
Haverigg	—	—	—	—	1	1
Lindholme	1	1	3	3	2	2
Long Lartin	4	3	2	1	—	—
Parkhurst	5	5	—	—	8	8
Preston	—	—	—	—	1	1
Shepton Mallet	—	—	2	2	—	—
Stafford	3	3	—	—	1	1

Establishment	1987		1988		1989	
	Applications	Prisoners	Applications	Prisoners	Applications	Prisoners
Wakefield	2	2	—	—	—	—
Young offender institutions						
Aylesbury	—	—	1	1	3	3
Dover	7	7	—	—	5	5
Glen Parva	1	1	1	1	—	—
Guys Marsh	1	1	—	—	—	—
Hollesley Bay	1	1	—	—	—	—
Northallerton	1	1	—	—	—	—
Onley	1	1	—	—	—	—
Rochester	7	7	—	—	—	—

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many doubled door cells there are in Her Majesty's prisons; and how many times double door cells were used in each of the years from 1986 to 1990.

Mrs. Rumbold: In England and Wales the current prison design standards provide that a special cell for the temporary confinement of a refractory or violent inmate, or a protective room in a prison hospital for the temporary confinement of an inmate who is disturbed or is otherwise a danger to himself or herself or to others, should have inner and outer doors. Not all special cells and protective rooms at present designated as such are so equipped. Reliable information about the total number of special cells and protective rooms is not available centrally. The readily available information about the total number of occasions on which special cells and protective rooms designated as such have been used is as follows:

Year	Special cells	Protective rooms
1986	1,662	n.a.
1987	1,491	507
1988	1,453	623
1989	1,739	593

n.a.—not available.

Figures for 1990 are not yet available.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many ex-gratia payments were made to prisoners who claimed to have been attacked in jail by prison officers in each year for 1986 to 1990; in which prison the incidents occurred; how many prison officers were disciplined; and on what grounds it was decided not to discipline prison officers in these cases.

Mrs. Rumbold: Central records are kept only of allegations made by prisoners of assault by staff when these result in civil litigation. Of the 20 such claims received during this period, six have been concluded, and in one case compensation has been paid. This was for a negotiated settlement relating to an alleged assault which was fully investigated and on which it was decided that no disciplinary action would be taken. The settlement was accepted by the plaintiff without any admission of liability on the part of the Department or individual members of staff.

Electoral Register

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much is spent by electoral registration officers in each of the London boroughs on compiling the electoral register and keeping it up to date; and if he will give comparable figures for Birmingham, Cornwall, Kent and Lancashire.

Mrs. Rumbold: I regret that the information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Security Service

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish the Security Service Commissioner's annual report for the year ended December 1990.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: As soon as is practicable.

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints against the Security Service were received, and how many actually investigated by the Security Service Tribunal in the 12 months ending December 1990.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Security Service Tribunal operates independently under the provisions of the Security Service Act 1989. I do not propose to make available details of its work. It will be for the Security Service Commissioner to decide in consultation with the tribunal what information might be included about the tribunal in his annual report to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Traffic Wardens, London

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to devolve recruitment and control of traffic wardens to individual London boroughs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans to devolve the recruitment and control of traffic wardens to the London boroughs. Under the provisions of the Road Traffic Bill, the London boroughs will be able to recruit their own parking attendants to undertake the enforcement of certain breaches of parking controls.

Charities

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the income of charities for the financial year 1989-90.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available centrally, but statistics compiled by the Charities Aid Foundation suggest that the current annual turnover of the whole charitable sector in England and Wales is in the region of £15 billion.

Crime, North Yorkshire

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current level of crime in north Yorkshire; and what it was at the same time in 1990.

Mr. John Patten: North Yorkshire police recorded a total of 44,590 offences during 1990, compared with 35,774 in 1989. The number of offences detected in 1990 was 17,726 compared with 12,092 in 1989. These are the most recent figures on which a comparison can be made.

Mr. Joseph Barker

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the treatment of Joseph Arthur Lewis Barker, prisoner CJ0124 in Her Majesty's prison, Liverpool stating why he has been moved to the hospital prison, what injuries he has and what treatment he is being given.

Mrs. Rumbold: For reasons of medical confidentiality it is not our practice to disclose publicly information about the medical condition or treatment of individual prisoners. I shall be writing to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to release prisoner CJ0124, Joseph Arthur Lewis Barker from prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Mr. Barker"s earliest date of release from prison is 16 February 1993. He will be eligible to be considered for parole from 19 October 1991.

SCOTLAND

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1 to 7) and overall in the Scottish Office are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Lang: The number amd percentage of women officers in grades 1 to 7 and overall in the Scottish Office and associated Departments at 1 April 1990 are shown in the table:

Grade (and equivalents)	*Women*	*Percentage*
1	—	—
2	—	—
3	2	6·5
4	—	—
5	17	11·3
6	36	16·2
7	64	13·2
Overall	2,967	39·6

None of the staff in grades 1 to 7 at 1 April 1990 described themselves as belongiing to an ethnic minority.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Scottish Office last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My Departmentt conducted a voluntary survey of the ethnic origins of staff in 1987, a reminder exercise in 1989, and thereafter all new entrants have been invited to complete questionnaires. I have no plans to conduct a further survey.

We achieved an 87 per cent. response from the exercise, and 0·3 per cent. of staff have described themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at the Scottish Office.

Mr. Lang: My Department does not conduct recruitment for top grades.

Recycling

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce a scheme for local authorities in Scotland comparable to that announced by the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 2 January.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have no plans to introduce in Scotland a system of supplementary credit approvals for local authority investment in recycling projects. The arrangements for handling recycling investment through local authority capital expenditure allocations are given in my reply of 24 January 1991 to my honourable Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost), at columns *306-7*.

Employment Training

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many employment training places in Scotland in 1990-91 were taken up by trainees in the categories of (i) all 18 to 24-year-olds unemployed for at least six months and (ii) those between 18 and 50 years unemployed for two years or more.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Precise information about numbers of trainees is not available in the form requested. Information about people who take up employment training places is obtained from returns submitted by training managers and is incomplete. However, from these returns it is estimated that, in Scotland, from 1 April 1990 to 4 January 1991, 14·7 per cent. of all starts were aged 18 to 24 years and unemployed for at least six months and 24·4 per cent. were aged between 18 and 50 years and unemployed for two years or more.

Forestry Commission

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all land which was owned by the Forestry Commission and has been sold, for which local authorities have been able to enter into an access agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The arrangements for access agreements which my right hon. and learned Friend, the then Secretary of State for Scotland, announced on 21 November 1990, *Official Report*, columns *164-66*, have not yet been introduced.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a list of all land currently owned by the Forestry Commission on a county by county basis, giving the area of the land and stating the type of woodland or other type of countryside.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Forestry Commission is organised administratively into seven conservancies and 57 forest districts; information cannot therefore be given by counties except at disproportionate cost. A summary of the land currently managed by the Forestry Commission is given by forest districts in tables 15, 16 and 17 of appendix XI to the commission's 1989-90 annual report, a copy of which is in the Library.

Lothian Health Board

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how much of the 1991-92 revenue allocation to Lothian health board is allotted to *(a)* hospital services, *(b)* community units, *(c)* special projects, *(d)* general practitioners and *(e)* projected efficiency savings in (i) cash and (ii) percentage terms;

(2) if he will list the special projects funded by the 1991-92 Lothian health board revenue allocation and the money allotted to each of them from the allocation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Lothian health board has been allocated £346·505 million for hospital and community health revenue expenditure for 1991-92. Within this total, specific sums of £7·706 million—2·2 per cent.—and £2·124 million—0·6 per cent.—were made available for AIDS-related services and Project 2000 respectively and a general allocation of £2·457 million—0·7 per cent.—was given for other services such as drug misuse and breast cancer screening. The board will set its own priorities in regard to expenditure on hospital services and community units. The board has been asked to find an additional 1 per cent. of its HCH revenue allocation, or £3·465 million, from cash releasing efficiency saving which will be available to improve patient care.

In addition to the hospital and community health allocation, Lothian was allocated £5·923 million for general practice team staff and £2·3 million for general practice premises.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money was allotted to general practitioners from the 1989-90 revenue allocation to Lothian health board; and what was Lothian health board's revenue expenditure on general practitioners in that year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In 1989-90, funds for general medical services were not cash limited and therefore no specific allocations were made to health boards. In that year, expenditure by Lothian health board on general medical services was £27·748 million.

Nurses

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many nurses are registered with the bank nursing scheme in each of the health board regions *(a)* at each grade and *(b)* in total.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Mortgage Repossessions

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many mortgage repossession orders have been made in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole in each of the last five years, and for each of the last 12 months.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 6 March 1991]*: This information is not available.

Revenue Support Grant

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the amount of revenue support grant allocated to each Scottish district council on a per capita basis; if he will explain the formulae applied in calculation of these grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The figures are set out in the table.

A full explanation of the methodology applied in determining the revenue support grant for all authorities, including district councils, for 1991-92 is set out in the report on the Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1991, which was laid before the House of Commons on 30 January and approved on 13 February.

The principles used in distributing RSG are agreed between the Scottish Office and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities through the distribution committee of the working party on local government finance.

RSG forms only part of aggregate external finance, the other components of which are specific grants and non-domestic rate income. Meaningful comparison between districts is only possible in terms of AEF as a whole.

Revenue Support Grant 1991-92 per head of population

District Councils	*£*
Berwickshire	56·83
Ettrick and Lauderdale	48·42
Roxburgh	61·42
Tweeddale	58·81
Clackmannan	45·98
Falkirk	26·51
Stirling	30·88
Annandale and Eskdale	40·09
Nithsdale	37·54
Stewartry	47·79
Wigtown	64·38
Dunfermline	23·31
Kirkcaldy	22·43
North East Fife	57·08
Aberdeen City	38.84
Banff and Buchan	35·89
Gordon	61·39
Kincardine and Deeside	53·21
Moray	48·63
Badenoch and Strathspey	44·85
Caithness	54·41
Inverness	27·18
Lochaber	50·29
Nairn	60·06
Ross and Cromarty	69·10
Skye and Lochalsh	116·48
Sutherland	91·20
East Lothian	36·50
Edinburgh City	52·68
Midlothian	56·68
West Lothian	46·40
Argyll and Bute	93·85
Bearsden and Milngavie	63·63
Clydebank	82·24
Clydesdale	61·82
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	37·50
Cumnock and Doon Valley	64·01
Cunninghame	16·32
Dumbarton	33·83
East Kilbride	21·34
Eastwood	55·87
Glasgow City	73·37
Hamilton	53·29
Inverclyde	72·33

District Councils	£
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	46·11
Kyle and Carrick	39·51
Monklands	78·13
Motherwell	59·49
Renfrew	53·07
Strathkelvin	69·66
Angus	52·31
Dundee City	65·69
Perth and Kinross	50·24

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Credit

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what his Department is doing to improve the publicity for family credit.

Mr. Jack: Since 1989 a series of advertising campaigns and other publicity has led to a high level of awareness of family credit. But there is a high turnover of families within the eligible population, as people move into and out of eligibility as their family circumstances change. It is necessary therefore to ensure that those who become newly eligible are aware of the benefit and that they may qualify.

So that all families with children are made aware of family credit and are able to see whether they might be entitled, a personalised message about family credit now appears in child benefit order books, and on the appropriate award notices where child benefit is paid direct into a bank or building society. This tells the family that they may be able to get family credit if their income is less than the figure quoted in the message, which is individual to that family. A new advertising campaign, using television commercials to draw attention to the message in child benefit order books, began on 11 February. A poster has also been produced for display in post offices.

Other publicity measures which have been undertaken recently include a mailing, last August, of specially prepared material to some 80,000 advisers, including citizens advice bureaux, ministers of religion and others, and the inclusion of a leaflet about family credit in "Bounty Bags" which mothers of new-born babies receive in hospital.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his reply of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *402*, regarding cold weather payments, if he will inform the hon. Member for Oldham, West when the information is placed in the Library.

Mr. Scott: Yes, I will inform the hon. Member when information for February is placed in the Library. However, a full and accurate picture of cold weather payments claims and expenditure will not emerge until later because claims can be made up to three months after the period of cold weather.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *265*, whether immediate payments of cold weather claims can be approved on the telephone by local offices without personal attendance or written application by the claimant.

Mr. Scott: No. Claims for social fund cold weather payments, in common with other social security benefits, must be made in writing. A telephone call can alert the office to the likelihood of a claim, but payment will depend on written confirmation made either in person or through the post.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his most up-to-date estimate of the numbers of *(a)* applicants and *(b)* recipients of the special cold weather payments for the first two weeks of February.

Mr. Scott: Estimates of cold weather payment claims and payments for the first two weeks of February could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. When details of actual claims and payments become available, they will be placed in the Library.

Young People (Benefits)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the total numbers of those in receipt of *(a)* supplementary benefit and *(b)* income support aged (i) 16 years, (ii) 17 years and (iii) 18 years in each year between 1978 and 1980 in Wales.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested for supplementary benefit is in the table. Income support was introduced in April 1988.

	Supplementary benefit recipients in Wales		
	1978	*1979*	*1980*
Aged 16	4,000	4,000	5,000
Aged 17	4,000	3,000	5,000
Aged 18	3,000	3,000	5,000

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiries 1978-80.

Residential and Nursing Homes

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what account he took of the increase in the number of residents of residential and nursing homes claiming housing benefit in deciding to reduce the scope of the entitlement of such residents to housing benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) on 29 October 1990 at columns *368-70*.

Disabled Workers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the lifting of Crown immunity from Government Departments in respect of the 3 per cent. quota of jobs for disabled people.

Miss Widdecombe: We have always aimed to meet the quota of 3 per cent.

Water Charges

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any proposals to uprate social security benefits to take account of the increases in water charges that will be implemented as a consequence of the Water Act 1989.

Miss Widdecombe: Income-related benefits are considered for uprating each year and we seek to take account of all relevant factors.

Income Support

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the reasons for the adoption by benefit offices in the Isle of Wight and Somerset of differing policies in relation to the payment of income support to residents transferred from local authority care to independent homes.

Miss Widdecombe: Eligibility for income support is defined by regulations and is available in respect of fees, up to certain limits, to residents of registered residential care homes and in certain other types of homes. Adjudication officers receive guidance on their interpretation of the regulations by the chief adjudication officer in the adjudication officers' guide, a copy of which is available in the Library. It is for individual adjudication officers to make decisions in any given case.

Disablement Allowances

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each of the last three years the number and percentage of people awarded mobility allowance whose terms of award was insufficient for them to take advantage of the motability scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: People whose awards of mobility allowance are for two years or less are not eligible for any of the motability schemes. The precise information requested is not available, but the numbers of such people receiving mobility allowance on specified dates are in the table.

	Awards of two years or less	*Total live load*	*Percentage*
On 30 December 1988	46,101	555,975	8·3
On 28 December 1989	50,774	599,268	8·5
On 27 December 1990	51,013	640,658	8·0

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all the statutory instruments which will be superseded by regulations made under the disability living allowance and Disability Working Allowance Bill.

Mr. Scott: A number of sets of regulations will be made under the Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance Bill. The introduction of disability living allowance will, for example, require amendments to be made to all the regulations relating to attendance allowance and mobility allowance and to a range of other sets of regulations covering general matters such as claims and payments and the inter-relationship between benefits. Work is continuing on the drafting of the regulations and it is not yet clear how many sets of regulations will need to be amended.

Single Payments

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the cost of administering single payments for each year of the scheme from 1980 to 1988 expressed *(a)* in money terms, *(b)* as a proportion of the total value of single payment expenditure that year and *(c)* at 1991 prices.

Mr. Scott: Single payments were part of the supplementary benefit scheme and administration costs were not separately identified.

Severe Hardship Payments

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to publish the research commissioned by his Department on severe hardship payments for 16 and 17-year-olds.

Mr. Jack: We expect to publish the research on such payments in the near future.

Pension Book

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the layout and terminology of the current pension book to make it more user-friendly.

Miss Widdecombe: A number of options for a redesigned benefit order book are currently under consideration.

Pensions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what additional benefits are due to a pensioner couple in receipt of £83·25 state pension, £27·80 attendance allowance and occupational pension of £25·80.

Mr. Jack: The extent to which this pensioner couple might be eligible for additional benefits would depend on a range of factors, including the amount of any other income or capital they possess, the size of their family and household composition, their housing costs, if any, and the amount of community charge payable.

Transitional Additions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people were in receipt of transitional additions for each category for which such additions are payable at the latest date for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: Shortly after the 1990 uprating, the number of people in each category who were in receipt of income support transitional additions were as follows:

	Number
Pensioners	42,000
Long-term sick and disabled	8,000
Families with children	7,000
Others	52,000

Social Fund

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the independent research commissioned from the social security research unit of the University of York to examine whether the social fund is meeting its objectives will be available for publication in either completed or interim form prior to the establishment of the benefits agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The research into the operation of the social fund by the social policy research unit is not expected to be completed until the end of December 1991.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what procedures exist for his Department to

monitor the local priority categories used for allocating grants from the social fund and changes which take place in those priorities.

Mr. Scott: There are no centrally imposed procedures for monitoring local priority categories, or changes which take place in those priorities.

This function is the responsibility of the relevant local manager who, as the appointed area social fund officer and budget holder, is required to issue guidance on matters specified by the Secretary of State. That guidance must take account of local factors in specifying priority needs for grants and loans and the levels of priority which may be met from the expenditure allocation for the local social fund officers for the relevant period. The area social fund officer is also required to monitor and review at least monthly the planned level of expenditure and the priority needs and levels for his locality and to revise them as necessary. It follows that this guidance can vary from one local area to another, thus ensuring that the highest priority needs in a community are met.

Unemployed Claimants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each of the past four years the total cost and number of unemployed claiming *(a)* unemployment benefit, *(b)* unemployment benefit and income support and *(c)* income support for Great Britain and each of the standard regions.

Mr. Jack: The information is not available in the form requested. The numbers of unemployed receiving benefits in November of each year are set out in tables 1(a) to 1(d). Total benefit expenditure for Great Britain on income support, unemployment benefit, rate rebates and community charge benefits paid to unemployed people is shown in table 2.

Claimants in receipt of unemployment benefit, unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit/income support and supplementary benefit/income support only 1987 to 1990
(Figures are for November each year).

	Unemployment benefit	*Benefit Unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit/income support*	*Supplementary benefit/income support only*
	Table 1(a)		
1987			
Great Britain	548,772	126,609	1,407,222
South East	124,000	28,804	315,009
East Anglia	15,185	3,700	30,160
South West	39,757	9,127	76,010
West Midlands	51,953	12,215	164,632
East Midlands	38,478	7,938	80,837
Yorkshire and Humberside	56,558	13,633	141,867
North West	70,279	17,698	218,740
Northern	45,124	10,819	105,359
Wales	31,312	8,002	77,895
Scotland	76,126	14,673	176,713
	Table 1(b)		
1988			
Great Britain	384,769	114,902	1,065,930
London East	27,040	9,406	102,854
London South	27,301	8,831	93,460
London West	22,224	5,548	46,168
South West	27,696	6,893	54,087
West Midlands	34,987	10,334	117,850
East Midlands	35,853	9,180	79,457
Yorkshire and Humberside	42,300	12,135	108,953
North West	56,629	17,849	180,284
Northern	31,268	9,661	77,918
Wales	24,547	7,988	59,346
Scotland	54,924	17,077	145,553
	Table 1(c)		
1989			
Great Britain	210,325	78,457	918,924
London East	15,974	6,832	83,952
London South	16,074	6,624	77,078
London West	12,882	4,346	36,771
South West	14,294	4,875	45,814
West Midlands	18,465	6,801	95,783
East Midlands	20,722	6,997	67,333
Yorkshire and Humberside	23,018	8,225	97,727
North West	30,389	11,485	158,546
Northern	15,771	5,879	71,903
Wales	12,512	5,017	50,383
Scotland	30,224	11,376	133,634

	Unemployment benefit	Benefit Unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit/income support	Supplementary benefit/income support only
	Table 1(d)		
1990			
Great Britain	282,726	60,225	969,315
London and South East	71,674	16,017	232,998
South West	20,491	4,453	56,875
West Midlands	25,420	5,953	97,022
East Midlands	28,096	6,336	77,672
Yorkshire and Humberside	29,725	6,441	99,043
North West	38,514	7,728	157,971
Northern	19,273	4,069	70,649
Wales	15,348	3,694	53,243
Scotland	34,185	5,534	123,842

Note: Standard regions changed in 1988 and 1990.

Table 2
Expenditure on unemployed people 1986-87 to 1989-90

	£ million
1986-87	7,310
1987-88	6,650
1988-89	5,240
1989-90	4,280

Housing Benefit

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he plans to publish the research by the social policy research unit into the operation of housing benefit review procedures.

Miss Widdecombe: I have today placed a copy of the report in the Library. We shall be studying the research findings with care and considering whether there is a need to make changes to the current arrangements.

The report will be published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office and is expected to be available in the early summer.

EMPLOYMENT

Manufacturing Jobs

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs have been lost in manufacturing in each of the last twelve months.

Mr. Jackson: Changes in the number of employees in manufacturing industries are supplied in the table.

Employees in employment in manufacturing industries
Great Britain
Seasonally adjusted

1990	Net monthly change (Thousands)
January	4·1
February	−13·7
March	−13·0
April	−7·6
May	−6·0
June	11·0
July	2·3
August	−2·0
September	−22·9
October	−18·6
November	−15·6
December	−30·4

Duty Workers

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* *(a)* the number of detached duty workers recruited and the numbers now operating in the south-east and south-west of England dealing with unemployed people claiming benefit, *(b)* the standard regions from which the detached workers were recruited and *(c)* the total costs, including travel, overnight allowances and any other premium payments, for each quarter between 1 January 1988 and 31 January 1991.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service Executive Agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Employment Service

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps are being taken by the employment service to deal with the increased numbers of unemployed people claiming benefit in the south-east and south-west regions of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service Executive Agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for employment training in each of the years 1988-89 and 1989-90 *(a)* the total outturn and planned expenditure in both cash and real terms and *(b)* the total number of places provided for Great Britain and each of the standard regions.

Mr. Jackson: The total outturn and planned expenditure on youth training in cash and constant prices for 1988-89 and 1989-90 is shown in table *(a)*. Table *(b)* gives the total number of youth training (YTS) places provided for Great Britain and each of the standard regions in 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Table (a)

£ million

	Outturn		Planned expenditure	
	Cash prices	Constant prices[1]	Cash prices	Constant prices[2]
1988-89	993	1,056	1,141	1,214
1989-90	976	976	1,039	1,039

[1] Cash figures adjusted to 1989-90 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation measured by the GDP deflator shown in the Chancellor's autumn statement.

[2] Figures exclude community industry.

Table (b)

Training Places	1988-90	1989-90
Great Britain	391,950	359,469
South East	40,008	38,613
London	21,207	20,660
South West	30,503	28,043
West Midlands	43,609	39,394
East Midlands and Eastern	46,633	42,592
Yorkshire and Humberside	45,228	41,151
North West	60,703	53,412
Northern	30,484	27,790
Wales	23,779	22,665
Scotland	49,796	45,149

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for youth training in each of the years 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 *(a)* the total estimated planned expenditure and for 1990-91 the estimated outturn expenditure, in both cash and real terms, *(b)* the total estimated planned expenditure for credits included in the above and *(c)* the total estimated number of youth training places provided for Great Britain and each of the standard regions.

Mr. Jackson: The total estimated planned expenditure on youth training (YT) and training credits in 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 in cash and constant prices is shown in the table. The estimated outturn expenditure for YT in 1990-91 is £833 million, which is equivalent to £771 million in constant prices[1]. Information on the number of places provided is not available.

£ million

	Youth training		Training credits	
	Cash prices	Constant prices[1]	Cash prices	Constant prices[1]
1990-91	[2]814	754	—	—
1991-92	[3]844	737	115*	100
1992-93	842	702	120	100
1993-94	831	669	118	95

[1] Cash figures adjusted to 1989-90 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation measured by the GDP deflator shown in the Chancellor's autumn statement.

[2] As shown in the 1991 spring supplementary estimate published in February 1991.

[3] Cash prices for 1991-92 onwards published in departmental report (Cm. 1501-1519).

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for employment training in each of the years 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 *(a)* the total estimated planned expenditure in both cash and real terms and *(b)* the total number of planned places, for Great Britain and each standard region; and what is the estimated outturn expenditure for 1990-91 employment training in 1990-91 for Great Britain and each standard region.

Mr. Jackson: Total planned expenditure on employment training in cash and constant prices in 1990-91 to 1993-94 is shown in the table. Information on the total number of planned places is not available. Estimated outturn expenditure in Great Britain for employment training in 1990-91 is £1,062 million. Regional expenditure forecasts are for internal management purposes only.

£ million

	Cash	Constant
1990-91	1,074	995
1991-91	877	766
1992-93	792	661
1993-94	881	654

Notes:

(1) Cash figures for 1991-92 to 1993-94 are taken from the departmental report (Cm. 1501 to 1519) and adjusted to take account of recent additions to planned expenditure in 1991-92.

(2) Cash figure for 1990-91 is the spring supplementary estimate published in February 1991.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for youth training in each of the years 1988-89 and 1989-90 *(a)* the total outturn and planned expenditure in both cash and real terms and *(b)* the total number of places provided for Great Britain and each of the standard regions.

Mr. Jackson: The following table *(a)* shows the total outturn and planned expenditure on employment training in both cash and constant prices in 1988-89 and 1989-90. Table *(b)* shows the average number of filled places provided for Great Britain and each region in 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Table (a)

	Outturn		Planned Expenditure	
	Cash prices £ million	Constant prices[1] £ million	Cash prices £ million	Constant prices[1] £ million
1988-89	[2]425	[2]452	494	526
1989-90	1,107	1,107	1,210	1,210

[1] Cash prices adjusted to 1989-90 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the gross domestic product deflator shown in the Chancellor's autumn statement.

[2] These figures do not include wages for those who continued on community programme terms and conditions. ET was launched in September 1988, therefore these figures are only for six months of operation.

Table (b)

	1988-89	1989-90
South East	7,200	13,800
London	10,900	20,100
South West	7,000	11,900
West Midlands	12,700	22,800
East Midlands and Eastern	9,100	16,300
Yorkshire and Humberside	16,500	25,100
North West	15,900	28,500
Northern	12,200	23,600
Wales	8,800	15,800
Scotland	12,100	24,800
Great Britain[1]	111,400	203,200

[1] Great Britain total includes a small number of trainees at residential training colleges and large contractors not included in regional figures.

Rochdale TEC

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* the directors of Rochdale training and enterprise council and *(b)* any resignations which have taken place since the board was established.

Mr. Jackson: An up-to-date list of TEC directors including those of Rochdale TEC is held in the House of Commons Library. Resignations are a matter for the TEC.

DEFENCE

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The last such survey was conducted in 1988. A further survey is being conducted at the moment.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1 to 7) and overall in the Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information on ethnic minorities is based on a voluntary survey conducted since 1988 to which not all staff responded. The figures as at January 1991 are as follows:

	Women		*Ethnic minorities*	
	Number	*per cent.*	*Number*	*per cent.*
Grade 1	0	—	0	—
Grade 2	0	—	0	—
Grade 3	1	1·6	0	—
Grade 4	0	—	0	—
Grade 5	8	2·5	0	—
Grade 6	10	1·2	4	0·5
Grade 7	85	2·9	18	0·6
Overall	40,202	28·7	1,847	1·3

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Ministry.

Mr. Alan Clark: Recruitment at grade 7 level is undertaken by the Civil Service Commission on behalf of the MOD. Entry to grades above grade 7 is normally through internal promotion procedures.

Challenger II Tank

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral answers of 19 February, *Official Report*, columns 137-38, when he now expects to make a decision on the Challenger II tank contract bid.

Mr. Alan Clark: I hope that a decision on the equipment for our future main battle tank fleet will not have to be delayed too long.

Territorial Army

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what decision he has reached about the future size of the Territorial Army; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) on 20 February 1991 at column *192*.

The Gulf

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Gulf support groups are known to his Department; and what advice and back-up support has been given to them.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We know of 70 support groups. The Gulf amenities desk telephone line, which is open 24 hours a day, is available to provide information and advice.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in which areas of the country from which men and women now serving in the Gulf have been recruited there is no Gulf support group.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information on areas of the country from which personnel now serving in the Gulf have been recruited is not held centrally, and we are not necessarily aware of all the Gulf support groups operating in the United Kingdom. The question could not, therefore, be answered without incurring disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the regiments serving in the Gulf and, in each case, indicate from which area of the country the majority of the men and women have been recruited.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The principal recruiting areas of the British Army regiments and corps serving in the Gulf are listed in table A. Regiments and corps which draw their recruits from across the country are listed in table B.

Table A

Regiment/Corps	*Recruiting area*
The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards (Carabiniers and Greys)	Scotland
Queens Royal Irish Hussars	Northern Ireland, Surrey, Sussex, London
14th/20th Kings Hussars	Lancashire (including Greater Manchester), Isle of Man
16th/5th The Queens Royal Lancers	Staffordshire
Queens Dragoon Guards	Wales, Shropshire, Herefordshire
2 Field Regiment Royal Artillery	Greater Manchester
12 Air Defence Regiment Royal Artillery	Cumbria, Lancashire
26 Field Regiment Royal Artillery	Surrey, Sussex
32 Heavy Regiment Royal Artillery	Cheshire, Isle of Man, Merseyside
39 Heavy Regiment Royal Artillery	West Midlands, Shropshire, Hereford and Worcestershire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire
40 Field Regiment Royal Artillery	Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Ayrshire

Regiment/Corps	Recruiting area
1 Armoured Division Signal Regiment	Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside
30 Signal Regiment	Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Avon, Somerset, Dorset, Devon, Cornwall
2 Squadron 14 Signal Regiment (Electronic Warfare)	Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Avon, Somerset, Dorset, Devon, Cornwall
1st Battalion Scots Guards	Scotland, Cumbria, Durham, Lancashire, Isle of Man
1st Battalion Royal Scots	Edinburgh, Lothian, Peebles
3rd Battalion Royal Regiment of Fusiliers	Northumberland, Lancashire, Birmingham, London, Warwickshire
1st Battalion Royal Highland Fusiliers	Ayr, Glasgow
1st Battalion Kings Own Scottish Borderers	Dumfries, Galloway, Borders
1st Battalion The Staffordshire Regiment	Staffordshire and Birmingham
1st Battalion Queens Own Highlanders	Scottish Highlands
28 Ambulance Squadron Gurkha Transport Regiment	Nepal
205 General Hospital (Volunteer)	Glasgow

Table B
Regiments and corps which recruit nationwide

Army Air Corps
Corps of Royal Engineers
Coldstream Guards
Royal Army Ordnance Corps
Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
Royal Corps of Transport
Royal Pioneer Corps
Royal Military Police
Womens Royal Army Corps

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to arrange for the clean up of military detritus, toxic wastes and redundant equipment in Kuwait, southern Iraq and northern Saudi Arabia as a result of Operation Granby.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: British forces are currently assisting in clearing hazards from the battlefield.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures his Department has taken to ensure the general welfare of the families of military personnel serving in the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 6 March 1991]:* In addition to the normal welfare facilities provided by each service for the support of families and dependants, special arrangements have been made to provide help and support during Operation Granby, including the provision of a Gulf helpline service at military establishments, specialist counselling where needed, the issue of fact sheets and briefings to disseminate information and answer queries. Those who are remote from military establishments are kept in contact by regular telephone calls and information bulletins.

Taylorplan Services Ltd.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts have been awarded by his Department to Taylorplan Services Ltd.; what hourly rates of pay were advertised by the company for any contract awarded by his Department; what complaints he has received about pay rates offered by the company or its quality of work; and whether the company has any current contracts with his Department.

Mr. Alan Clark: A total of 20 Ministry of Defence contracts for catering and cleaning work have been awarded to Taylorplan Services Limited; 18 of these are still current.

The rates of pay offered by contractors for employment on their service contracts with the Ministry are a matter for the companies themselves. We have received no complaints about Taylorplan, either in relation to their pay rates or their contract performance.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 8 March 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mortgage Possessions

Mr. Gould: To ask the Attorney-General how many mortgage possession actions were issued in the Upminster court area in the last 12 months.

The Attorney-General: There is no county court at Upminster. Upminster falls within the district of Romford county court, which in 1990 issued 1,180 mortgage possession actions and made 434 orders for possession.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Central America

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much total bilateral aid to central America was in 1990.

Mrs. Chalker: Aid statistics for 1990 are not yet available. Figures for previous years can be found in the 1990 edition of "British Aid Statistics", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Council of Europe (UK Delegation)

Mr. Haynes: To ask the Lord President of the Council what changes have been made in the composition of the United Kingdom delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has appointed the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) as a full member in place of the former hon. Member for Neath, the late Donald Coleman.

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Applications

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he gives to local authorities that consider planning applications on land which they are themselves marketing and selling to private developers.

Mr. Yeo: The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides that when determining proposals for development of its own land a local authority is bound by the same statutory rules which apply to the determination of any other planning application. It must have regard to the provisions of the development plan, where relevant, and to any other material considerations. The ownership of the land concerned is not a material consideration.

Community Charge

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are currently registered as community charge payers in England.

Mr. Key: The figure is 35,900,000.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Dixon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of Government grants for 1990-91 per head of population in *(a)* the London borough of Wandsworth and *(b)* South Tyneside borough council.

Mr. Key: Government grants in 1990-91 consist of revenue support grant, special grants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge benefit grant and transitional relief grant. Government grants per head of relevant population in 1990-91 are £677 in Wandsworth and £369 in South Tyneside.

Public Buildings (Windows)

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if, following the terrorist attack on Downing street, he will direct the Property Services Agency to fit laminated glass in all Government buildings;

(2) if, following the bomb attack on Victoria station, he will order a review of the types of glass fitted in facilities in public areas;

(3) if he will instruct the Property Services Agency to undertake a review of the types of glass fitted in public buildings with respect to the effect of attacks by bombs and other explosive devices.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the statement by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on 7 February. It would not be appropriate to give details of any particular measures which may be taken.

Homelessness

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to combat homelessness in the Manchester and Greater Manchester areas; and what further measures he intends to take.

Sir George Young: Resources for housing are allocated through the housing investment programme for local authorities and through the Housing Corporation for housing associations. The general needs index, which determines local authority allocations under the housing investment programme, has been revised to take greater account of homelessness pressures. For 1991-92 local authorities in the Greater Manchester area have been allocated £113·948 million through the housing investment programme. For 1991-92 housing associations in the north-west region, including Greater Manchester, have been allocated £104·5 million through the Housing Corporation. Also in 1991-92 three Manchester-based voluntary organisations concerned with homelessness—SHADES city centre project, Hulme Action research project and Selcare Trust outreach and resettlement project—will be receiving grants from my Department under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 for the first time.

Oil Pollution (Bahrain)

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the recent request by the Government of Bahrain for equipment to help combat oil pollution.

Mr. Heseltine: The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), is visiting Bahrain on 9 March for discussions with the Government of Bahrain and to see at first hand the counter-pollution preparations for dealing with the Gulf oil spills. I will be presenting a first consignment of three oil recovery skimmers which the United Kingdom is making available to the Government of Bahrain. We expect a further consignment of three skimmers will be airlifted to Bahrain shortly. The cost of these operations is estimated at £300,000 and a new subhead is being created on class VIII, vote 5 to enable the provision of oil recovery equipment to Bahrain.

Pollution Control

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the regulatory framework for introducing integrated pollution control and local authority air pollution control under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 will be completed.

Mr. Baldry: I am pleased to announce that my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment, for Wales and for Scotland have today laid before Parliament four statutory instruments relating to part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. These are:

the Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations 1991, which define the processes to be covered by local authority air pollution control and by integrated pollution control (IPC); the substances, the release of which to air, land and water are to be controlled; and the timetable for the implementation of part I of the 1990 Act;

the Environmental Protection (Applications, Appeals and Registers) Regulations 1991, which deal with the procedures for making an application for an authorisation under part I of the 1990 Act; consultation with the public and statutory consultees; the appeals procedures; and public registers of information;

the Disposal of Controlled Waste (Exceptions) Regulations 1991, which deal with the interface between the waste controls exercised currently under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and the two new control regimes established under part I of the 1990 Act; and

the Environmental Protection (Authorisation of Processes) (Determination Periods) Order, which proves for an extension of the period allowed for the determination of an application for an authorisation under part I of the 1990 Act, where an application is made for information to be withheld from the public register on grounds of national security or commercial confidentiality; and where an application is made for an existing plant which falls to local authority control, for a reduction of the period allowed for determining applications relating to certain small waste oil burners.

These statutory instruments provide the main regulatory basis for the introduction of integrated pollution control and local authority air pollution control on 1 April.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he will make a statement on cost recovery charges for local authority air pollution control;

(2) whether he will make a statement on Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution cost recovery charges for integrated pollution control.

Mr. Trippier: The Environmental Protection Act 1990 provides for the introduction of charges to cover the costs of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) and the National Rivers Authority (NRA) in regulating processes under integrated pollution control (IPC), and to cover the costs of local authorities in regulating processes for air pollution control.

With the agreement of the Treasury, the Secretary of State has now made schemes of charges for the two control systems which will both take effect from 1 April 1991. I will be placing copies of these in the Library.

Last July, the Department published a consultation document inviting comments on proposed charging schemes for IPC and local authority pollution control, both taking the form of an application fee payable when a process was submitted for authorisation, an annual subsistence charge payable for holding an authorisation, and a fee for consideration of substantial variation of an authorisation.

The Department has received some 79 responses on these proposals, a list of which has been placed in the Library. Copies of individual responses may be obtained through the Library.

In the case of processes subject to IPC, which vary substantially in size and complexity, it was proposed in the consultation document to relate IPC fees and charges to the number of specified "components" which the process comprised. Thus a small metal-plating plant might have one or two components, while an iron and steelworks might have 25 components or more, and pay correspondingly larger charges. Respondents generally agreed that the proposed structure of IPC charges and the component-based approach provided a satisfactory basis for relating charges to regulatory effort, without undue administrative complexity.

The scheme now made therefore operates on this basis. The application fee will be £1,800 per component, or £1,200 for a process already subject to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution air pollution control. The annual subsistence charge will be £500 per component. Where the process also involves discharge to controlled water and is thus subject to monitoring and oversight by the National Rivers Authority, the subsistence charge will include an element to meet these costs also. The substantial variation fee will be £600 per component.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's forecast 1991-92 costs relating to IPC, to be recovered through the fees and charges, amount to some £5·9 million. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will closely monitor its expenditure and at the end of the financial year will publish detailed accounts and information on charging and regulatory costs.

The scheme for local authority air pollution control is broadly similar to that for IPC, except that the fees and charges are set per process, and components do not apply, since the processes coming under local authority control are less diverse in size and complexity. The application fee is £800, the annual subsistence charge £500, and the substantial variation fee £530. Reflecting a simplified authorisation procedure for small waste oil burners, the application fee for these is £100 and the annual subsistence charge £100. The Department intends to review the scheme later in the year, in consultation with interested parties.

The schemes take account of many useful comments received, and extensive discussion with industry and other interested parties, to ensure that detailed operation is straightforward and equitable.

Local Government Finance (EC)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline the method of funding used to finance local government in each of the 11 other members of the European Community.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 6 March 1991]:* Information on local government revenue in the European Community is compiled by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and published in "Revenue Statistics of OECD Member Countries". The information requested is set out in the following tables.

Local government revenue sources

Percentage

	Grants	Fees/ fines	Other revenues	Tax revenue
Belgium[1]	63·4	—	—	36·6
Denmark	42·0	5·3	4·8	47·9
France	34·8	16·2	5·1	43·9
FR Germany (State)[2]	15·3	7·9	5·3	71·4
FR Germany (Local)[2]	26·7	22·1	13·4	37·8
Greece[3]	25·6	27·9	14·6	31·9
Italy	90·4	2·1	5·2	2·2
Luxembourg	33·2	4·8	6·7	55·4
Netherlands	80·8	5·1	8·3	5·8
Portugal[4]	—	—	—	—
Republic of Ireland	71·3	10·6	11·9	6·2
Spain	27·1	10·2	5·4	57·3

Source: Revenue statistics of OECD countries 1965-89, all figures 1987 unless otherwise stated.

[1] Figures for fees/finesand other revenues are not available. Percentage share between grants and taxes will, therefore, be smaller than shown in table.

[2] Figures for Germany are based on 1985 data.

[3] Figures for Greece are based on 1980 data.

[4] Figures for grants, fees/fines and other revenues are not available for Portugal.

Local government tax revenue sources (per cent.)

	Income taxes	Corporate, profit, capital gains, etc.	Social security contributions	Payroll taxes	Property taxes	Taxes on goods and services	Other taxes
Belgium	66·5	11·6	5·8	0·0	0·0	16·1	0·0
Denmark	89·8	1·8	0·0	0·0	8·3	0·1	0·0
France	15·2	0·0	0·0	4·4	34·2	13·0	33·2
FR Germany (State)[1]	51·7	10·6	0·0	0·0	5·5	32·2	0·0
FR Germany (Local)[1]	66·1	14·9	0·0	0·0	18·1	0·7	0·3
Greece[2]	10·8	0·0	0·0	37·9	7·1	44·1	0·0
Italy	26·7	19·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	54·3	0·0
Luxembourg	34·2	47·0	0·0	0·0	4·0	14·8	0·0
Netherlands	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	75·0	25·0	0·0
Portugal	0·0	38·9	0·0	0·0	20·1	40·6	0·4
Republic of Ireland	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	100·0	0·0	0·0
Spain	16·9	16·4	0·0	0·0	22·8	42·7	1·3

Source: Revenue Statistics of OECD Countries 1965-1989, all figures 1987 unless otherwise stated.

[1] Figures for Germany are based on 1985 data.

[2] Figures for Greece are based on 1980 data.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total value of work carried out for the Property Services Agency at the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich by CITEC Electric Ltd.; and when the company will receive payment.

Mr. Yeo: The total value of work carried out for the Property Services Agency at the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich by CITEC Electric Ltd. is £2,029·90 inclusive of VAT, which has been paid to the company in full.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements are in hand for the inspection of city technology colleges by Her Majesty's inspectorate; if he will detail the number, location and frequency of visits by inspectors; and if he will make it his policy to publish the findings.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The inspection arrangements provide for each CTC to be visited in their first term of existence to enable the DES to register them as independent schools, a legal requirement placed upon all such schools. Following this, termly visits are being made at present. In addition, as with any other school, Her Majesty's inspectorate is invited to visit individual CTCs from time to time to offer advice. The number of inspection visits made by Her Majesty's inspectorate to each CTC is as follows:

Kingshurst: seven
Djanogly and MacMillan: four each
Bradford, Emmanuel, Harris and Leigh: one each.

As is the case for all schools such routine visits do not result in published reports. The findings are conveyed orally to the principal and the chairman of governors or other nominated governors. I have no plans to publish the records of such visits to CTCs or to any other school. Where the inspection is both designed and intended to result in a formal written report then the CTC, like any other school, would be informed in advance that such was to be the outcome. The report would then be published by me in the usual way. The first inspection which is expected to lead to a published report is to be carried out early in this coming summer term at Kingshurst CTC.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn, *Official Report*, 26 February, column *434*, if he will place in the Library details of the evidence he has available of the past neglect by local education authorities of grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The capital allocations for grant-maintained schools were in response to deficiencies identified by GM schools in their existing buildings. The expenditure covers repair work in some cases and in other cases adaptation and new construction to allow for the implementation of the national curriculum.

ENERGY

Sizewell B

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *29*, what consideration has been given to the experience of the loss of coolant at the power station at Mihama, Japan on the design and cost of the Sizewell B power station.

Mr. Wakeham: The incident referred to, a rupture of a steam generator tube, resulted in a release of radioactivity which was extremely small and constituted no danger to the population or the environment. In preparing the safety case and cost estimates for Sizewell B, the CEGB took full account of the possibility of such an incident occurring. Indeed, this was one of the incidents which was specifically addressed at the Sizewell B public inquiry, and it is also addressed in all of the station's safety reports. The design of the reactor and its protective systems are such as to make the possibility of a significant release of radioactivity from incidents involving a loss of reactor coolant extremely remote. Nevertheless, I understand that Nuclear Electric plc maintains a watching brief on overseas incidents so that it can review their safety procedures in the light of any lessons which might be learnt.

Independent Electricity Generators

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the effects on independent electricity generators of the bulk supply tariff rates determined by the CEGB successor companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Electricity prices are now determined under the contractual and operating arrangements which have been established for the newly structured industry. There are no bulk supply tariffs.

Oil Exports

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if exports will be permitted of crude oil from the United Kingdom continental shelf to the countries of central and eastern Europe.

Mr. Wakeham: Her Majesty's Government have decided that the guidelines, introduced on 31 January 1979 —*Official Report*, column *461*—which govern the destination of crude oil exports from the United Kingdom continental shelf shall be withdrawn with immediate effect. This means that there will be no inhibition on companies exporting crude oil to the countries of central and eastern Europe, and other countries with one exception. This initiative is primarily in response to the oil supply difficulties of countries in central and eastern Europe as a result of falling exports from the Soviet Union and the loss of supplies from Iraq and Kuwait.

While European Community measures exist on the export of crude oil to South Africa, Her Majesty's Government will expect companies exporting crude oil to abide by these measures by not exporting crude oil from the United Kingdom continental shelf to South Africa.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Pint Glasses

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to make use of his powers under the Weights and Measures Act 1979 to clarify the definition of a pint when it is served into a brim measure glass, and to encourage the licensed trade to introduce line measure glasses.

Mr. Leigh: There is little evidence of dissatisfaction amongst individual consumers about how beer is served. I therefore have no plans for action on these matters.

ECGD (Insurance Services Group)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 5 March to the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), *Official Report*, column *88*, if he will require the payment of any form of bond by those shortlisted tenderers for the acquisition of the insurance services group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department, for access to commercially sensitive information on the insurance services group.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. Confidentiality undertakings have been obtained from each company invited to tender. In the event of a breach of any undertaking the Secretary of State will be able to pursue legal remedies through the United Kingdom courts.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 5 March, to the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), *Official Report*, columns *88-89*, what restriction he is placing on the numbers of staff of the shortlisted tenderers for the acquisition of the insurance services group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department who will be allowed to see details of insurance services group's commercial transactions, operations, figures and accounts; and what methods he proposes to prevent the subsequent commercial misuse of any such information acquired in the tendering process by unsuccessful bidders.

Mr. Sainsbury: Each shortlisted company has entered into a detailed confidentiality undertaking to the Secretary of State which restricts, on a need-to-know basis, the persons allowed to see the detailed information provided in connection with the tender. It has been drafted to protect the interests of the Secretary of State and the eventual buyer and to achieve an appropriate balance between the restrictions imposed and the need to use the

information for the purpose of the tender. Legal remedy is open to the Secretary of State if there is evidence of misuse. Overseas companies who have been invited to tender have submitted to the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom courts.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 5 March, *Official Report*, columns *88-89*, to the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West, on what date he expects the shortlisted candidates for purchasing the insurance services group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department to visit the insurance services group headquarters in Cardiff.

Mr. Sainsbury: There will be different dates for each short-listed candidate. The precise dates are currently under discussion with the short-listed companies, but the visits are expected to take place during April.

Salmon

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the likely increase in imports of Norwegian farmed salmon following the imposition of United States tariffs on imports to the United States of America; and of the impact of these Norwegian imports on the United Kingdom salmon farming industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: The final determination in the United States anti-dumping case against farmed salmon from Norway has yet to be made by the US International Trade Commission. It is not possible to quantify the effect which the eventual decision in this case may have on Norwegian exports of farmed salmon.

However, in recommending the termination of the anti-dumping case brought in the European Community by Scottish and Irish salmon producers, the Commission has agreed to follow closely the export of Norwegian farmed salmon to the Community and, if necessary, to initiate further discussions with the Norwegian Government.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress is being made with the European Community anti-dumping investigation into farmed salmon from Norway.

Mr. Sainsbury: Following assurances given by the Norwegian Government on measures to stabilise the market in farmed salmon, the European Commission submitted a proposal to the Council of Ministers to close the investigation without remedy. The Commission has also agreed, at the request of the United Kingdom, to follow closely the export of Norwegian farmed salmon to the Community and, if necessary, to initiate further discussions with the Norwegian Government.

Export Controls

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), *Official Report*, 22 January, columns *118-19*, he will list the dates and locations of the seminars on export controls to which he makes reference; and if he will indicate the number and types of companies in attendance; and if he will make a statement on the outcome of the seminars.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 28 February 1991]*: DTI non-proliferation seminars have been held this year in Southampton (17 January), Manchester (31 January) and London (5 February), and were attended by 30, 52 and 160 delegates respectively. A broad cross-section of United Kingdom industry was represented, with particularly strong participation from the electronics and defence industries. The programme of non-proliferation seminars will continue through the remainder of this year and events are already planned for Edinburgh (18 April), Bristol (4 June) and Birmingham (11 June).

I am satisfied that the seminars are making a valuable contribution to heightening awareness about the risks of clandestine procurement activities and explaining export controls.

The Gulf

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to what address smaller firms in the construction and in the catering equipment industry should address their inquiries for supply of goods and services to Kuwait and the Gulf states.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 7 March 1991]*: All inquiries on project business should be directed to the DTI's projects and export policy division in 1-19 Victoria street London SW1. Telephone 071 215 5381/4887.

All other inquiries should be made to the Kuwait desk in the DTI's overseas trade division. Telephone 071 215 5491/4388/5081/5221/4246. (Address as above).

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to introduce smaller specialist United Kingdom companies and skilled persons to the purchasing authorities in Kuwait and the Gulf states.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 7 March 1991]*: The Government of Kuwait have been made aware of the range of experience and capabilities available from British industry in the prospectus presented to them during the visit to Ta'if last month of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary with senior business men. At this early stage in the reconstruction of Kuwait it is not possible to advise on opportunities for supplying specific goods and services. My Department is keeping a list of companies which have expressed interest in opportunities in Kuwait and will provide relevant information through the export intelligence service (EIS) when it becomes available. Companies that do not already subscribe to the EIS are advised to do so and to ask to be profiled for Kuwait. Smaller firms should register their interest with the Crown Agents and should also explore the possibilities for sub-contracting to larger companies with experience in the Gulf. Companies which formerly had agents in Kuwait should seek to re-establish contact with them or with agents in other Gulf markets. The normal export services of my Department remain available to assist exporters to other Gulf markets. Persons seeking employment in Kuwait should register their interest with the Employment Service overseas placing unit in Sheffield.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Escapees

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether Olutayo Akinkunmi, who escaped from Spring Hill on 13 January 1990, has since been recaptured; and whether his offence was drug related;

(2) whether Olutayo Akinkunmi, and Mojeed Gbadegesin Osinboyejo, who escaped from Spring Hill on 13 January 1990 and 15 April 1990, and Mercades Cano who escaped from Askew Grange on 18 August 1990, have since been recaptured.

Mrs. Rumbold: Mojeed Osinboyejo and Mercades Cano are still unlawfully at large.

Olutayo Akinkunmi was sentenced at Reading crown court on 6 September 1988 to two and a half years' imprisonment for the illegal importation of drugs (herbal cannabis). He absconded from Spring Hill open prison on 13 January 1990 and was recaptured on 13 May 1990. He was deported on his release from prison on 16 July 1990.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his answers of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *398*, 28 February, *Official Report*, column *568*, and 1 March, *Official Report*, column *648*, on recaptures of escaped prisoners, what sentences the escapers had been given; and how much had been served, in each case.

Mrs. Rumbold: Maureen Amaker Mgbadike was sentenced to three years' imprisonment and had served 10 months of her sentence when she absconded.

Desiree Adina Caesar was sentenced to five years' imprisonment and had served one year one month and 11days of her sentence when she absconded.

Nana Adoma Frimpomaah was sentenced to five years' imprisonment and had served one year 23 days of her sentence when she absconded.

Abiodan Kafo was sentenced to six years' imprisonment and had served one year two months and 19 days of her sentence when she absconded.

Joke Lawal was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment and had served one year four months and 22 days of her sentence when she absconded.

Tina Tony Okpoye was sentenced to six years' imprisonment and had served one year two months and 25 days of her sentence when she absconded.

Agatha Ekwueme was sentenced to five years' imprisonment and had served 11 months and five days of her sentence when she absconded.

Tawakality Jaiyesimi was sentenced to six years' imprisonment and had served one year of her sentence when she absconded.

Bhagyawati Jain was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment and had served one year two months and 11 days of her sentence when she absconded.

Uche Angela Okeke was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment and had served one year four months and nine days of her sentence when she absconded.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the crime clear-up rate for 1990; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of crimes cleared up in the Metropolitan area in each of the past two years.

Mr. John Patten: Figures published by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis show the clear up rate for notifiable offences recorded in the Metropolitan police district in 1990 was 17 per cent. and the number of crimes cleared up had risen from 131,400 in 1989 to 141,700 in 1990.

Police Pensions

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the annual expenditure for each of the years 1986 to 1990, inclusive, on ordinary police pensions; and how many of the officers receiving pensions during each of these years were compulsorily retired on account of age.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Expenditure on police pensions in England and Wales was as follows:

£ million

	Gross expenditure[1]	*Police officers' contributions*	*Net expenditure*
1986-87	386·9	163·4	223·5
1987-88	423·1	186·1	237·0
1988-89	457·0	203·3	253·7
1989-90	512·5	221·7	290·8

[1] Includes annual payments, commutations, net transfer values and refunds of contributions.

Information to answer the second part of the question is not held centrally.

Mr. Delbert Gordon

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the solicitor acting for Delbert Devon Gordon from Jamaica, Home Office reference G291458, was sent the explanatory statement for an appeal lodged in January 1990; when he intends to reply to the latest letter on this topic from the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch; and if he will make a statement about the reasons for the lengths of time involved in his Department's dealings in this matter.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are substantial backlogs of appeals awaiting preparation of explanatory statements and these have regrettably delayed work on Mr. Gordon's case. However, the statement has been prepared and will be despatched to the appellate authorities very shortly. I will write to the hon. Member when this has been done. The appellate authorities will make arrangements for the explanatory statement to be forwarded to the appellant's nominated representative.

Commission for Racial Equality

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the outcome of the recent post office investigation into leaked documents at the Commission for Racial Equality; and what was the cost of the investigation and who paid for it.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand that the outcome of this post office investigation was inconclusive and no action was taken. The cost, paid by the Commission for Racial Equality, was £2,303.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the number of redundancies declared under the recent restructuring proposals at the Commission for Racial Equality, giving an ethnic and gender breakdown.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand that three officers took compulsory early retirement or severance because of the recent structural changes at the Commission for Racial Equality. All were men—one African, one Asian and one white.

TRANSPORT

Red Routes

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the appointed establishment in personnel he expects as a consequence of the appointment of the traffic director of London red routes and any other additions to departmental staff; and what increase he expects in net costs over current costs of parking control.

Mr. Chope: As to the establishment of the traffic director I refer the hon. Member to the explanatory and financial memorandum accompanying the Road Traffic Bill. I do not expect any permanent addition to departmental staff. The cost of enforcing the arrangements for on-street parking in London proposed in connection with the Road Traffic Bill cannot be estimated at this stage, but it is intended that enforcement action by the local authorities should be self financing.

London Traffic

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish his draft statutory objectives for the proposed London directors of traffic and the draft statutory guidance for traffic management and parking, respectively, as required by clauses 42, 43 and 54 of the Road Traffic Bill as at Third Reading in the House of Commons.

Mr. Chope: In the autumn.

Fuel Efficiency

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures the Government are taking to ensure that fuel efficiency is promoted in car advertisements.

Mr. Chope: I have recently held discussions with the Advertising Standards Authority, which is now taking a more active role in controlling advertisements that stress high speed. This should have benefits in terms of both safety and fuel efficiency.

Wherever a new vehicle is offered for sale, the results of its official fuel consumption test are required by law to be displayed. Dealers are also required to have available my Department's publication "New Car Fuel Consumption —The Official Figures". This enables different models to be compared.

British Rail Land

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what land he has purchased within the past two years within the Wakefield constituency from British Rail.

Mr. McLoughlin: No such land has been purchased within the past two years.

London Airports

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that no use will be made of Northolt airport for any present or future overflow traffic from Heathrow; what plans he has to extend current civil and commercial traffic using Northolt airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is the Government's policy that airliners should take precedence at Heathrow and Gatwick, and that smaller airports around London should cater for business aviation operations displaced from the two major airports. There are no specific proposals to increase the use of Northolt by civil aircraft.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what effect the decision to abolish rules 1, 2 and 3 of the traffic distribution rules for airports will have on the number of permitted air traffic movements at RAF Northolt.

Mr. McLoughlin: None.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for the reduction of aircraft noise over Ealing, Hanwell, Perivale, Greenford and Northolt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Older, noisier jet aircraft (the so-called chapter 2 types) will be progressively phased out over the next decade. That will mean individual aircraft will increasingly be only of the quieter types, which are less intrusive, and as a result the noise climate will improve.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to allow night flights at Heathrow airport after 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: When the present night restrictions were introduced, their objective was to improve the night noise climate around Heathrow and Gatwick without imposing unnecessary restrictions on the airline industry. That objective will be the starting point when we review the current night restrictions. As announced on 12 July 1990 we are conducting a major research project on the effect of aircraft noise on sleep. Its conclusions will be taken into account in the review.

EMPLOYMENT

Genetically Modified Organisms

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many laboratories have been registered as being in containment category 4; and how many projects using genetically modified organisms at containment level 4 have been approved in the last five years.

Mr. Forth: Eighteen centres with category 4 containment facilities are registered as having notified the Health and Safety Executive under the Health and Safety (Dangerous Pathogens) Regulations 1981.

No work involving the use of genetically modified organisms at level 4 containment has been notified under the Genetic Manipulation Regulations 1989.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many industrial large-scale plants using genetically modified organisms have been notified to the Health and Safety Executive in the last 10 years; and how many were GILSP containment category 1, 2 or 3.

Mr. Forth: Notification of the large-scale use of genetically modified organisms was only made mandatory in 1989. Since 1989, 38 centres have notified the Health and Safety Executive of work with genetically modified organisms classified as requiring good large-scale practice. No distinction is made between industrial and non-industrial large scale notifications.

Since 1989, one centre has notified work in large scale categories 1 to 3.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many laboratories have been registered as being in containment category 3; and how many projects using genetically modified organisms at containment level 3 have been approved in the last five years.

Mr. Forth: There is no requirement in United Kingdom law to notify containment level 3 facilities for naturally occurring pathogens.

Since 1989, three projects have been notified to the Health and Safety Executive for work with genetically modified organisms at level 3 containment.

Silicosis

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action his office proposes to prevent the recurrence of the disease silicosis in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Health and Safety Commission is currently consulting with employers, trades unions and other interested parties on a proposal to set a maximum exposure limit of 0·4mg/m3 for respirable crystalline silica which is the main causative agent of silicosis. Such a limit, enforced under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988, should ensure very stringent control of exposure to respirable crystalline silica throughout industry.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Building Control Fees

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the level of building control inspection fees and planning fees since 1980; and if it is his intention to increase the fees during the incoming financial year.

Mr. Hanley: Building control inspection fees were introduced in 1982 and increased in 1984, 1987 and 1990. Details of the charges are contained in tables 1 to 4 of SR 1982 No. 392, SR 1983 No. 388, SR 1986 No. 331 and SR 1989 No. 420. It is the Government's intention to consult later this year on a proposal to increase fees for prescribed building control functions during the financial year 1991-92.

Housing Executive Dwellings

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Housing Executive dwellings in (i) Coleraine, (ii) Magherafelt and (iii) Limavady council districts were system built; in which estates in each council district they are located; how many have been *(a)* replaced or *(b)* refurbished in each estate; how many is it intended to replace over the next five years; and what type of construction was used for these buildings.

Mr. Hanley: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that the information requested is as follows:

Council district	*Estate/location*	*Number of system built dwellings*	*Type of construction*	*(a) Number replaced*	*(b) Number refurbished*
1.					
Coleraine borough council	The Heights Coleraine	138	No fines concrete	Nil	138
Coleraine borough council	The Heights Coleraine	13	Aluminium bungalows	Nil	13
Coleraine borough council	Harper's hill Coleraine	373	Concrete construction with drylining	Nil	Nil
Coleraine borough council	Larkfield estate Kilrea	35	Timber frame	Nil	Nil
Coleraine borough council	Oakfield estate Kilrea	20	Timber frame	Nil	Nil
Coleraine borough council	Glen Estate Portrush	184	Timber frame	Nil	Nil
2.					
Magherafelt district council	Ashgrove estate Magherafelt	70	Timber frame	Nil	Nil
Magherafelt district council	Leckagh estate Magherafelt	111	Timber frame	Nil	Nil
Magherafelt district council	Mullaghbuoy estate Magherafelt	54	Orlit	Nil	54
Magherafelt district council	Crawfordsburn Maghera	20	Aluminium bungalows	Nil	20
Magherafelt district council	Sunnyside Park Maghera	83	Timber frame	Nil	Nil
Magherafelt district council	Mallon Villas Draperstown	19	Aluminium bungalows	Nil	19

Council district	Estate/location	Number of system built dwellings	Type of construction	(a) Number replaced	(b) Number refurbished
3.					
Limavady borough council	Caman Park Ballykelly	29	Timber frame	Nil	Nil
Limavady borough council	Columbia Park Ballymonie	43	Cross wall	Nil	Nil

Note: At present the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has no plans to replace any of the above dwellings within the next five years.

Irish American Calendar

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the financial contribution made by Government Departments or public bodies to the publication of the Irish American 1991 calendar; and which Government Department or public body approved the commentary in the calendar.

Mr. Hanley: The financial contribution made by Government Departments and public bodies was 19,000 US dollars. The commentary, approved by each of the bodies represented, was aimed at promoting Northern Ireland for business and tourism.

Short Brothers

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the implications for the other budgets within the department of Economic Development of expenditure on the privatisation of Short's.

Mr. Hanley: The costs associated with the privatisation of Short Brothers plc did not have any implications for other expenditure programmes undertaken by the Department of Economic Development. Additional funding as necessary was provided to the Department for this purpose.

Local Government Boundaries

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will request the Local Government Boundary Commissioner to consider the grouping of wards into district electoral areas while he is preparing his recommendations arising from his review of local government boundaries in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: It would require a change to the statutory remit of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner to enable him to group wards into district electoral areas. My right hon. Friend intends to review the procedure for determining boundaries at the earliest opportunity but it would not be practicable to undertake such a review at present without unduly delaying the work of the commissioner.

Student Loans

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of students attending all designated courses for student loans who are potentially eligible for student loans in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 7 March 1991]:* The most recent estimate for the academic year 1990-91 of the number of students domiciled in Northern Ireland who are eligible for a loan is 27,000.

Loan-bearing courses do not require designation if they are at institutions receiving support from public funds. The Department of Education for Northern Ireland may designate as loan-bearing courses of higher education at other institutions under regulation 4 of the Education (Student Loans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1990.

WALES

Community Charge

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest figures for the money provided by his Department under the community charge reduction scheme for *(a)* Cardiff and *(b)* the other Welsh districts.

Mr. David Hunt: In 1991-92, £62 million will be distributed under the community charge reduction scheme to 67 per cent. of chargepayers in Wales. In Cardiff £5,339,064 will be distributed and the latest figures for each Welsh district are given in the following table:

Relief 1991-92

	Amount to be distributed 1991-92 £
Cardiff	5,339,064
Alyn and Deeside	930,509
Colwyn	422,127
Delyn	985,579
Glyndwr	1,840,542
Rhuddlan	1,271,099
Wrexham Maelor	4,153,219
Carmarthen	1,209,675
Ceredigion	794,067
Dinefwr	1,043,059
Llanelli	1,783,624
Preseli Pembrokeshire	938,883
South Pembrokeshire	305,035
Blaenau Gwent	3,619,575
Islwyn	2,058,321
Monmouth	30,777
Newport	1,107,061
Torfaen	1,291,491
Aberconwy	213,118
Arfon	1,051,078
Dwyfor	524,813
Meirionnydd	619,281
Ynys Mon	1,335,028
Cynon Valley	3,129,318
Merthyr Tydfil	1,626,486
Ogwr	5,157,039
Rhondda	4,886,514
Rhymney Valley	2,830,399
Taff Ely	1,557,938
Brecknock	503,855
Montgomeryshire	282,259
Radnorshire	102,937
Vale of Glamorgan	158,560

	Amount to be distributed 1991-92 £
Port Talbot	1,715,915
Lliw Valley	2,053,343
Neath	2,030,452
Swansea	3,117,960
Wales	62,000,000

Orimulsion

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what representations he has received regarding burning of orimulsion at Ince power station; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the organisations which have contacted his Department expressing opposition to the use of orimulsion at the Ince power station.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

I have received a number of representations about burning orimulsion at Ince power station. A letter from Friends of the Earth Cymru was forwarded to my Department by my hon. Friend the Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts) on 17 September 1990. A letter from Gwynedd county council was forwarded to my Department by the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 19 September.

I have also received representations from the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) and the hon. Member, both of which were received on 24 September.

Representations have also been made by Friends of the Earth to the Chester regional office of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Betting

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will list the sums received per annum by way of betting and other duty by Her Majesty's Government on *(a)* off-course and on-course betting, *(b)* amusement machines, *(c)* casinos, *(d)* bingo, *(e)* football pools and *(f)* small lotteries.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In the year ended 31 March 1990, receipts from betting and gaming duties were:

	£ million
Off-course betting	459
On-course betting	Nil
Amusement machines	Nil
Gaming machines ie amusement with prizes and jackpot machines	97
Casino gaming	50
Bingo	66
Football pools	304
Small lotteries	Nil

Local Government Finance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish details of the latest assumptions used in the public expenditure planning process as to the likely level of *(a)* housing capital receipts and *(b)* other capital receipts generated by local authorities in (i) England, (ii) Scotland, (iii) Wales and (iv) Northern Ireland in each of the planning years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* The Government do not plan local authorities' self-financed expenditure or capital receipts. The outlook for spending from local authorities' own resources is however taken into consideration during the annual public expenditure survey, although estimates of receipts are used only in respect of the forthcoming year. During the 1990 survey, it was estimated in broad terms that local authorities in England might generate the following levels of receipts in 1991-92 in respect of services within the English local authority block:

	£ billion
Housing	1·8
Other	1·1

Levels of local authority capital receipts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are not considered in the survey as these territories receive consequentials of the relevant parts of the English settlement.

Electricity Companies

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 16 January, *Official Report*, column *509*, whether he will state the grounds on which costs incurred by the electricity distribution companies in their change of ownership were regarded as general overheads of their business.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 7 March 1991]:* As I explained in my previous reply, the shares of the electricity distribution companies were issued and sold on behalf of the Secretary of State for Energy, who received all the proceeds.

There was therefore no supply of shares by electricity distribution companies to which input tax was attributable. Any related costs incurred by the companies as a consequence fell to be treated with other non-attributable costs as general overheads of the business.

Income Tax

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing how many people face marginal tax rates, both including and excluding social security, of *(a)* over 40 per cent., *(b)* over 50 per cent., *(c)* over 60 per cent., *(d)* over 70 per cent., *(e)* over 80 per cent., *(f)* over 90 per cent., and *(g)* over 100 per cent., (i) now and (ii) in each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* Information is available only for marginal deduction rates including social security. Such information as is available is contained in the table.

Numbers with marginal deduction rates at or above each level (thousands)

	1985-86	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
100 per cent. +	70	0	0	0
90 per cent. +	130	45	45	45
80 per cent. +	290	345	210	235

	1985-86	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
70 per cent. +	290	515	415	395
60 per cent. +	450	515	420	400
50 per cent. +	680	515	420	400
40 per cent. +	n/a	n/a	455	670

Notes:

1. Figures are based on pooled family expenditure survey data and are cumulative.
2. Calculated for benefit units in receipt of income-related benefits where at least one partner works 24 hours per week or more.

SCOTLAND

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at the Lord Advocate's Department.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for the recruitment of senior grades lies with the Civil Service Commission. Grade 1 to 7 posts in the Lord Advocate's Department are almost exclusively staffed by lawyers. The extent to which ethnic minority groups are represented in the legal profession in Scotland is mirrored in recruitment.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1 to 7) and overall in the Lord Advocate's Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As at 1 April 1990 there were 1,087 employees in the Lord Advocate's Department. Of this number 707 (65 per cent.) were women and 4 (0·3 per cent.) from ethnic minorities. The breakdown within grades 1 to 7 is as follows:

Grades	Total number of employees	Women		Ethnic minorities	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1-4	15·5	nil	(0)	nil	(0)
5	32·5	2	(6·1)	nil	(0)
6	40·0	3	(7·5)	nil	(0)
7	118·0	48	(40·6)	1	(0·8)

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Lord Advocate's Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Following the 1987 survey the employment of persons from ethnic minorities is constantly monitored at all grades. There are no plans to make a statement at this time.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the total cost of the privatisation of the electricity industry in Scotland; how much is expected to be spent on *(a)* pre-sale costs, including marketing and *(b)* direct sale costs, including stamp duty and underwriting fees in each financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Expenditure on electricity privatisation in Scotland is published annually in the Appropriation Accounts. The annual outturn figures in respect of pre-sale costs are as follows:

	£
1987-88	616,000
1988-89	2,111,000
1989-90	3,811,000

For 1990-91 £9·5 million has been provided to cover both pre-sale and direct sale costs. Direct sale costs will be announced after the sale in the usual way.

The costs involved are small by comparison with the expected proceeds from the sale.

Enterprise Companies

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will show the planned expenditure for the new local enterprise companies for 1991-92 as distributed between training and economic development.

Mr. Allan Stewart: These are operational matters for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise and I have asked the chairmen to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the planned expenditure of Scottish Enterprise for *(a)* economic development and *(b)* training in 1991-92; and what were the equivalent figures in 1990-91.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Details of planned expenditure for Scottish Enterprise in 1991-92 together with equivalent figures for 1990-91 were published in table 3.6 of the Scottish Office departmental report "Serving Scotland's Needs" (Cm. 1515). The figures in that table for 1991-92 do not include the increases announced by my right hon. Friend on 2 February and 26 February. A breakdown of total expenditure which includes the £9·6 million announced on 2 February will be published in the Supply Estimates; but those estimates will not include the additional £13·6 million for employment training announced on 26 February, which will feature in a supplementary estimate to be taken later in the year.

For the reasons explained in my reply to the hon. Member on Wednesday 19 December 1990 full details of planned expenditure on training in Scotland in 1990-91 are not available. The relevant figures published in table 3.6 of "Serving Scotland's Needs" are estimates of comparable Scottish Office estimate provision for training expenditure within the Scottish Enterprise area.

HEALTH

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his initiative to reduce hospital waiting lists.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is the time patients wait for treatment which is important, not total numbers on the list. I am pleased to inform the hon. Member that about half of all national health service in-patients are admitted

immediately and that of the remainder, half are admitted within five weeks. The problem of excessive waiting times is therefore concentrated on a minority of national health service patients. We are continuing the special waiting list fund in 1991-92 with a further £35 million to tackle this problem. Regions will match their allocations pound for pound bringing to £60 million the amount which will be available to reduce the number of patients who wait excessively long. £9 million from the fund has been earmarked for 80 of the worst lists in the country, which are to be investigated by a team from Qa Business Services.

The National Health Service management executive is agreeing targets with all 14 regional health authorities for substantial reductions in the numbers of long waiters by March 1992.

Product Licences

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to reduce the average time taken to grant product licences.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: During the past year the Medicines Control Agency (MCA) has been reorganised into separate businesses, licensing procedures have been streamlined and additional professional staff have been allocated to licensing work. As a result there have been substantial improvements in the agency's performance.

The agency is justifiably proud of its' position as the fastest licensing authority in the world for new drug substances. It wishes to retain this position. The director of the Medicines Control Agency has recently reported that it has actively sought to improve its performance in this area over the past 12 months.

In the abridged (established drug substances) licensing area there has also been considerable progress. The time to reach a licensing decision on standard and complex applications has reduced from 16 months in September 1990 to 10 months in January 1991 and will be further reduced to four months by April 1992. For those applications which have to be submitted to a committee set up under section 4 of the Medicines Act 1968 the time taken has reduced from 19 months in September 1990 to 13 months in January this year and will be seven months by April 1992. These are net times and do not include the time industry may take, often significant, to respond to questions raised by the agency about their applications.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average time taken to grant product licences for parallel imports.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: During the seven months from 1 January 1990 to 31 July 1990, the latest period for which figures are available, the average time taken from date of application to date of grant of a parallel import licence was 18 months.

Medical Products

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to propose to the European Commission that products under article 5 of the draft directive on the legal status of the supply of medical products for human use should be listed on the assumption that products with the same brand name in different member states are identical unless the manufacturers otherwise specify.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. Under current proposals the draft directive on the classification of medicinal products for human use requires member states to publish a list of products subject on their territory to medical prescription and to communicate the list to the Commission and to other member states. The form in which the list would be produced is still the subject of negotiation.

Medicines Control Agency

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will reintroduce a turnover-related element into the Medicines Control Agency fee system.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the course of its full review of the fee structure, the Medicines Control Agency (MCA) has been considering a number of options. The MCA will be publishing its proposals shortly.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to meet the chairman of the Association of Pharmaceutical Importers to discuss the accountability of the Medicines Control Agency.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No, but I understand that the chairman of the Association of Pharmaceutical Importers has had informal discussions with Medicines Control Agency officials and a further meeting is planned.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the upper limit on turnover for companies to be eligible for the payment concessions from the Medicines Control Agency.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received a number of representations that the limit on turnover, which allow companies to qualify for concessions in time for payment, should be raised. We are considering these in the full review of the Medicines Control Agency's fee structure.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received calling for the Medicines Control Agency fee structure to be amended; if he has any proposals to amend the fee structure; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A number of representations have been received suggesting that the Medicines Control Agency's fee structure should be amended. The Medicines Control Agency has been carrying out a full review of its fee structure. New proposals should be published shortly.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what mechanisms there are for hon. Members to raise the question of particular outstanding applications to the Medicines Control Agency.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is open to hon. Members to write to Ministers at any time to inquire on behalf of an applicant about progress of a particular application. Information about a licence application is, however, commercial in confidence and cannot be divulged without the permission of the applicant.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to ensure that the Medicines Control Agency processes product licence (parallel imports) licence applications quickly and effectively.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: From April 1990 the number of staff employed on product licence (parallel import) applications has been increased and procedures have been streamlined follwing the re-organisation of the Medicines Control Agency into separate businesses. The director of the Medicines Control Agency has recently announced in a speech to the British Institute of Regulatory Affairs the objective of eliminating all licence backlogs by April 1992.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy for the Medicines Control Agency to give an explanation if a product licence application is outstanding for more than six months.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. It is open to applicants to inquire to the Medicines Control Agency about the progress of their applications at any time. In addition, information on the time taken to grant licences is published by the MCA at regular intervals in the Medicines Act information leaflet.

Association of Pharmaceutical Importers

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he plans to invite the Association of Pharmaceutical Importers to join the joint consultative group; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. the joint consultative group exists to provide an informal discussion forum comprising senior representatives of the Department, the Medicines Control Agency and the two principal trade associations. If it were expanded to cover other interested trade associations it could not function in that informal way.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the chairman of the Association of Pharmaceutical Importers; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have had no formal meetings with the chairman of the Association of Pharmaceutical Importers.

Mental Illness

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have been discharged from institutions for the mentally ill into community care since 1979; and what information he has as to how many of these people are amongst these currently classified as homeless.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the number of people discharged from *(a)* long-stay mental handicap and *(b)* long-stay mental illness hospitals since 1980.

Mr. Dorrell Information available centrally is given in the table. Figures up to 1986 exclude deaths and all transfers to other hospitals, while figures after 1986 only exclude deaths and transfers between hospitals within a district health authority.

Centrally collected figures are not available on the current whereabouts of persons with a mental illness discharged from national health service hospitals and hospital units.

Discharges from mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units, in England 1979-89

Year	After a stay of one year or more		All durations of stay	
	Mental illness	Mental handicap	Mental illness	Mental handicap
1979	3,460	1,178	149,027	15,760
1980	3,376	1,120	158,556	18,014
1981	3,516	1,246	163,583	21,258
1982	3,465	1,229	162,230	24,345
1983	3,563	1,457	167,535	30,445
1984	3,928	1,919	171,144	34,892
1985	3,441	2,052	176,200	37,902
1986	3,571	2,528	176,351	40,464
1987-88[1]	3,900	2,500	181,350	35,050
1988-90[1]	5,150	2,960	188,600	39,360

[1] Estimated number of finished district spells include transfers to other hospitals outside the district.

Drugs

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are his estimates of the annual cost to the national health service of introducing original pack dispensing for generic pharmaceuticals and of the pharmacists' containers allowance.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is not possible to estimate what the effect of introducing more original pack dispensing for generic pharmaceuticals might be on costs for the national health service.

The cost of the container allowance for the year 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990 was £14·6 million.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the proposed European Community directive on patient information leaflets for pharmaceuticals; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We support the principle of providing improved information to patients about their medicines as proposed by the EC.

Discussions on details are in progress.

Occupational Therapists

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many occupational therapists are employed by local authority social services departments in England; and what is the current vacancy rate.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At 30 September 1989 the number of qualified occupational therapists employed in social services departments in England was 1,305 in whole-time equivalent (wte) terms. Of these, 65 staff (wte) were employed in capacities other than that of occupational therapist, for example, senior management.

Information on the numbers of vacancies for occupational therapists in social services departments is not collected centrally.

Respite Care

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list, for each local authority social services department in England, the number of respite care beds provided in *(a)* residential care homes and *(b)* hostels.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Home Helps

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hours of home help service were provided by local authority social services departments in each year from 1979-80 to 1989-90.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information about hours of home help service is not collected centrally. The numbers of home helps employed by social services departments in England in whole-time equivalent terms at 30 September in each year are set out in the table.

	Number
1979	44,660
1980	46,637
1981	46,541
1982	47,310
1983	49,326
1984	50,561
1985	51,959
1986	53,706
1987	56,336
1988	57,004

Abortion

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has about administrative arrangements in London district health authorities for getting women who want abortions into the queue.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received any representations about the availability of abortion services in London.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes. Arrangements for the provision of abortion services within the national health service are the responsibility of individual health authorities. Queries of a local nature should be taken up with the chairman or general manager of the health authority concerned.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list *(a)* for each of the last four years and *(b)* for each London district health authority the average waiting time for abortions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The available information is for the year 1987-88 and relates to waiting time for admissions for the category "legally induced abortion". For each of the four Thames regional health authorities the average, as expressed by the median waiting time, was one week. Reliable information is not available on a district basis.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list *(a)* for each of the last four years and *(b)* for each London district health authority the number of abortions carried out.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of abortions performed on residents of the London district health authorities can be found as part of table 24a of OPCS annual review volumes "Abortion Statistics". These are published in series AB and copies are in the Library. The latest year for which data are available is 1989.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has issued guidelines about procedures for referrals for abortions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave her on 28 January at column *429*.

Interleukin II

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals are *(a)* currently conducting a clinical trial of Interleukin II or *(b)* prescribing Interleukin II on a named patient basis; and if he will list the hospitals concerned.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: For reasons of confidentiality information held by the Medicines Licensing Authority about clinical trials cannot be divulged. The Department does not have information about the use of drugs on a named patient basis.

Maternity Cases

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list for the most recent year for England and for each national health service region the percentage of women whose deliveries were (i) at a domestic address, (ii) in a consultant ward of a national health service hospital, (iii) in a general practitioner ward of a national health service hospital, (iv) in a combined consultant/general practitioner ward of a national health service hospital, (v) in a private hospital, (vi) in another hospital or institution and (vii) elsewhere;

(2) if he will list for the most recent year for England and for each national health service region the percentage of women who had (i) general anaesthesia, (ii) epidural or caudal anaesthesia, (iii) spinal anaesthesia, (iv) combinations of these methods of anaesthesia and (v) none of these methods of anaesthesia during labour or delivery;

(3) if he will list for the most recent year for England and for each national health service region the percentage of women (i) whose labours were surgically induced, (ii) whose labours were induced by oxytocic drugs, (iii) whose labours were induced by a combination of surgical methods and oxytocic drugs, (iv) whose labours were of spontaneous onset and (v) who had elective caesarean sections;

(4) if he will list for the most recent year for England and for each national health service region the percentage of women whose deliveries were conducted by *(a)* a hospital doctor, *(b)* a general practitioner, *(c)* a midwife and *(d)* a person other than a doctor or a midwife.

(5) if he will list for the most recent year for England and each national health service region the percentage of women whose deliveries were *(a)* spontaneous, including abnormal presentation of the head and breech spontaneous, *(b)* instrumental including forceps, ventouse and breech extractions, *(c)* caesarean sections and *(d)* by other and unspecified means.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 22 February 1991]:* The most recent information available is for 1988-89, the first year for which additional delivery details were collected in the hospital episode statistics system. Following are the national estimates derived from these data; in the case of place of delivery, it has not been possible to provide the precise breakdown requested. The national percentages should be treated as approximate

figures and it is not possible to provide reliable regional estimates. Steps have been taken to improve quality and completeness of data which should reduce the level of approximation in later years and enable more detailed breakdowns to be made.

	Per cent.
(i) Place of delivery	
In an NHS hospital:	
In a consultant ward	61
In a GP ward	4
In a consultant/GP ward	33
Other than NHS hospital	2
(ii) Anaesthetic administered	
General	7
Epidural or caudal	15
Spinal	1
Combination of the above	1
Other, including no anaesthetic	60
Not known	15
(iii) Method of onset of labour	
Surgically induced	4
Oxytocic drugs	8
Combination of the above	6
Spontaneous onset	73
Elective caesarian	5
Not known	5
(iv) Person conducting delivery	
Hospital doctor	22
General practitioner	[1]0
Midwife	72
Other	1
Not known	4
(v) Method of delivery	
Spontaneous	78
Instrumental	11
Caesarian section	10
Other and unspecified	1

[1] less than 0·5 per cent.

Residential Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is his policy on allowing registration of private residential and nursing homes which refuse admission to residents who require income support to pay for their care;

(2) what information he has on how many registered private residential or nursing homes currently refuse admission to residents who require income support to pay for their care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no information about how many homes refuse admission to people requiring income support. Local authorities and health authorities are the registering authorities under the Registered Homes Act 1984. The Act sets out the criteria which enable a registration authority to refuse an application for registration. The admission of people who rely on income support is not among the criteria. There are no plans to seek amendment of the Act in this respect.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what mechanisms exist to determine whether those in nursing homes in receipt of income support top-up payments towards the costs of nursing care are actually receiving nursing care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The person responsible for a nursing home has a statutory duty to provide adequate facilities and services to meet the care needs of their patients. District health authorities must inspect each home at least twice a year to ensure that this requirement is met.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the most recent guidance issued to registration authorities with regard to privacy in residential care and nursing homes; and if he has any proposals to issue further guidance.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The question of privacy is dealt with in the 1989 social services inspectorate guidance "Homes are for Living In" and is also being covered in the current publications in the "Caring for Quality" series, of which three have already been issued and a further two are to follow. Copies will be placed in the Library. The Department's caring in homes initiative will reinforce the emphasis on good practice in residential care homes.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

The Gulf

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what is his policy on the involvement of United States and British forces in future security arrangements for Gulf states;

(2) what is his policy on a security agreement for the Gulf area involving states in the region and other states; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether he will make it his policy to ensure that the future security of the Gulf states is not based upon the armed forces of any one state in the region; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what is his policy on the involvement of north African states in the security of the Gulf region.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: New arrangements for the security of the Gulf states are matters for the states of the region themselves. We welcome the initiative taken by the Foreign Ministers of The Gulf Co-operation Council states, Egypt and Syria to discuss future security arrangements. We are ready to play our part if asked to do so.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to promote democracy amongst the Gulf states.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Constitutional arrangements in the Gulf states are a matter for their Governments and peoples.

As regards Kuwait, the national conference held in Jedda in October 1990 by the Government in exile and with delegations representing Kuwaiti opinion across the board, agreed that there should be a return to the provisions of the 1962 constitution as soon as possible after liberation. We have welcomed the Kuwaiti crown prince and Prime Minister's recent public reiteration of his Government's commitment of popular participation under this constitution, including new elections for the national assembly after liberation.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on the role of the United Nations in the future security arrangements in the Gulf region.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A lasting peace in the Gulf region must clearly provide for the security of Kuwait and the other countries of the Gulf. It will be for the countries of the region to reach agreement on the necessary arrangements. We would not rule out the deployment of UN military observers or peacekeeping forces in the area if that were their wish.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to achieve a complete withdrawal of United States and British forces from the Gulf region.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is our intention to withdraw British forces that have been involved in hostilities from the Gulf region as rapidly as possible.

We believe that it is for the countries of the region to take the lead in deciding future security arrangements.

The withdrawal of United States forces is a matter for the United States Government.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to extend military non-proliferation measures in the Gulf region.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our immediate objective is to complete the restoration of international peace and security in the middle east. We shall be examining with our partners how best to limit the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Northern Somalia

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on trade links with northern Somalia.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have been asked to reply.

United Kingdom trade with Somalia is not classified by region.

Figures on trade with Somalia can be obtained from "Overseas Trade Statistics Business Monitor MM20" tables II and V. A copy is available in the Library.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Fund

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of their social fund budgets have been spent by both Barnsley offices of his Department in *(a)* 1989-90 and *(b)* 1990-91.

Mr. Scott: Details of local office budget allocations and expenditure are available in the Library.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will show for (1) Leeds West and (2) Leeds metropolitan district council area the number of applicants for and awards of *(a)* community care grants, *(b)* budgeting loans and *(c)* crisis loans and (i) the amounts awarded, (ii) the percentage refused and (iii) the average award.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 4 March 1991]:* Information on average awards and the percentage of refusals for the period April 1990 to January 1991 is given in the tables. Other information requested by the hon. Member is available in the Library.

Average awards

	Budgeting loans £	*Community care grants* £	*Crisis loans* £
Leeds West	211·80	373·64	39·48
Leeds Metropolitan	207·00	315·60	45·80

Percentage refused

	Budgeting loans per cent.	*Community care grants per cent.*	*Crisis loans per cent.*
Leeds West	36·1	64·9	2·1
Leeds Metropolitan	34·7	63·2	4·1

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what relationship and liaison will be established between the independent living fund and the benefits agency upon the inception of the latter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Discussions are now taking place between the director of the independent living fund and officers of the shadow benefits agency to draw up a service agreement. The aim is to reflect existing arrangements in the most sensible way without causing disruption either to the independent living fund or to the agency. The agreement will mainly cover personnel and administrative matters.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications to the independent living fund have been submitted since 1 August 1990 *(a)* per calendar month and *(b)* in total.

Mr. Scott: The figures requested are:

Month	*Applications*
1990	
August	635
September	458
October	512
November	545
December	373
1991	
January	491
February	531
Total since 1 August 1990	3,545

Residential Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his latest estimate of the number of claimants in receipt of income support payments towards the cost of care in *(a)* voluntary care homes, *(b)* private residential homes, *(c)* private nursing homes and *(d)* private homes with joint registration from each of his local offices;

(2) what is his latest estimate of the number of claimants in private homes with joint registration who receive income support payments towards the cost of *(a)* residential care and *(b)* nursing care.

Miss Widdecombe: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy on the continued payment of income support towards the cost of residential or nursing care to residents in homes which have been deregistered under the Registered Homes Act 1984 and where the management of the home concerned has been taken over by either *(a)* a local authority social services department or *(b)* a health authority.

Miss Widdecombe: Residents of a home managed by a local authority social services department would be treated as accommodated under part III of the National Assistance Act 1948 and residents of a home managed by a health authority would be treated as hospital in-patients; such people who were entitled to income support would receive the appropriate rates of benefit.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the number of claimants in receipt of income support payments towards the cost of care in *(a)* voluntary care homes, *(b)* private residential homes, *(c)* private nursing homes and *(d)* private homes with joint registration.

Miss Widdecombe: Numbers are available only for all residential care homes and nursing homes.

	Number
Residential care	128,000
Nursing homes	71,000

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the full annual cost of income support payments to residents in *(a)* voluntary care homes, *(b)* private residential homes, *(c)* private nursing homes and *(d)* private homes with joint registration.

Miss Widdecombe: Costs are available only for all residential care homes and nursing homes.

	£ million
Residential care	772
Nursing homes	618

Social Security Acts

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when it is his intention to introduce a Bill to consolidate the Social Security Acts 1975 to 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The Law Commission has responsibility for the consolidation of Bills.

The consolidation of the Social Security Acts 1975 to 1991 is currently under active consideration and the Law Commission is, of course, consulting with this Department. At present, it is not possible to say with any certainty when a Bill will be introduced.

Research Projects

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when and how he proposes to publish the research reports on consumer views of the attendance allowance medical examination, invalid care allowance, the preliminary study of people leaving certain long-stay institutions, consumer perceptions of personal pensions, information needs of informal advisers and housing benefit reviews, referred to in his answer to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North on 25 February, *Official Report*, columns *401-04*.

Mr. Scott: Decisions have been reached in respect of two of the research subjects listed by the hon. Member. The preliminary study of people leaving certain long-stay institutions was a short information-gathering exercise only, and was not commissioned with a view to publication. Copies of the report on housing benefit reviews are available in the Library and the report will be published in the early summer.

Pollok Local Office

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what sites are under consideration for the planned Glasgow, Pollok local office; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The location of the preferred site is expected to be known in the near future.

Local Offices, Bradford

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what representations he has received about the closure of his Department's local offices in Bradford on 7 and 8 February; what arrangements were made during severe weather for emergency cover or provision to help families with children, without money; and if he will make a statement;

(2) why the after hours service was not operating when his Department's offices in Bradford were closed during the day this month; and on how many occasions and in what circumstances the after hours service declined to make home visits during February.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 28 February 1991]:* All three Bradford offices closed two hours early on 7 February, and Bradford East and Bradford South did so again on 8 February. On both days staff ensured all urgent payments were made before they left for home, and the out-of-hours service began work at 6 pm. From 4 to 17 February a total of 152 requests for out of hours visits were received in the Bradford area, of which 41 were refused. Each decision that a visit was unnecessary was taken on the facts of the individual case. Bradford citizens advice bureau has complained about the closures, and I understand that the district manager designate for the Bradford group of offices has written to the hon. Member to inform him of his response and of the steps he is taking to keep caller facilities open should similar circumstances recur.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what instructions have been issued to the local Department of Social Security office out-of-hours service in Bradford concerning home visits.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 28 February 1991]:* Bradford local offices have copies of guidance on the Department's out of hours service. The guidance describes action to be taken when a referral is received. It is for the out of hours service officer to decide, on the facts of the case, whether a home visit payment is appropriate.

DEFENCE

The Gulf

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations have been received by his Department from families of forces personnel serving in the Gulf regarding inefficiencies in, and the cost of, the postal service from Britain to the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave her on 6 March 1991 at columns *221-22*.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the costs of operations in the Gulf; and from which subheads of which votes these funds are taken.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The additional costs of the Gulf conflict, as so far assessed, are £1·75 billion. Indications are that the eventual costs may be up to £3 billion. Vote subheads which have borne or are likely to bear the additional costs of the Gulf conflict are:

Vote 1:
A1, A2, A3, B1, B2, B3, B4, BZ, C1, C2, C3, D1, D2, DZ, E1, E2, EZ, F1, F2, F3, F5, F6, F7, FZ, G1, G2, GZ, H1, H2, HZ, I1, L1, L2, L3, L5, L6, L7, L9, LZ.

Vote 2:[1]
E1, F1, F2, F3, F4, I2, J1, J2, J3, J4, J5, J7, J8, K1, L1, L2, M1, M2, M3, M4, M5, M6, N1

Vote 3:
A1, A2, A3, AZ.

Vote 4:
A1, A2.

Vote 5:
A1, A3.

[1] Costs have also fallen upon vote 2, sections A to D, but these cannot be attributed to individual subheads.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British military personnel were killed in the Gulf war; how many were injured; and how many of these were killed or injured by Iraqi forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Seventeen British servicemen are confirmed to have been killed and 43 injured in action. Of these, nine have been been confirmed killed and 11 injured in a single incident, when a US A-10 aircraft attacked two Warrior armoured vehicles. The circumstances surrounding the other casualties are still under investigation. Eight British servicemen are still missing in action.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are taken to allow independent groups to assess whether Iraqi prisoners of war being held in Saudi Arabia are being treated to the standards set out in the Geneva convention.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The International Committee of the Red Cross has full access to Iraqi prisoners of war in Saudi Arabia, as required by the third Geneva convention.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any NATO-assigned munitions from RAF Welford are being used by B52 aircraft operating from the United Kingdom to bomb targets in the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This is a matter for the United States Government.

Dubai Defence Exhibition

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many applications his Department has received from defence manufacturers for temporary export licences for equipment or technology to exhibit at the Dubai '91 aerospace and defence exhibition planned to be held in November.

Mr. Alan Clark: Applications for temporary export licences are made to the Department of Trade and Industry.

Arms Sales

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now make it his policy to answer questions tabled by hon. Members relating to the benefits accruing to British arms manufacturers and defence material producers arising from his Department's procurement and arms sales promotion activities.

Mr. Alan Clark: I see no reason to change the policy of this and previous Administrations on answering such questions.

Hunting

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total revenue paid to his Ministry from the annual fees paid for licences issued to allow hunting on his Ministry's land.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Total receipts in 1990-91 from annual hunting licence fees were £75. The Ministry of Defence also recover the costs of preparing and issuing new licences, but figures for receipts are not held centrally.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many licences have been issued to allow hare coursing to take place on his Ministry's land.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Glengarry Radio System

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the decision was taken to cancel the extremely low frequency radio system that had been proposed for Glengarry, Scotland.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on 14 February 1991 at column *592*.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has for a proposed extremely low frequency radio system to be sited somewhere other than Glengarry, Scotland.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: None.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total cost to date of the extremely low frequency radio system that had been proposed for Glengarry, Scotland; and from which subheads of which votes these funds were taken.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is not our practice to give specific details of moneys spent on individual research programmes. The minimal costs associated with work to date have been borne on votes allocated for defence research.

RAF Fairford (Explosives)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether local fire brigades are informed when explosives destined for RAF Fairford are transported through their areas.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All local emergency services have been notified in the recent movements of explosives destined for RAF Fairford.

B52 Bombers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures will be taken, in the event of a B52 in-flight emergency shortly after take off, to inform the local fire brigades responsible for the areas between RAF Fairford and the munitions dumping ground off Hartland point.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Low Flying

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low flying sorties were flown in the United Kingdom low-flying system in each calendar month of 1990.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: For the number of low-flying sorties carried out between January and August 1990, I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 1 November 1990 at column *766*. The number of low-flying sorties carried out in the United Kingdom for the remainder of 1990 is as follows:

Month	*Number*
September	11,361
October	13,166
November	11,834
December	6,330

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties were flown in the United Kingdom low-flying system in January.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: In January 1991, 8,990 sorties were flown in the United Kingdom low-flying system.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties were flown at a height of less than 250 ft in the United Kingdom low-flying system in each calendar month of 1990.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Figures for sorties that have been flown below 250 ft are not available, but figures for the number of movements authorised for flying below 250 ft in the three United Kingdom tactical training areas in each calendar month of 1990 are as follows:

1990

Month	*Number*
January	227
February	374
March	864
April	336
May	525
June	82
July	75
August	701
September	834
October	815
November	861
December	233

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties were flown at a height of less than 250 ft in the United Kingdom low-flying system in January.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: In January 1991, 330 movements below 250 ft were authorised in the three United Kingdom tactical training areas.

Holy Loch Base

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any facilities will remain on standby at Holy Loch after the proposed closure of the base by the United States Navy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Detailed closure arrangements for the Holy Loch submarine support facility have not been finalised. However, though the Holy Loch's use for future periodic submarine visits is possible, we do not currently expect that any facilities will be retained on a standby basis after closure.

USAF (Explosives)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what regulations cover the transportation of explosives belonging to the United States Air Force in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Movements of US-owned explosives are subject to the normal regulations governing the transport of explosives in the United Kingdom. These are: for road movement, the Road Traffic (Carriage of Explosives) Regulations 1989—Statutory Instrument 1989 No. 615; for rail, the Conditions of Acceptance and Carriage by Rail of Military Explosives 1990 (BR 22206/2, The Red Book); and for ports, the Dangerous Substances in Harbour Areas Regulations 1987—Statutory Instrument 1987 No. 37.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether movements of explosives around the United Kingdom by the United States Air Force are escorted by any personnel from his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

RAF Upper Heyford

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the scheduled date for resurfacing the runway at RAF Upper Heyford.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice to publish information of this kind.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 11 March 1991

HOME DEPARTMENT

Animal Experiments

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many animals, by species, were killed during the last year for which details are available specifically for the provision of cell or tissue material for research or experimental purposes.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 controls scientific procedures only on living animals and no statistics are collected of animals killed by the exempted methods set out in schedule 1 to the 1986 Act for in vitro work.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department proposes in respect of those recommendations of the Medical Research Council inquiry team investigating the conduct of experiments on animals by Professor Wilhelm Feldberg at the National Institute for Medical Research laboratories, Mill Hill, London, which relate to the functions and decisions of the Home Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Home Office accepts the Medical Research Council inquiry report's finding that, as a result of a failure by Professor Feldberg and Mr. Stean to maintain anaesthesia of sufficient depth, up to four rabbits were caused avoidable suffering.

Primary responsibility for ensuring that procedures regulated by the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 are carried out properly at an establishment lies with the holder of the certificate of designation. In the light of the report, officials have discussed with the certificate holder for the National Institute for Medical Research proposals for improving the management, control and monitoring of animals procedures at the institute, which he is now considering. We have also asked the MRC for the evidence of the alleged deliberate breaches of the Act referred to in the report.

As for the two recommendations contained in the report relating to the Home Office, initial proposals have been put to the Animal Procedures Committee about the position of aging licensees and we shall consider what action may be necessary when the committee has completed its consideration of the issues arising from this case.

We do not accept the recommendation in the report for an increase in the number of animal (scientific procedures) inspectors. Although the report suggests that inspectors should be more closely involved in monitoring the treatment of animals during experiments, this is principally the responsibility of personal licensees, who have a duty under the law for the care of their animals. It would be impractical to expect inspectors to be present whenever animal procedures are carried out.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the estimate of the number of wild-caught primates, by species, currently held in British scientific institutions for the purposes of experimentation;

(2) how many wild-caught primates were used in the United Kingdom in each of the last three years for experimental purposes.

Mrs. Rumbold: Statistics about the origin of primates held or used are not kept centrally. In general, smaller primates, like marmosets, are bred in captivity. Primates larger than rhesus or cynomolgous monkeys are difficult to breed successfully in captivity, even abroad.

Wildlife Protection

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what specific provision is made in each of the police authorities in Wales for the enforcement of wildlife protection legislation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the chief constables in each of the police forces in Wales that each force has well-established liaison arrangements with those other agencies which have an interest in wildlife protection. The allocation of resources to the enforcement of wildlife protection legislation is a matter for chief officers.

Escapees

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department from which prison Lydia A. Gyamifi escaped on 8 February 1988; and whether she has since been recaptured.

Mrs. Rumbold: Lydia A. Gyamifi absconded from Her Majesty's prison Askham Grange and is still unlawfully at large.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answers to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West of 28 February and 1 March, *Official Report*, columns *568* and *648*, on recapture of escapees, which of the escapees were on drug-related offences, which of the escapees were in debt to the courts; and which escapees' passports are in the possession of his Department.

Mrs. Rumbold: The 10 women concerned had all been convicted of drug offences. None is known to have been in debt to the courts at the time of absconding from prison. The passports of five of the 10 women are in the possession of the Home Office.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the Metropolitan police precept for 1990-91 per community charge payer, and also the police precept per community charge payer for each of the English counties.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Metropolitan police precept for 1990-91 was 112·79 per head of relevant population. County police forces in England and Wales do not produce identifiable precepts; their budgets form part of the expenditure of the relevant county councils, which precept on the community charge collection fund for the totality of their needs.

Welsh Police Forces

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the present state of the police forces in Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is set out in the table:

	Police strength[1]	*Establishment*[2]	*Civilian strength*[1]	*Number of officers returned to operational duties 1985-89*
Dyfed-Powys	936	943	243	21
Gwent	1,001	1,009	290	23
North Wales	1,339	1,351	439	28
South Wales	3,123	3,168	1,111	134
Total	6,399	6,471	2,083	206

[1]As at 31 December 1990.
[2]As at 1 April 1990.

Members of the European Parliament

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters he has received since 4 January 1990 from Members of the European Parliament concerning local or national matters; and if he will make it his practice where the former are concerned to provide the hon. Member for the local constituency with copies of any such correspondence for his or her information.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Between 5 January 1990 and 7 March 1991 we received 187 such letters from Members of the European Parliament. As I explained in my reply on 4 April 1990, at column *638*, to a question from the hon. Member for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young), where Members of the European Parliament raise matters that are exclusively of local interest, the practice is to reply suggesting that the MEP should refer the matter to the hon. Member for the constituency concerned. As to other correspondence, replies would normally be copied to the hon. Member concerned only if the MEP had himself copied his letter in this way.

Tobacco Sponsorship

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the Independent Television Commission about the desirability of maintaining the practice of not televising tobacco-sponsored sporting events; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Broadcasting Act 1990 requires the ITC to draw up and consult about a code on the sponsorship of programmes. My right hon. Friend was consulted about the present code, which lays down standards for any broadcast coverage of tobacco-sponsored events. Whether to cover such events remains a decision for the television companies.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the British Broadcasting Corporation about the exposure of tobacco brand names and logos in television coverage of sponsored sporting events; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None. The BBC is, however, aware of the special issues raised by tobacco company sponsorship which are fully reflected in its guidelines to programme makers. The BBC observes the terms of the voluntary agreement reached between the Minister for Sport and the Tobacco Advisory Council in 1987.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to support smokers in his Department to give up smoking on the eighth No Smoking Day on 13 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Wide publicity has been given throughout my Department to the aims of the eighth No Smoking Day, to take place on 13 March.

Postal and Proxy Voting

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what newspapers and magazines were used to advertise the availability of postal and proxy voting during the period before the 1987 general election; and at what cost.

Mrs. Rumbold: Advertisements were placed in the following newspapers. The campaign cost £431,000.

Sun
Daily Star
Daily Mirror
Today
Daily Express
Daily Mail
Sunday Mirror
Sunday People
News of the World
Sunday Express
The Mail on Sunday
The Sunday Times
The Times
The Guardian
The Independent
The Daily Telegraph
Financial Times
Morning Star
The Observer
The Sunday Telegraph
News on Sunday

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers' Negotiating Rights

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the European trade union committee for education on negotiating rights for teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I received a letter dated 22 December 1990 from the European trade union committee for education about teachers' negotiating rights on 3 January 1991.

Autism

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department has undertaken a full evaluation of the work of the Higashi school for autistic children in Boston, USA; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: The Department has not undertaken a full evaluation of the Higashi school, but is continuing to seek information about its principles, methods and effectiveness.

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the number of workplaces for civil servants in his Department; what proportion of the total number have an on-site nursery facility; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide a holiday play scheme; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide after-school child care facilities; what charges are made for use of any facility; what the net cost has been for the provision of these facilities; and what estimate he can make of any future expenditure.

Mr. Eggar: In addition to the Department's two main sites in London and Darlington, there are 41 HMI local offices each containing fewer than 12 members of staff. The Darlington site has a holiday play scheme for which in 1990-91 parents paid £4 per day for the first child and £3 for each subsequent child. The net cost to the Department of the provision was £3,800 which is expected to rise to £4,000 in 1991-92. There are plans to provide nursery facilities at the Darlington site but no plans for after-school child care.

The Department has no plans to provide any on-site child care provision in London. However, the Westminster holiday play scheme, supported by this and other Departments, is available during each of the school holiday periods to employees' children. In addition, the Department is considering with other Departments the establishment of interdepartmental creche facilities in London and commuting areas.

Science and Engineering Research Council

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will consider additional funding for the next financial year for the Science and Engineering Research Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The science budget for 1991-92 has already been fully allocated to the five research councils and related bodies.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish details of all voluntary-aided city technology colleges that are planned and their intended locations, together with *(a)* the cost to local authorities, *(b)* the total public expenditure involved and *(c)* the amount of sponsorship (i) pledged and (ii) confirmed; who the sponsors are; and if he will make a statement on their legal and financial status.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am still considering the legal and financial implications of proposals that voluntary-aided schools with the characteristics of city technology colleges might offer a worthwhile new means of extending the undoubted benefits of the CTC programme.

Education, Norfolk

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the percentage increase in teachers employed by Norfolk county council between 1961 and *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1980 and *(c)* 1990 in actual and full-time equivalent terms and the percentage increase over the same period in the number of children being educated by Norfolk county council, excluding nursery pupils and nursery teachers.

Mr. Fallon: Information for individual local authorities for 1961 and 1970 is not readily available on a basis comparable to later years because of local government reorganisation in 1974. The table gives the requested information for 1980 and 1990.

Maintained Primary[1] and Secondary schools in Norfolk

	Teachers		*Pupils*
	Actual number (thousands)	*Full-time equivalent (thousands)*	*Full-time equivalent (thousands)*
1980	6·3	6·0	115·9
1990	6·4	5·8	99·4
Per cent. change	+2·5	−2·6	−14·3

Northern Region

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will give the numbers attending full-time courses at *(a)* universities and *(b)* polytechnics in the Northern region in 1980 and 1990, together with the percentage change.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information is given in the table. Data for 1990 are not yet available.

Full-time and sandwich students in higher education courses at Universities and Polytechnics in the Northern Region

	1980-81	*1989-90*	*Percentage change*
Universities	12,575	13,702	9
Polytechnics	10,093	17,742	76
Total	22,668	31,444	39

Source: Universities Statistical Record.
Further Education Statistical Record.

Tobacco Industry

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many meetings he, his predecessor, his Ministers and his Department's officials have had with representatives of the tobacco industry since 1 January 1989; and if he will list the dates, venues and purpose of each meeting.

Mr. Atkins: I met representatives from the Tobacco Advisory Council on 12 December 1990 at their request to

discuss a range of issues relating to tobacco sponsorship of sport. Department officials meet representatives from the tobacco industry at meetings of the committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship—COMATAS.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the current annual total sponsorship of sports by tobacco companies; if he will list these individually; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The latest available information, provided by the Tobacco Advisory Council, on the total sponsorship of sports in the United Kingdom by British tobacco companies is £5·329 million for the year ending 31 March 1989. A breakdown of this figure is not available. This sum compares with £7·699 million in 1986-87.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will invite representatives of the health professions to participate in his Department's current negotiations with the tobacco industry on the control of tobacco sponsorship; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will report on the progress of his Department's negotiations to date with the tobacco companies on the control of tobacco sponsorship of sporting events; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: There are no current negotiations with the tobacco industry on the control of tobacco sponsorship of sporting events.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to support smokers in his Department to give up smoking on the eighth No Smoking Day on 13 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No special arrangements have been made for No Smoking Day, but staff who need help and advice can, as always, obtain this from our staff welfare service.

Disabled Teachers

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what advice his Department gives to TASC—the teaching as a career unit—regarding the recruitment and employment of teachers with disabilities;

(2) what advice he is seeking on the recruitment and employment of teachers with disabilities in preparation for new guidelines for LMS;

(3) what advice he has given to local education authorities regarding the employment of teachers with disabilities.

Mr. Fallon: The Department's guidance to employers, teacher training institutions and other bodies is contained in circular 1/88, "Physical and mental fitness to teach of teachers and of entrants to teacher training". My right hon. and learned Friend sees no need for any further advice to TASC or to LEAs or in connection with LMS regarding the recruitment or employment of teachers with disabilities.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the proportion of teachers employed by each local education authority who are disabled.

Mr. Fallon: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Institute of Food Research

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the new Institute of Food Research building at Reading university has been completed; when staff will start to occupy it; what is the latest estimate of the cost of its construction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Agricultural Food Research Council expects that the new building for the Institute of Food Research on the campus of the university of Reading will be completed in June this year. Scientists on the present Shinfield site will transfer to the new building in August. The estimated cost of construction is £9·6 million. This new building will provide the Reading laboratory of the IFR with excellent facilities to house the strong scientific programmes on microbiological food safety, consumer sciences, molecular sciences and biotechnology under way at Shinfield. It will also enhance the institute's position as an internationally recognised centre of excellence in food sciences.

Education, Gloucestershire

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* administrative staff and *(b)* teaching staff were employed by Gloucestershire education authority in each year from 1985 to 1990.

Mr. Fallon: The total employees of Gloucestershire local education authority in March 1990 were as follows:

	Number
Full-time teachers and lecturers	4,600
Part-time teachers and lecturers	2,800
Full-time other employees	2,000
Part-time other employees	3,800

These figures include the nursery, primary and secondary schools sector, special and further education and central administration. Comparable figures for other years are not available.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many pupils attended schools administered by Gloucestershire education authority in each year from 1981 to 1990.

Mr. Fallon: The number of pupils attending maintained schools in Gloucestershire each year from 1981 to 1990 is as follows:

Year	*Pupils on Roll*
1981	87,450
1982	84,752
1983	82,009
1984	80,115
1985	78,797
1986	76,913
1987	76,019
1988	75,264
1989	74,550
1990	74,133

Education Expenditure

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing the proportion of total education spending which is spent on the provision of central services in respect of each local education authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Fallon: The latest available information for England relates to LEA spending on central services for schools which are categorised as discretionary excepted items under local management of schools. The eighty-seven LEAs that introduced local management of schools in April 1990 have published budget statements for 1990-91 which show how much of the potential schools budget is withheld from schools to be spent on discretionary excepted items. The figure for each LEA is given in the table. Comparable information is not available for the FE or other education sectors. Information about Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

1990-91 Budgets
Percentage of potential schools budget spent on discretionary excepted items

Local education authority	*Discretionary exceptions as percentage of potential schools budget*
Westminster	22·02
Kingston upon Thames	21·54
Haringey	20·64
Waltham Forest	20·35
Newcastle upon Tyne	20·25
Merton	20·21
Richmond upon Thames	20·02
Bromley	19·30
Cambridgeshire	19·25
Coventry	19·07
Bexley	18·67
Oxfordshire	18·63
Enfield	18·50
Harrow	18·48
Hounslow	18·41
Oldham	18·36
Ealing	18·34
Humberside	18·29
Wolverhampton	18·23
Dorset	18·15
Calderdale	18·14
Knowsley	18·09
Bury	18·08
Avon	17·70
North Tyneside	17·70
Wiltshire	17·65
Isle of Wight	17·52
Cumbria	17·47
Sheffield	17·39
North Yorkshire	17·38
Lancashire	17·34
Redbridge	17·29
Nottinghamshire	17·28
Wakefield	17·13
Somerset	17·09
Birmingham	16·96
Devon	16·89
Durham	16·87
Sandwell	16·76
St. Helens	16·73
Wigan	16·72
Gateshead	16·71
Derbyshire	16·63
Barnsley	16·62
Kirklees	16·62
Sutton	16·56
Cornwall	16·43
Norfolk	16·38
Brent	16·37
Cleveland	16·37
South Tyneside	16·24
Havering	16·13
Dudley	16·02
Bedfordshire	15·98
Essex	15·97
East Sussex	15·91
Cheshire	15·69
Barnet	15·64
Salford	15·63
Trafford	15·62
Tameside	15·60
Shropshire	15·40
Staffordshire	15·39
Northamptonshire	15·26
Kent	15·13
Buckinghamshire	15·12
Liverpool	15·09
Lincolnshire	14·87
Warwickshire	14·76
Solihull	14·69
Doncaster	14·55
Surrey	14·43
Suffolk	14·34
Walsall	14·28
Rochdale	14·26
Hampshire	14·22
Bradford	13·96
Leeds	13·88
Rotherham	13·87
Northumberland	13·46
Gloucestershire	13·22
Sunderland	13·14
Barking and Dagenham	12·99
Sefton	12·56
West Sussex	12·51
Berkshire	12·32
Bolton	10·90

Special Needs

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make regulations under section 13 of the Education Act 1981 relating to the approval of independent schools to admit pupils with statements of special educational needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: The Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Wales have today laid such regulations before Parliament and issued related circulars. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to lay amending regulations made under section 12 of the Education Act 1981 relating to the approval of special schools, on which he issued a draft for consultation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: The Secretaries of State for Education and Science and Wales have today laid before Parliament regulations to amend the Education (Approval of Special Schools) Regulations 1983. The Department has also issued circular 3/91, which replaces circular 6/83 and explains the updated requirements for the approval of special schools. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science to which posts in public bodies he appoints individuals where the posts are *(a)* part-time and *(b)* remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 6 March 1991]:* The details of such appointments are listed on pages 15 to 17 of the Cabinet Office publication, "Public Bodies 1990", which is available in the Library. There are no part-time posts remunerated by more than £50,000 per annum.

Sports Council

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements he has made for continuing the payment of Government grant-in-aid to the Sports Council.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[pursuant to his reply, 30 January 1991, c. 511]:* Parliamentary approval for my Department to make grant-in aid to the Sports Council will be sought in a spring supplementary estimate for the schools, research and miscellaneous services vote—class XI, vote 1. This will provide for expenditure of £1 million in addition to £14,161,000 transferred from the Department of the Environment for the last quarter of 1990-91. The additional expenditure will be offset by a saving elsewhere on the vote. Pending Parliament's approval, urgent expenditure against this additional £1 million will be met by repayable advance from the Contingencies Fund.

HEALTH

Funding, Leeds

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *239*, how much expenditure has been allocated to Leeds from regional and central funding in each year since 1979 *(a)* at 1990-91 prices and *(b)* as a percentage of the 1990-91 expenditure.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is shown in the table. The source and notes to my earlier reply remain applicable.

Leeds health authorities—total expenditure on hospital and community health services (HCHS)

Year	Revenue expenditure £000 (at 1990-91 prices)	Revenue expenditure As a percentage	Capital expenditure £000 (at 1990-91 prices)	Capital expenditure As a percentage
1979-80	187,054	74·6	16,751	112·7
1980-81	204,642	81·6	20,751	139·6
1981-82	206,799	82·5	23,862	160·6
1982-83	205,284	81·9	21,602	145·4
1983-84	210,709	84·0	19,566	131·6
1984-85	213,272	85·0	13,742	92·5
1985-86	215,733	86·0	13,334	89·7
1986-87	223,665	89·2	10,273	69·1
1987-88	235,516	93·9	10,623	71·5
1988-89	245,116	97·7	14,136	95·1
1989-90	250,762	100·0	14,862	100·0

Note: The figures have been expressed at 1990-91 prices by the use of the Gross Domestic Product deflator. The percentages are calculated on those constant-price values but are related to 1989-90 (the latest year for which actual expenditure data are available).

NHS Trusts

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will name the members of the group representing the interests of national health service trusts at his most recent meeting.

Mr. Waldegrave: Two seminars for NHS trust chairmen were arranged last month. I attended on 25 February, when 26 of the 57 trusts were represented. All the chairmen had been invited to attend the seminars. A list of the names of trust chairmen is held in the Library.

Pharmaceutical Licensing Authority

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to support the creation of a central EC pharmaceutical product licensing authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is the Government's stated policy to support in principle the European Commission's proposals for the future licensing of medicines, including the creation of a central licensing authority.

Child Protection

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances, and by whose authority, children are placed on child protection registers; how many children are on such registers in the London region; how many of these do not have an allocated social worker; what similar figures are available for other parts of the United Kingdom; what are the present legal responsibilities of local authorities towards children on the register; how these will alter when the Children Act comes into force; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A child's name is normally placed on the child protection register following discussion at a case conference, convened by the social services department or by the NSPCC in areas where this function is undertaken by the NSPCC in agreement with the social services department, when abuse or potential abuse is confirmed and an inter-agency agreement is made to work co-operatively to protect the child. When a registered child moves the child should be registered at once pending the first case conference in the new area.

The latest information about the number of children on the registers in London boroughs who are not allocated to a social worker is published in "Child Protection Services in London, Aspects of Management Arrangements in Social Services Departments, 31 December 1989", together with numbers on the registers at the time at which the survey took place. Copies are available in the Library. Similar information is not available centrally for the rest of England.

The most up-to-date information about numbers on child protection registers relates to 31 March 1990. This information is collected from all local authorities in England and is published in the provisional feedback "Children and Young Persons on Child Protection Registers, year ending 31 March 1990, England". Copies are available in the Library.

Similar statistics covering the rest of the United Kingdom are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland, for Wales and for Scotland.

The present legal responsibilities of local authorities towards children on the register are the same general

duties as those towards all children under the Child Care Act 1980: to promote the welfare of children and the Children and Young Persons Act 1969, to investigate the possible need for care proceedings and, if necessary, to take them.

When the Children Act comes into force children on child protection registers will generally be children in need and entitled to the provision of services set out in section 17 of the Act, whether or not they are looked after by the local authority. Generally the powers to investigate are greater than before, particularly where there is refusal of access to the child.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total amount of money spent by the South Yorkshire metropolitan ambulance service on *(a)* preparing its declaration of intent to apply for national health service trust status and *(b)* hosting seminars on material prepared by the accountants, Parnell, Kerr and Foster.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chief ambulance officer of the South Yorkshire metropolitan ambulance service for details.

Food Safety

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans he has to achieve effective industry self-regulation in food safety and food hygiene;

(2) which sectors and organisations within the food industry *(a)* operate and *(b)* propose to operate voluntary codes of practice in respect of food safety and food hygiene;

(3) if he will list by sector those food industry organisations that have submitted proposals in respect of achieving effective industry self-regulation.

Mr. Dorrell: It is the responsibility of the food industry itself to produce safe food and, like the Richmond committee, the Government encourage self-regulation. Although comprehensive information is not held centrally, we are aware of a number of food industry organisations which have prepared or are preparing guidance on food safety issues for the benefit of their members.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list seminars, workshops and other meetings, indicating whether they were addressed by *(a)* Ministers or *(b)* civil servants, on the issue of food safety and food hygiene in each of the years 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Dorrell: Ministers and officials from the Department of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office have addressed a large number of conferences, seminars and other meetings to publicise the Food Safety Act 1990 to consumers, enforcement authorities and the food industry. A complete list could not be suppplied except at disproportionate cost.

Cholesterol Testing

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to make cholesterol testing more widely available.

Mr. Dorrell: The Standing Medical Advisory Committee was asked to consider the cost-effectiveness of opportunistic cholesterol testing and reported in May last year. Because the report indicated that this is an area of divergent medical opinion, it was decided to issue the report for widespread consultation. Consultation has now been completed and a large number of responses were received. We expect to be in a position to consider the findings soon.

Members of the European Parliament

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many letters he has received since 4 January 1990 from Members of the European Parliament concerning local or national matters; and if he will make it his practice where the former are concerned to provide the hon. Member for the local constituency with copies of any such correspondence for his or her information.

Mr. Dorrell: We have received 94 such letters. As with other correspondence, replies would normally be copied to the hon. Member concerned if the original letter had been copied in this way.

Lung Cancer

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of deaths from lung cancer he attributes to smoking; how many such deaths occurred in people under 65 years of age, and in all age groups, in the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The table shows the total number of people whose deaths were registered in England and Wales in the years 1985-89 with an underlying cause of malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung; and the number of those aged under 65. It is estimated that at least 90 per cent. of these deaths can be attributed to tobacco smoking.

Number of deaths with lung cancer[1] as underlying cause of death, England and Wales, 1985-89

Year	All ages	0-64 years
1985	35,792	10,665
1986	35,257	10,094
1987	35,138	9,549
1988	35,302	9,571
1989	34,581	8,936

[1] International classification of diseases (9th revision) code 162 —malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung.

Smoking

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the annual cost to the national health service of treatment of smoking-related diseases for each of the last five years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) on 4 July 1990 at column *594*. This estimate is not sufficiently precise to justify the calculation of yearly figures, although it is checked on a regular basis.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many working days his Department estimates are lost due to smoking-related illness; what is the estimated cost to the gross national product from such days lost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Royal College of Physicians has estimated that over 50 million working days are lost each year due to smoking related disease. The likely cost in terms of lost production is about £2,200 million to £3,200 million.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the fourth annual report of the committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: We expect the committee's fourth annual report to be published by the summer.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress of his Department's negotiations to date with the tobacco industry on the control of tobacco advertising.

Mr. Dorrell: Discussions have been under way with the tobacco industry on updating the voluntary agreement on tobacco advertising since the beginning of 1990. Some progress has been made, but the industry is reluctant to conclude a new agreement until it is clear about the impact on its business of European Community directives to complete the single market. We are pressing the industry to conclude a new agreement in the near future.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many meetings he, his predecessor, his Ministers and his Department's officials have had with representatives of the tobacco industry since 1 January 1989; and if he will list the dates, venues and purpose of each meeting.

Mr. Dorrell: Officials regularly meet the tobacco industry to discuss a whole range of issues including the working of the voluntary agreements and EC measures on tobacco. Following is a list of the main meetings since 1 January 1989:

Date	*Venue*	*Purpose*
30 January 1990	Department of Health	The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Lords) met the Tobacco Advisory Council to discuss the draft EC Tobacco Advertising Directive
31 January 1990	Department of Health	The Secretary of State met the Tobacco Advisory Council to open negotiations on updating the voluntary agreements on tobacco advertising and product modification
27 March 1990	Department of Health	Officials met the Tobacco Advisory Council to carry forward negotiations on updating the voluntary agreements
15 May 1990	Department of Health	Officials met the Tobacco Advisory Council to carry forward negotiations on updating the voluntary agreements
14 November 1990	House of Lords	The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Lords) met the Tobacco Advisory Council to discuss the implementation of EC Directives on Tobacco
23 January 1991	Department of Health	The Secretary of State met a representative of Imperial Tobacco Ltd. to discuss various tobacco related issues.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of acute beds in national health service hospitals and the total number of in-patient bed days per annum he estimates are used by patients suffering from smoking-related diseases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The number of bed-days attributable to smoking-related disease was estimated in 1985 to be between 2·8 million and 4·8 million a year. The current figure is likely to be of the same order.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has of the relationship between consumption of cigarettes, particularly by children, and increases in prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on 13 January 1989 at column *768*. We are not aware of any new studies which have become available since 1989.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the future of the Health Promotion Research Trust.

Mr. Dorrell: The funds given to the trust by the tobacco industry will soon be exhausted. I understand that the trustees are prepared to examine other possibilities for continuing the work of the trust.

Oral Tobacco

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to ban the sale of all new oral tobacco products in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The supply of oral snuff products was banned in the United Kingdom on 13 March 1990 by means of regulations under the Consumer Protection Act 1987. On 21 December 1990 the regulations were quashed by the divisional court on a procedural point. We have appealed against that decision.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library a full copy of the research commissioned by the committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship; if he will list the subjects covered by that research, the period this research covered and the findings of this research; who was commissioned to undertake this research; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Details of the research commissioned by the committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship are contained in the first, second and third annual reports of the committee, published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office—ISBNs 0 11 321138 4, 0 11 321225 9 and 0 11 321306 9—copies of which are in the Library. In addition, Coopers and

Lybrand Deloitte has recently completed some research on the tobacco industry's adherence to the cigarette voluntary code for promotions with specific reference to direct mail. The period covered by the research was 1989 to 1990. Details will be published in the Committee's fourth report. My hon. Friend is aware that the original research reports are not published because the industry, which meets half the cost of the research, has objected on various grounds. This position was set out in the reply my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave him on 27 October 1989 at column *631*.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the members of the committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The membership of the committee is as follows:

Mr. D. Adams—Welsh Office
Mr. R. R. Boxall—Gallaher Ltd.
Mr. W. J. Burroughs—Department of Health
Mr. N. M. Hale—Department of Health
Mr. D. R. Hare—Tobacco Advisory Council
Mr. B. C. W. Heard—Imported Tobacco Products Advisory Council
Mr. T. S. Heppell—Department of Health
Mr. A. King—Scottish Office
Mr. P. Middleton—Imperial Tobacco Ltd.
Mr. W. C. Owen—Tobacco Advisory Council
Mr. E. D. Oxberry—Rothmans (UK) Ltd.
Mr. J. Scott—Department of Health and Social Security (Northern Ireland)
Mr. P. J. Vaughan—Department of Education and Science

One place on the industry side of the committee is temporarily vacant. The post of independent chairman is also temporarily vacant following the resignation of Sir Peter Lazarus in January. The Government and the tobacco industry hope to make a new appointment to this post shortly.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will invite representatives of the health professions to participate in his Department's current negotiations with the tobacco industry on the control of tobacco advertising; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department's own professional advisers have considerable expertise in these matters and are represented at the negotiating sessions.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to support smokers in his Department to give up smoking on the eighth No Smoking Day on 13 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: National No Smoking Day has been publicised widely in the Department. The following activities are planned for 13 March:

manned information points in building foyers with publicity and leaflets on leading a healthy lifestyle, and encouragement to enrol for stop smoking courses sponsored by the Department.
opportunities for smokers to hand in their cigarettes and enter a prize draw.
publicity in staff canteen.
exhibitions by the Occupational Health Service and the Look After Your Heart project manned by professional advisers available to give advice on giving up smoking.

The aims of national No Smoking Day and the initiatives outlined above have the full support of Ministers in the Department.

Mental Health Grant

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the local authorities which have indicated that they are not taking up the full amount of the new mental health specific grant.

Mr. Dorrell: The local authorities which have indicated that they are not taking up the full amount of the new mental illness specific grant are;

	Indicative Allocation	*Bid*	*Amount of allocation not taken up*	*Per cent. of grant allocation not taken up*
	£	£	£	
Salford	110,000	nil	110,000	100·0
Bromley	130,000	76,160	53,840	70·1
Bolton	120,000	98,200	21,800	22·2
Havering	90,000	75,000	15,000	20·0
Redbridge	110,000	100,000	10,000	10·0
Tameside	90,000	84,000	6,000	7·1
Essex	560,000	531,600	28,390	5·3
Hampshire	550,000	532,888	17,112	3·2
Bury	70,000	67,900	2,100	3·1
Surrey	370,000	364,399	5,601	1·5
Oxfordshire	200,000	198,940	1,060	0·5
Sefton	110,000	109,685	315	0·3
Avon	370,000	369,437	563	0·2
Stockport	110,000	109,807	193	0·2
Hereford	220,000	219,649	351	0·1
Nottinghamshire	400,000	399,700	300	<0·1
Warwickshire	170,000	169,995	5	<0·1
Hammersmith	150,000	149,940	60	<0·1

Bed Closures

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate for the number of hospital bed closures during the current financial year; and when figures will be available on an area basis.

Mr. Dorrell: We do not routinely collect this information centrally, since bed numbers are not a good indicator of levels of service in the national health service. It is for each health authority to determine the level and mix of health service provision in its area, taking account of local circumstances and the increased resources available to them.

Diabetics

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health why it has been decided not to make the needles used with Novapen syringes available at no charge to people who receive a free supply of insulin on prescription.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: NHS supply arrangements for insulin pens and needles need to be considered together. Subject to our normal evaluation of individual brands, including Novapen, we would consider making pens and needles prescribable as an alternative to syringes, if this could be done without additional cost. Discussions with suppliers are currently in progress.

Laboratory Services

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the survey of laboratory backlogs and workload carried out in the second half of 1990 referred to in his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *240*.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The survey dealt only with those district health authorities in which the processing time for cervical smear tests was over one month on 1 July 1990. These are listed in the table with the length of the backlog and the number of smears received in the period March to May 1990. Since the length of backlogs changes over time, the current position is likely to vary from that shown. Two out of three health authorities processed smear tests within the requested one month.

Survey of laboratory backlogs and workloads: July 1990

DHA	*Backlog (weeks)*	*Smears Received March-May 1990*
Northern		
North West Durham	7·5	3,171
Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland	5·5	24,053
Yorkshire		
Hull, East Yorkshire	7	13,116
Grimsby	6	5,684
Bradford, Airedale	6	12,956
Wakefield	6	5,589
Trent		
South Derbyshire	6	16,061
Nottingham	12	22,205
Doncaster	12	7,942
Rotherham	8	n/a
Sheffield	6	14,420
East Anglia		
Cambridge	12	8,254
West Norfolk	6	n/a
North West Thames		
North Bedfordshire	8	6,396
Barnet	5	n/a
North East Thames		
North East Essex	12	8,155
Southend	11	11,144
Haringey	5	4,623
Basildon and Thurrock	13	8,091
Redbridge	14	5,260
West Essex	10	6,933
Mid Essex	6·5	8,769
Enfield	5·5	n/a
South East Thames		
Canterbury/Thanet	5	7,510
Dartford/Gravesend	5	6,144
Medway	5	8,244
Tunbridge Wells	7	6,167
Greenwich	12	3,975
Bromley	7	9,300
Lewisham and North Southwark (Guy's)	13	3,630
South West Thames		
Worthing	9	n/a
Merton/Sutton	5	n/a
South West Surrey	7	n/a
Wessex		
West Dorset	5	n/a
Portsmouth	8·5	n/a
Southampton	5	n/a
Swindon	7	n/a
Bath	8	n/a
Oxford		
Oxfordshire	5·5	n/a
East Berkshire	10	10,915
Aylesbury Vale	5	12,969
South Western		
Bristol and Weston, Frenchay, Southmead	5	14,911
Cornwall	7	11,651
Exeter	7	11,959
Torbay	7	6,708
West Midlands		
Herefordshire	6	4,443
Worcestershire	8	5,557
Shropshire	7	12,295
South Warwickshire	6	7,349
Central Birmingham (part)	5	8,072
West Birmingham	5	8,010
Coventry	5	10,569
Mersey		
Liverpool (part)	5	4,016
St. Helens and Knowlsey	6·5	5,820
Chester	6	6,161
North Western		
West Lancashire	8	1,491
Bolton	7	7,698
Rochdale	10	4,174
Stockport	8	3,212

Nursing Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will extend the consideration of the fitness of applicants to run private care and nursing homes to include an assessment of the fitness of persons holding office in companies in ownership of homes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans to do so.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what sanctions are available to registration authorities when a successful prosecution for the operation of an unregistered home does not lead to the closure of the home.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It would be open to the registration authority to take fresh proceedings against the person running the home.

The Registered Homes (Amendment) Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) will, if it becomes law, extend the requirement to register to residential care homes with fewer than four residents.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action can be taken by registration authorities against private or voluntary residential care or nursing homes which fail to produce and provide residents with a written complaints procedure.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Persons registered under the Registered Homes Act 1984 are required to inform residents in residential care homes in writing how any complaints will be dealt with and to see that complaints received are fully investigated. If this requirement is not observed the response of the registration authority will depend on the particular circumstances of the case. The objective will always be to ensure that an effective complaints procedure is in place.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce a requirement for the public display of complaints procedures within residential care and nursing homes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans to do so.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about NHS prescription and related charges and optical vouchers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have today laid before the House regulations for increases in prescription charges in the national health service in England and Wales which will take effect from 1 April 1991. The prescription charge will increase by 35p from £3·05 to £3·40. The increase of nearly 11·5 per cent. reflects the higher cost of the pharmaceutical services and will provide about £17 million extra income to the resources available to the health service in England and Wales.

The new charge will continue to represent less than half the cost of an average prescription to the NHS. The existing exemption arrangements under which about four out of five of all prescription items are provided free of charge remain unchanged. The four-monthly and annual prepayment certificates will continue to be available, the fees for which will increase from £15·80 and £43·50 to £17·60 and £48·50 respectively. The effect of the wide-ranging exemption arrangements and the continued availability of prepayment certificates is that a charge will be paid in respect of less than 20 per cent. of all items dispensed in the NHS.

The charges for elastic stockings and tights, fabric supports and wigs supplied through the hospital service will also be increased from 1 April, as set out in table A.

Turning now to general dental services, at present those patients who are liable to pay a dental charge contribute a fixed proportion—75 per cent.—of the cost of each course of treatment, up to a maximum of £150. The House has already been informed that we have no plans to increase the proportional charge. However, the maximum charge has remained unchanged since 1988 and, from 1 April 1991, it will be raised to £200.

I am pleased to announce increased help for people who receive vouchers towards the cost of their spectacles. Overall the value of spectacle vouchers will increase by 6 per cent. from 1 April and the most frequently prescribed A, B and D vouchers will go up by 7·2, 6·1 and 6·5 per cent. respectively. In addition we shall be making changes to the voucher regulations to ensure that people with certain unusual optical prescriptions will be entitled both to free NHS sight tests and to the highest value spectacle vouchers.

Voucher values for the hospital eye service will rise by 6 per cent. for spectacle vouchers and 11·5 per cent. for contact lens vouchers. The maximum charge payable by patients will also increase.

The revised voucher values are set out in table B.

Table A
New hospital service charges from 1 April 1991 (present charge in brackets)

Elastic Stockings and tights, wigs and fabric supports	£	£
Each elastic stocking	3·40	(3·05)
Tights supplied through the hospital service	6·80	(6·10)
Surgical brassiere	14·50	(13·00)
Abdominal or spinal support	19·00	(17·00)
Stock modacrylic wig	29·00	(26·00
Partial human hair wig	74·50	(67·00)
Full bespoke human hair wig	108·00	(97·00)

Table B
National Health Service Spectacle Voucher Values

Voucher	*From 1 April 1991* £	*Present value* £
A	19·30	18·00
B	30·50	28·75
C	48·00	47·00
D	37·00	34·75
E	61·00	59·75
F	102·00	100·00
G[1]	102·00	100·00
H[1]	[2]32·15	[2]28·85
Complex lenses		
Single vision	3·60	3·50
Bifocal	19·25	18·75
Prisms per lens		
Single vision	4·10	4·00
Bifocal	5·10	5·00
Tints per lens		
Single vision	2·05	2·00

Voucher	*From 1 April 1991* £	*Present value* £
Bifocal	2·55	2·50
Photochromic per lens[1]		
Single vision	2·05	2·00
Bifocal	2·55	2·50
Small Frame Supplement	35·20	34·50
Supplement for Special Facial Characteristics[1]	35·20	34·50

[1] Hospital Eye Service
[2] Per Lens

PRIME MINISTER

Purchasing and Distribution

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Prime Minister what is the full annual cost, including overheads, of his Department's purchasing activity.

The Prime Minister: The full cost of the purchasing activity in the Cabinet Office for the current financial year is estimated to be £26 million.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Prime Minister how many people in the Cabinet Office are wholly or substantially involved in purchasing stores and distribution activities.

The Prime Minister: The number of people involved either wholly or substantially in these activities is nine.

Value for Money

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Prime Minister what measures of performance are employed by his Department to ensure value for money.

The Prime Minister: Although the nature of much of the Cabinet Office's work precludes assessment by way of formal performance measures, the identification of value-for-money targets is an integral part of the Department's planning and budgeting system. The system provides for the regular monitoring of progress towards targets and their achievement.

WALES

Duffryn Workshops

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will ensure that the West Wales training and enterprise council is adequately funded to avoid Duffryn Workshops in the Afan valley closing during the next month.

Mr. David Hunt: I announced on 28 February that over £8 million additional funding would be made available for employment training in Wales in 1991-92. It is the TEC's responsibility to determine which training providers can best meet the training requirements of the locality and to contract accordingly.

Primary Education

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the present state of education at primary level in Ceredigion and Dyfed.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The pattern of provision of maintained primary education in Dyfed is for the local education authority, not for me. However, in response to concerns expressed by some parents, mainly in the Teifi valley area, I have asked the local education authority for details of its introduction of categorisation of primary schools in terms of their use of Welsh as a medium of teaching.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans his Department has to help smokers give up smoking on No Smoking Day; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Welsh Office staff have been fully informed about this year's No Smoking Day and reminded of the standing invitation to join a smoking cessation group.

European Community

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many times he has visited Brussels concerning his Department's responsibilities in the European Community.

Mr. David Hunt: Since becoming Secretary of State for Wales on 4 May 1990 I have not visited Brussels to discuss matters relating to Wales and the European Community, but my Department is in close contact with the European Commission and the office of the United Kingdom permanent representative in Brussels, with officials visiting Brussels regularly to discuss specific policy interests. I am, of course, ready to visit Brussels when it becomes appropriate to do so in pursuit of my departmental responsibilities.

ENERGY

Gas Turbine Power Stations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many licences he has issued for combined cycle gas turbine power stations; what information he has on how many are under construction or for which construction contracts have been let; and which companies are building the plants.

Mr. Wakeham: The following combined cycle gas turbine generating—CCGT—stations have been given planning consent under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989:

Deeside Power Development Company Ltd.—Deeside Industrial Park, Clywd
Energy Resources Company Ltd.—Keadby, Humberside
National Power plc—Killingholme, South Humberside
National Power plc—Little Barford, Bedfordshire
PowerGen plc—Killingholme, South Humberside
PowerGen plc—Rye House, Hertfordshire
Teesside Power Ltd.—Wilton, Cleveland

The following applications for consent for CCGT generating stations are still being considered:

Barking Power Ltd.—Barking, London
Coryton Cogen Ltd.—Coryton, Essex
National Power plc—Didcot, Oxfordshire
National Power plc—Staythorpe, Nottinghamshire
PowerGen plc—Plymouth, Devon
Rugby Power Co. Ltd.—Rugby, Warwickshire
Texaco Ltd.—Angle Bay, Dyfed

The following projects incorporating CCGT technology have received approval under section 14(1) of the Energy Act 1976, that is, to establish an electricity generating station to be fuelled by natural gas, or for the conversion of an electricity generating station with a view to its being so fuelled:

Barking Power Ltd.—Barking, London
Berisford Bristar plc—Brigg, South Humberside
British Nuclear Fuels plc—Calder Hall, Sellafield
British Sugar plc—Bury St. Edmunds
Rugby Power Co. Ltd.—Rugby, Warwickshire
Coryton Cogen Ltd.—Coryton Essex
Deeside Power Development Company Ltd.—Deeside Industrial Park, Clywd
National Power plc—Killingholme, South Humberside
National Power plc—Little Barford, Bedfordshire
PowerGen plc—Rye House, Hertfordshire
Sheffield Heat and Power—Sheffield
Shell UK Exploration and Production—Shellhaven, Essex
Texaco Ltd./Mission Energy—Angle Bay, Dyfed
Wiggins Teape—Stoneywood Mill

The following projects incorporating CCGT technology have received approval under both sections 14(1) and 14(2) of the Energy Act 1976, that is, to establish an electricity generating station fuelled by natural gas and to enter into contractual arrangements for obtaining a supply of natural gas for an electricity generating station, or to extend any such arrangements:

The Boots Company plc—Beeston, Nottingham
BP Chemicals Ltd.—Baglan Bay, West Glamorgan
British Sugar plc—Wissington, Suffolk
Hawker Siddeley—Corby, South Humberside
Hawker Siddeley—Peterborough
ICI plc—Wilton, Cleveland
Lakeland Power—Roosecote, Cumbria
Leicester Energy Ltd.—Raw Dykes Road, Leicester
Occidental Petroleum—Flotta
PowerGen plc—Killingholme, South Humberside
Ranger Oil/PowerGen plc—South Denes, Great Yarmouth
Teesside Power Ltd.—Wilton, Cleveland

The further information requested by the hon. Member covers commercial matters for the companies concerned.

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the number of workplaces for civil servants in his Department; what proportion of the total number have an on-site nursery facility; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide a holiday play scheme; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide after-school child care facilities; what charges are made for use of any facility; what the net cost has been for the provision of these facilities; and what estimate he can make of any future expenditure.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department's staff are located at seven sites. In addition, there are various small offices where some two to three staff work. My Department does not provide nurseries, holiday play schemes, or after-school care and has no current plans to do so. However, my Department has participated in the holiday play scheme organised in the Westminster area by the office of the Minister for the Civil Service.

Purchasing and Distribution

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many people in his Department are wholly or substantially involved in purchasing stores and distribution activities.

Mr. Wakeham: These figures are reported annually to the Treasury's central unit on purchasing. The number reported for 1989-90 was seven.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the full annual cost, including overheads, of his Department's purchasing activity.

Mr. Wakeham: These figures are reported annually to the Treasury's central unit on purchasing. The amount reported for 1989-90 was £293,000.

Members of the European Parliament

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many letters he has received, since 4 January 1990, from Members of the European Parliament concerning local or national matters; and if he will make it his practice, where the former are concerned, to provide the hon. Member for the local constituency with copies of any such correspondence for his or her information.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Bolton, South-East (Mr Young) on 4 April 1990, at column *629*.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to support smokers in his Department to give up smoking on the eighth No Smoking Day on 13 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department has no plans to publicise this occasion, but a two-day exhibition on various health-related issues is being organised for early April as part of the Look After Your Heart campaign. An important feature of the exhibition will be making information and advice available to staff about smoking.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Soviet Union

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made in respect of Yefim Rokhvarg, Iosef Roginsky and Evgeny Pisarevsky of Leningrad who have been unsuccessfully applying to leave the Soviet Union.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Mr. Pisarevsky's name was included in a list of cases brought to the attention of the Soviet authorities in advance of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's recent visit to Moscow. We shall take account of the cases of Mr. Rokhvarg and Mr. Roginsky in our future representations.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made in respect of Vladimir Kodess, David Gurevich and Yuri Gindin of Leningrad, who have been unsuccessfully applying to leave the Soviet Union.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We can certainly raise these cases with the Soviet authorities, but in order to make our representations most effective we shall need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations

have been made in respect of Lev Lazarevich Kunin and Pavel Izakson of Moscow, who have been unsuccessfully applying to leave the Soviet Union.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Mr. Kunin's name was included in a list of cases brought to the attention of the Soviet authorities in advance of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's recent visit to Moscow. We shall take account of the case of Mr. Izakson in our future representations.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made in respect of Vladimir Gorodetsky, who has been unsuccessfully applying to leave the Soviet Union.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have now added Mr. Gorodetsky's name to the list of cases regularly brought to the attention of the Soviet authorities and will make firm representations in support of his application to leave the Soviet Union.

Ghana

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made recently to the Ghanaian Government concerning law No. 78 which allows for execution for political offences, and of law 4 which allows imprisonment without access to legal advice.

Mrs. Chalker: We have made no recent representations about these laws. We maintain regular ministerial and official contact with the Government of Ghana and they are well aware of our concern at some of their internal policies and on those concerning human rights issues.

Immigration

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current length of time applicants wishing to join spouses in the United Kingdom are having to wait for interview by British high commission staff in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh; and what action is in hand to reduce waiting times.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) on 20 February, at column *175*. During the past two years we have considerably reduced waiting times in the Indian sub-continent. No first-time applicant for settlement now waits longer than nine months for interview. We have increased staffing levels in Bombay and New Delhi. The construction of new premises in Islamabad, Dhaka and New Delhi and the move to new premises in Bombay will improve administrative procedures and are expected to reduce waiting times.

Child Care

Dr. Marek To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the number of workplaces for civil servants in his Department; what proportion of the total number have an on-site nursery facility; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide a holiday play scheme; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide after-school child care facilities; what charges are made for use of any facility; what the net cost has been for the provision of these facilities; and what estimate he can make of any future expenditure.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is as follows:

DIPLOMATIC WING

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is located in 15 buildings in the United Kingdom. Members of the Diplomatic Service also staff over 200 posts overseas. None has an on-site nursery facility, holiday play scheme or after-school child care facility at present, although places in the Westminster holiday play scheme, administered by the office of the Minister for the Civil Service, are open to FCO staff working in the Westminster area.

An on-site workplace nursery is being set up at Hanslope park, near Milton Keynes. Start-up costs are currently estimated at £45,000.

AID WING

The number of workplaces for Overseas Development Administration staff is three. None has an on-site nursery facility or provides after-school child care facilities. Two provide a holiday play scheme; places on the Westminster holiday play scheme are open to staff at the third. The ODA also provides accommodation for the Westminster holiday play scheme.

Details of charges, net cost and future expenditure in respect of the two workplaces which provide holiday play schemes are as follows:

	A	*B*
Charges made for use of facility	£3·25 per child per day plus £5 annual registration fee	£5 per child per day
Net cost of provision of facility	£850 (1990-91)	£1,600
Estimate of any further expenditure	The Aid Wing expects to support both schemes in 1991-92 but precise figures are not yet available	

Members of the European Parliament

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many letters he has received since 4 January 1990 from Members of the European Parliament concerning local or national matters; and if he will make it his practice where the former are concerned to provide the hon. Member for the local constituency with copies of any such correspondence for his or her information.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The information is not readily available in the form requested. Where Members of the European Parliament raise matters in correspondence which are exclusively of local interest, the practice is to reply suggesting that the MEP should refer the matter to the hon. Member for the constituency concerned.

A separate arrangement applies in respect of consular cases raised by MEPs. Our normal practice is to copy our response to the appropriate hon. Member in view of the direct personal involvement in such cases of the latter's constituent.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to support smokers in his Department to give up smoking on the eighth No Smoking Day on 13 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This Department will be publicising No Smoking Day with posters and leaflets. Giving up smoking also features as part of this Department's programme of occupational health for both the diplomatic and aid wings of the FCO.

Israel

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the help and support being given by Her Majesty's ambassador in Tel Aviv to British firms seeking contracts in Israel for housing Soviet immigrants; and what progress has been made in discussions with the Government of Israel in that regard.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Discussions are continuing between the Export Credits Guarantee Department and the Israeli authorities concerning the establishment of a line of credit to finance housing projects to be located in Israel. This will have to be on the condition that none of the funds are to be spent on housing in the occupied territories including east Jerusalem.

Jordan

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the difficulties experienced in Jordan in obtaining dried milk for babies, as a result of an embargo imposed at Aqaba by United States forces; and whether he has taken any steps to relieve this situation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have no information to suggest that activity in support of United Nations sanctions against Iraq by United States forces in the Red sea has created a shortage of dried milk in Jordan.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Westminster County Court

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General whether any counter-notice was served in respect of a notice to terminate the lease of Westminster county court.

The Attorney-General: Notice to terminate the lease of Westminster county court has not yet been given. No counter-notice has therefore been served.

Court of Appeal

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Attorney-General how many convictions have been quashed by the Court of Appeal criminal division since the coming into force of section 43 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 on 31 July 1989.

The Attorney-General: Between 1 August 1989 and 22 February 1991, a total of 382 convictions were quashed.

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Attorney-General how many retrials have been ordered by the Court of Appeal criminal division since 31 July 1989.

The Attorney-General: Between 1 August 1989 and 22 February 1991, four retrials were ordered.

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Attorney-General how many persons convicted after a trial on indictment had their sentences remitted by the Court of Appeal in each of the last two years.

The Attorney-General: The Court of Appeal has varied the sentence pronounced in the court in the following number of cases. These figures include cases which were committed for sentence to the Crown court as well as cases tried on indictment. The latter are not held separately.

	Cases
1989	1,314
1990	1,526

Incendiary Weapons

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Government have ratified the 1981 specific conventional weapons convention and the protocol on prohibitions or restrictions on the use of incendiary weapons.

The Attorney-General: The United Kingdom signed the convention on prohibitions or restrictions on the use of certain conventional weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects on 10 April 1981. It has not ratified the convention or accepted the protocol on prohibitions or restrictions on the use of incendiary weapons—protocol III to the convention.

ENVIRONMENT

Woodland (Planning)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to call in any application by a local authority to itself for permission for any development which would destroy ancient woodland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: No. My right hon. Friend's policy is to exercise his power to call in planning applications very selectively, and generally only when planning issues of more than local importance are involved. However, my right hon. Friend will pay close attention to any request by the Nature Conservancy Council that a planning application which affects ancient woodland which has been classed as a site of special scientific interest should be called in for his decision.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), then the Minister for Housing and Planning, announced on 25 July 1990, *Official Report*, column *372*, that my right hon. Friend intends to amend the Town and Country Planning (Development Plans) (England) Direction 1981 so as to require local authorities to report to him any development proposal by them or on their land which would conflict with the development plan, to enable him to consider calling in such proposals for his own decision.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of community charge payers in Exeter who *(a)* received

rebates in 1989-90 under the rates rebate scheme *(b)* received relief in 1990-91 under the community charge relief scheme and *(c)* will receive refunds under the community charge scheme.

Mr. Key: An average of 8,327 households in Exeter received a rate rebate in 1989-90; around 16,800 individuals in Exeter have benefited from transitional relief in 1990-91. No information is yet available on the number of people in Exeter who will be helped by the community charge reduction scheme. However, if Exeter district council sets its charge for 1991-92 at or above its scheme charge of £344, a couple living in an averagely rated property who have not moved since 31 March 1990 could look forward to a joint reduction of £183.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what income was received from the standard community charge in *(a)* Westminster and *(b)* Rotherham during 1990-91; what is his estimate of this income in 1991-92; and whether this income is taken into account in the determination of standard spending grant.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 7 March 1991]:* Income from standard community charges is not taken into account in the revenue support grant settlement.

Budgeted income from standard community charges (£ million)

	1990-91
Westminster city council	4·5
Rotherham MBC	[1]1·0

[1] Pre-capping estimate.

The information for 1991-92 is not yet available.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what sum will be provided from central funds in support of the local authorities of *(a)* Wandsworth, *(b)* Westminster and *(c)* Rotherham in 1990-91; and what is the estimated (1) expenditure, (2) central support and (3) per capita expenditure of each of those authorities in 1991-92.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 7 March 1991]:* The information about central Government support is as follows:

	External support 1990-91 £ million	*External support 1991-92 £ million*
Wandsworth	213·5	235·9
Westminster	153·5	188·1
Rotherham	119·5	124·2

The external support is paid to the receiving authority's collection fund. It finances expenditure by policy and fire and civil defence authorities as well as expenditure by the charging authority.

Information regarding their budgeted expenditure in 1991-92 has not yet been submitted to the Secretary of State for the Environment by these authorities.

Mr. Duffy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grant per poll tax payer is received by Sheffield.

Mr. Key: Government grants, consisting of revenue support grant, special grants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge benefit grant and transitional relief grant, per head of relevant population in 1990-91 are £309 in Sheffield.

Tyne and Wear UDC

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) of 27 February, *Official Report*, column *528*, if he will indicate how the figure of 5,500 as the number of jobs created as a result of the existence of the Tyne and Wear UDC was calculated;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 30 January, *Official Report*, column *661*, how his Department calculated the figure of 1,630 as the number of jobs created or gained, to March 1990, in the Tyne and Wear UDC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The jobs figures of 1,630 to March 1990 and 5,500 to date have been derived from three sources by the Tyne and Wear development corporation:

1. Property development projects in receipt of city grant for commercial end use.
2. Business development projects where financial support is given or committed to assist relocation or expansion.
3. Property and business development projects promoted and assisted by the Corporation, in the main on sites they have developed, but not involving direct grant assistance.

In all cases the jobs figures are based on actual employees together with jobs estimated by the company to be created within two years of the completion of the investment to which the company is committed.

Habitats Directive

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what he is doing to speed up progress towards the adoption of the habitats directive; and what is his estimate of the cost of ensuring effective implementation of the directive.

Mr. Trippier: In recent months my Department has taken an active part in discussions with our European Community partners to agree a text for a directive. I intend to reinforce our support at the Environment Council on 18 March. The cost of implementing the directive in the Community as a whole is expected to be substantial, but definitive figures are not yet available. The United Kingdom system of nature conservation is relatively well developed and the additional costs in the United Kingdom are not expected to be great.

Royal Parks Constabulary

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail the total cost of the Royal Parks Constabulary for the last three years and the number of serving officers and establishment.

Sir George Young: The figures are:

Year	*Cost £*	*Manpower*	
		Authorised	*Actual*
1987-88	2,381,000	164	151
1988-89	2,876,000	163	156
1989-90	3,346,000	163	152

The cost figures exclude accommodation and supervision which are not separately identifiable. Manpower figures are as at 31 December of each year.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the differences in pay and conditions of service for the Royal Parks Constabulary from equivalent Metropolitan police force ranks.

Sir George Young: Basic pay rates in the Royal Parks Constabulary are set at 85·5 per cent. of the equivalent rates for Home Department police forces. Officers receive the same rate of London weighting, but they do not receive the special London allowance paid to officers in the Metropolitan police. RPC officers are members of the civil service pension scheme which is non-contributory. Metropolitan police officers are members of the standard Home Department forces pension scheme which is contributory. Other conditions of service, including discipline codes, are similar for both forces.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number and types of vehicles used by the Royal Parks Constabulary.

Sir George Young: The Royal Parks Constabulary currently has a fleet of 28 vehicles:

	Number
Saloon cars (Ford Escort/Vauxhall Astra)	6
Vans (Ford Transit/Freight Rover Sherpa)	8
Personnel Carriers (Ford Transit)	2
Land Rover	1
Motorcycles (BMW)	11

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the duties of the Royal Parks Constabulary in the hours between locking the park gates and unlocking them.

Sir George Young: Of the 21 parks, gardens and open spaces policed by the Royal Parks Constabulary, 10 are fully closed at night. In the closed parks officers check unoccupied premises—park yards, restaurants, sports clubs, and so on—and prevent unauthorised access to the locked areas. In addition, some of the closed parks have security-sensitive premises located within them and officers carry out security patrols.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of arrests and successful prosecutions by type of offences for the last three years of the Royal Parks Constabulary.

Sir George Young: All persons arrested by the Royal Parks Constabulary are handed over to the Metropolitan police for processing. My Department does not keep a central record of the outcome of prosecutions. The numbers of reported crimes and arrests are:

	1988		*1989*		*1990*	
	Crimes	*Arrests*	*Crimes*	*Arrests*	*Crimes*	*Arrests*
Crimes of violence	51	25	28	14	37	25
Sexual offences	62	47	77	41	74	42
Burglary	45	1	52	9	47	5
Robbery	33	3	28	5	16	5
Theft	420	95	448	58	470	76
Criminal damage	70	27	80	24	59	20
Other	338	414	347	333	332	320
TOTAL	1,069	612	1,060	484	1,035	493

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Royal Parks Constabulary's duties and responsibilities were last reviewed.

Sir George Young: An inspection of the force was carried out by one of Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary in 1980. The constabulary and its arrangements have since been strengthened to reflect the increased emphasis on security protection which now forms an important part of its duties.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has discussed with local authorities the winding-up of the urban development corporations and the transfer of their functions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what are the proposed dates for the winding-up of the 10 urban development corporations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: UDCs were given indicative lifetimes at designation. On that basis, their projected wind-up dates would be:

	Year
First Generation:	
London Docklands	1996
Merseyside	1996
Second Generation:	
Black Country	1997
Teesside	1997
Trafford Park	1997
Tyne and Wear	1997
Third Generation:	
Bristol	1994
Central Manchester	1993
Leeds	1993
Sheffield	1995

We are keeping their lifetimes under review, and will discuss the implications of wind-up with local authorities and others in due course.

Electricians

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward a mandatory registration scheme for electricians.

Mr. Yeo: No. I am satisfied that the existing self-regulation of electrical contractors is operating satisfactorily.

Value for Money

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures of performance are employed by his Department to ensure value for money.

Mr. Heseltine: The Department's annual report—Cm. 1508—sets out a comprehensive range of performance measures associated with my expenditure programmes and in chapter A11 describes a number of other mechanisms used by my Department to secure value for money.

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his oral answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column 16, what estimate he has made of the number of civil servants involved, technically or administratively, in requests from neighbouring Arab states in the Gulf for help in cleaning up oil slicks.

Mr. Heseltine: In my Department, which has had the lead in environmental aspects of the Gulf conflict, around 20 civil servants have been involved to some degree in responding to these issues, including requests for assistance from the Gulf states. For about five staff, this has been a major part of their work. In other Departments closely involved the position is similar.

Community Charge

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by district or London authority in rank order the percentage of budgeted community charge so far received by each authority, starting with that authority which thus far has received the largest percentage.

Mr. Key: I am arranging for the information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many people within the city of Gloucester will benefit from the community charge reduction scheme;

(2) what amounts will be made available to residents of Gloucester as a result of the community charge reduction scheme.

Mr. Key: Information on the total number of community charge payers in each charging authority who will benefit from a reduction and the amount of reduction scheme grant payable to each authority will be available once charging authorities have submitted their claims to my Department. However, a couple who have not moved since 31 March 1990 living in a property that had an average rates bill for the Gloucester area could look forward to a joint reduction in their bills for 1991-92 of £197.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, given declared community charge levels by each district authority, what is the increased payment per couple which will be required before the community charge reduction scheme applies.

Mr. Key: Many chargepayers will receive reductions even if charging authorities set their personal community charge below or at the same level as last year.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to support smokers in his Department to give up smoking on the eighth No Smoking Day on 13 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: Posters advertising the day and information leaflets will be displayed in all the Department's main offices throughout the country and an article placed in the in-house journal. Guidance has been given to all staff on damage to health caused by smoking. Welfare officers are on hand to give help and advice to staff who wish to give up smoking and on the availability of cessation classes.

Housing, Waveney

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are the criteria for housing investment programme allocations for non-urban authorities; and how they were applied for 1991-92 for Waveney district council;

(2) how the general needs index applies to Government grant aid for housing purposes for Waveney district council for 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Housing investment programme—HIP—allocations for 1991-92 for non-metropolitan district authorities, including Waveney, as well as for metropolitan districts and London authorities, were made in part by references to an objective measure of need—the generalised needs index—and in part on the basis of recommendations by my Department's housing regional controllers to reflect their knowledge of local needs and circumstances. Local authorities were able to explain their needs and priorities to the Department in their annual HIP returns and strategy statements and subsequent HIP meetings.

The generalised needs index is not used directly in the distribution of Government grant aid, although both housing revenue account subsidy and specified capital grants, mainly for house renovations, are available to authorities in support of housing investment programme expenditure.

Housing Authorities

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to encourage local housing authorities wishing to become enabling authorities instead of direct providers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: My Department has issued guidance to all local authorities on how to develop their enabling role: I am sending my hon. Friend a copy and placing a copy in the Library. I am pleased by the extent to which many authorities are responding to encouragement to adopt a mainly enabling role, assessing the needs of their areas and helping housing associations, private landlords and developers to meet those needs, rather than concentrating exclusively on direct provision of council housing.

Urban Programme

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the report from Victor Hausner and Associates on their research into the use of the urban programme in creating employment opportunities for black and ethnic minority communities in the inner cities.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend hopes to receive the final report of this research project soon.

Saltley Renewal Area

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the purpose of the visit by the Minister for Housing and Planning to the Saltley renewal area on 26 February; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I visited Saltley to see the progress being made in regenerating this area of older private housing in Birmingham and to meet some of the residents. I am impressed by the partnership between the city council, the Heartlands urban development agency, the housing associations and the residents and the way in which the programme for improvement is being carried forward, using to good effect the additional resources which we have made available over several years.

Radioactive Material

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his present policy in respect of the dry storage of radioactive material.

Mr. Trippier: Other than on licensed nuclear sites, no person shall keep, use, or cause or permit to be kept or used, radioactive material unless he is registered under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 or exempted from being so. Dry storage of spent nuclear fuel is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Dartmoor National Park

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he hopes to sign the order varying the Dartmoor national park boundary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The statutory period for representations ended on 28 February. A decision on the boundary variation order will be reached as soon as we have considered all the representations made.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures he has in respect of the volume of disposal of low-level radioactive waste *(a)* at Drigg and *(b)* at local authority landfill sites.

Mr. Trippier: The latest figures showing volumes of low-level radioactive waste disposals to the disposal facility operated by BNFL at Drigg, Cumbria are set out in the BNFL publication "Radioactive Discharges and Monitoring of the Environment 1989", a copy of which is in the Library.

Small amounts of low-level radioactive waste are authorised under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 for disposal at local landfill sites following careful safety assessments in each case. However, the Department does not maintain a central record of the volume of waste involved in these disposals.

Colliery Spoil

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received the Ove Arup report on the monitoring of the use of the evaluative framework for the disposal of colliery spoil; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Although there has been a decrease in the amount of colliery spoil produced in recent years, its disposal is still a problem. Version 1 of the evaluative framework, published in 1987, was designed to assist decision making on future disposal schemes for deep mine colliery spoil. It has encouraged systematic investigation of both environmental and financial aspects of alternative options.

My Department commissioned research to monitor the effectiveness of the framework and it has now been modified to include the lessons learnt. The contractors have now submitted their main research report to my Department and published version 2 of the evaluative framework. I have today placed copies in the House Library. I am sure that the publication of this updated version will improve its usefulness to both the local authorities and the coal industry and will help resolve many of the problems that have been experienced.

London Boroughs Grant Scheme

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to approve a budget for the London boroughs grant scheme; and what steps he is taking to ensure the future well-being of those schemes approved for the current financial year.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 6 March 1991]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no power to approve a budget for the London boroughs grants scheme. This is a matter for agreement by the constituent boroughs. However, at the request of the London boroughs grants committee, he has agreed to exercise his power to set a limit on the maximum expenditure of the scheme in 1991-92 and has set it at £30·155 million.

Planning Applications

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions in the current parliamentary Session he has had local authority planning applications referred to him which contravened both the local county structure plan and the local rural areas plan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 8 March 1991]:* Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

At present, local authorities are required to report to my right hon. Friend only those proposals which would materially conflict with or prejudice the implementation of the development plan. In 1990 local authorities reported to my right hon. Friend 278 proposals which, in their opinion, materially conflicted with a development plan.

Benzene

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the legal benzene limits in petrol in other countries of the world; and what is the legal benzene limit in petrol in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply.

The benzene content of petrol in the United Kingdom, in common with all the other EC member states, is limited to a maximum of 5 per cent. by volume by EC directive 85/210/EEC. The Department of Energy does not hold information on legal benzene limits in non-EC countries, but we understand that there is no country which imposes a lower legal limit.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the level of benzene in *(a)* four-star petrol, *(b)* three-star petrol and *(c)* unleaded petrol.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply.

In 1988 petrol quality surveys in the United Kingdom market suggested a range of benzene contents for leaded petrol of 2·9 to 4·7 per cent. and for unleaded petrol of 3·4 to 4·5 per cent. Three-star petrol is no longer sold in the United Kingdom.

Genetically Modified Organisms

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many genetically modified organisms have been released to the environment in the United Kingdom in the years 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.

The number of releases of genetically modified organisms into the environment since 1986 are as follows:

Year	*Number of releases*
1986	1
1987	3
1988	6
1989	5
1990	[1]13
1991	[2]Nil

[1] In 1990, in addition to 13 small-scale field trials, one product —a genetically modified bakers yeast—was cleared for marketing.
[2] In 1991, no releases have taken place to date. One trial has been cleared to take place later in 1991.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Community Charge

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much he expects to save from community charge benefit in Scotland as a result of the introduction of the community charge reduction scheme.

Mr. Mellor: Some £15 million.

Mr. Dover: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if community charge reductions operative from 1 April will be taken into account in the calculation of future retail prices indices.

Mr. Maples: Yes.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the reduction in the retail prices index, if the community charge were abolished and the expenditure transferred to the central Exchequer.

Mr. Maples: It is not the practice to provide estimates of the effects on the retail prices index of such hypothetical changes to the public finances. The effects would depend on how the expenditure currently financed by the community charge would subsequently be funded and how the Central Statistical Office would treat the abolition of the community charge in the RPI.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the change in the real and the nominal exchange rate of sterling against *(a)* the deutschmark, *(b)* the United States dollar and *(c)* the yen, between the last quarter of 1986 and the last quarter of 1990.

Mr. Maples: The nominal and real exchange rate changes between the last quarter of 1986 and the third quarter of 1990 are shown in the table. There are several ways in which changes in the real exchange rate can be measured. The table shows the changes indicated by the different increases in GDP deflators over the relevant period.

	Change 1986Q4 to 1990Q3 per cent.	
DM/Sterling	*$/Sterling*	*Yen/Sterling*
3·38	30·15	17·93
[1]21·36	[2]45·73	[3]45·82

[1] Real DM/Sterling.
[2] Real $/Sterling.
[3] Real Yen/Sterling.

Data are not yet available to calculate real exchange rates up to the fourth quarter of 1990.

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the cost of provision for child care for civil servants.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In 1989 the Treasury gave Departments discretion to contribute towards the costs of child care facilities where this offered value for money and could be contained within existing departmental running costs limits. Information on how much has been spent on child care is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Birds and Animals (Seizures)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state any conveniently available figures for the number of occasions in the past five years when Customs officers have delivered seized specimens of birds or animals to airlines for return to their country of origin.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Live creatures seized by Customs under endangered species legislation are, whenever feasible, returned to their country of origin for

eventual release back into the wild. This is in accordance with one of the principles established in the Washington convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora. Figures are held centrally, in conveniently accessible form, only from 1989 onwards. In that time there has been one operation involving the return of birds to Turkey.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what quarantine arrangements have been made in the new Stansted terminal for wild birds and other animals confiscated in accordance with the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: None. Quarantine facilities are not generally available at, ports and airports. Their absence does not impair Customs ability to enforce the controls on endangered species.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action was taken by Customs and Excise officials in relation to the unlawful concealment of goldfinches in the luggage of Mr. I. H. of Wood Green, Essex, discovered at Stansted airport on 18 September 1990.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Action was taken to seize and forfeit the birds under the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979.

Civil Servants, South Wales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to improve the career structure for civil servants employed in south Wales.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Although there are no central plans specific to south Wales, my right hon. Friend keeps all aspects of the staffing of the civil service under review.

Members of the European Parliament

Dr. Godman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many letters he has received since 4 January 1990 from Members of the European Parliament concerning local or national matters; and if he will make it his practice where the former are concerned to provide the hon. Member for the local constituency with copies of any such correspondence for his or her information.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Since 4 January 1990 Treasury Ministers have received 79 letters from Members of the European Parliament concerning local or United Kingdom matters. Where Members of the European Parliament raise matters in correspondence which are exclusively of local interest, the practice is to reply suggesting that the MEP should refer the matter to the hon. Member for the constituency concerned. As with other correspondence, replies to such communications would normally be copied to the hon. Member concerned only if the MEP had himself copied his letter in this way.

Alcohol Duties

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what he bases his February forecast of a 13·3 per cent. increase in the revenue from alcohol duties for 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Several factors were taken into account in deriving the forecast which is based on the Chancellor's 1990 autumn statement. The most important of these were the forecast growth in real consumers' expenditure in 1990, the 1990 Budget changes in excise duties on alcoholic drinks and the path of revenue receipts in the year to date at the time the forecast was made.

An estimate of the revenue outturn in 1990-91 will be available when the Chancellor issues his 1991 Financial Statement and Budget Report.

Tobacco Taxation

Mr. Amos: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received in favour of *(a)* an increase in the taxation of tobacco products and *(b)* decreasing the taxation of tobacco products in his forthcoming Budget; if he will list them; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have received many letters this year about the taxation of tobacco products. Those asking for a freeze outnumber those asking for an increase. I do not propose to list all those that have written. However, most of those asking for a freeze consist of small shopkeepers acting on a campaign organised by the Tobacco Alliance while the majority of those asking for an increase consist of various health organisations, regional health authorities and members of the public.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the yield, in current and in real terms, from tobacco tax in each of the last five years for which figures are available; what is the estimated yield for the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Following is the available information:

£ million

	Tobacco Duty Receipts		*Estimates of VAT on Tobacco Expenditure*	
	At Current prices	*At 1989-90 prices*	*At Current pices*	*At 1989-90 prices*
1985-86	4,459	5,470	920	1,130
1986-87	4,755	5,650	990	1,180
1987-88	4,767	5,450	1,000	1,150
1988-89	4,990	5,380	1,050	1,130
1989-90	5,035	5,035	1,080	1,080

The 1990 autumn statement forecast of receipts in current prices from tobacco duty for 1990-91 was £5·5 billion. Comparable forecasts for the other elements shown in the table are not available. The next estimate for the yield from tobacco duty in 1990-91 will be published in the Financial Statement and Budget Report.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect on the retail prices index of raising the tax on a packet of 20 cigarettes by *(a)* 20p, *(b)* 32p and *(c)* 50p; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: If the increases in tax were fully reflected in cigarette prices the direct effects on the retail prices index would be approximately as follows:

Increases in tax on 20 cigarettes	*Percentage points effect on RPI*
20p	+0·4
32p	+0·6
50p	+0·9

Mr. Amos: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue would arise in a full financial year from raising the tax on a packet of 20 cigarettes by *(a)* 20p, *(b)* 32p and *(c)* 50p; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The revenue yield from these tax increases can be estimated by using the tax revenue ready reckoner in table 4.7 of chapter 4 of the 1990 autumn statement.

Capital Transfers

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he issued any instructions in the period 1982 to 1987 to allow exemption by the Inland Revenue on capital transfers between companies from capital duties; and when such transfers were treated as gifts;

(2) if he will publish the guidelines used in exempting capital transfers between companies from capital duty in the period 1982 to 1987;

(3) if he will furnish an estimate of the value of capital transfers between United Kingdom stockbrokers and their parent banks exempted from capital duty in the period 1982 to 1987 by the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 8 March 1991]:* Capital duty was charged not on capital transfers but on contributions of capital to a company—for example on the formation of the company. The scope of the duty was laid down in legislation.

It is not clear what information the hon. Member has in mind. If he will write to me I shall be able to consider his points in more detail.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will specify the circumstances in which a person in receipt of mobility allowance is not required to pay *(a)* VAT or *(b)* car tax on the purchase of a motor vehicle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 7 March 1991]:* All handicapped persons, including those in receipt of mobility allowance, are eligible for VAT and car tax relief when they purchase a motor vehicle, but only if that vehicle has been designed or substantially and permanently adapted for their use.

Cigarette Prices

Mr. Amos: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the ratio of the price of an average priced packet of 20 cigarettes to the average weekly wage in each of *(a)* 1961, *(b)* 1971, *(c)* 1981 and *(d)* the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples: The table shows the average price of 20 cigarettes as a percentage of average gross weekly wages for adult male manual workers in manufacturing industries.

	Per cent.
October 1961	1·4
October 1971	0·9
October 1981	0·8
October 1990	0·7

EMPLOYMENT

Disabled People

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the measures taken by Her Majesty's Government since 1979 to assist in the employment of disabled people.

Mr. Jackson: The Government have an impressive record over recent years on measures which assist people with disabilities to find and keep employment and to develop within it. My Department has lead responsibility within government for this matter and in 1989-90 the Department spent around £400 million on helping 225,000 people with disabilities through its general and special programmes and services.

Initiatives aimed at improving the prospects for people with disabilities, including their employment prospects, are promoted by Government Departments in co-operation with a range of agencies and organisations. Measures taken since 1979 by my Department and other Government Departments are listed in the table. Other measures introduced before 1979 have also been continuing since then. People with disabilities can also participate alongside non-disabled people wherever possible in much mainstream provision as is not mentioned here.

1979: The Fit for Work Award Scheme was introduced by the Department of Employment Group.

1981: The Department of Employment Group replaced Disablement Advisory Committees by Committees for the Employment of Disabled People.

1981: A review of the Department of Employment Group's Employment Rehabilitation Service was undertaken.

1982: Report by the Department of Employment Group on its Review of Assistance to Disabled People.

1982: The Department of Social Security's Mobility Allowance, for people who are unable to walk or virtually unable to walk due to physical disablement, was made tax free.

1982: The Department of Trade and Industry introduced support for Information Technology projects for people with disabilities.

1983: The Department of Employment Group guaranteed a one year training place under the Youth Training Scheme to all those leaving school without a job to go to regardless of race, sex, religion, or disability up to the age of 18 years.

1983: The Department of Employment Group introduced the Disablement Advisory Service which helps advise employers on how to integrate people with disabilities into their workforce and promote good employment and development policies.

1983: The Department of Employment Group's Individual Training Throughout with an Employer scheme was introduced under which people with disabilities were placed with an employer and given training in a skill or semi-skill on an individual basis.

1983: The Department of Employment Group introduced its Release For Training scheme which provided support for people with disabilities already in employment who were experiencing difficulties which required a period of essential training.

1983: The Department of Employment Group introduced the Professional Training Scheme which provided assistance, to a maximum of three years, for people with disabilities who had been refused an LEA grant, to help meet the costs of courses of higher level study, including university courses.

1984: The Department of Employment Group launched the Code of Good Practice on the Employment of Disabled People.

1984: The Department of Employment Group published a report on Proposals for the Development of the Employment Rehabilitation Service.

1984: The Department of Employment Group's Asset Centres were set up to provide assessment and rehabilitation services in areas not well served by Employment Rehabilitation Centres.

1984: Introduction in Scotland under the Building Standards (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1984 of Part T 'Facilities for Disabled Persons' which ensures that account is taken of the needs of people with disabilities in the construction of most new buildings and during alterations and extensions of certain existing buildings.

1985: The Department of Employment Group introduced the Sheltered Placement Scheme to enable individuals with severe disabilities to work in open employment alongside non-disabled workers.

1985: The Department of Employment Group introduced the Wider Opportunities Training Programme aimed to help unemployed people, including people with disabilities, to improve their competitiveness for employment or further vocational training.

1985: The Department of Employment Group introduced the Job Training Scheme which provided vocational training to those who were unemployed to help them compete in the labour market and had relaxed eligibility rules for people with disabilities.

1985: The Department of Employment Group set up the Residential Training Unit to provide funds centrally for Residential Training. Four residential training colleges and a number of private training colleges are supported to provide training in a wide range of courses and catering for a variety of disabilities, most offering qualifications.

1985: The Department of Employment Group introduced the Other Training Arrangements scheme which provided additional funding to purchase training for people with disabilities where mainstream training precluded certain skill areas or specialist provision was needed.

1985: The Building (Fourth Amendment) Regulations 1985 require new offices, shops, single storey independent educational buildings and other single story buildings in England and Wales to which the public is to be admitted to be constructed with suitable means of access for people with disabilities.

1985: The Companies Act introduced a requirement for Directors' Reports for companies with over 250 employees to state company policy on the recruitment, retention and development of staff with disabilities.

1985: The Office for the Minister for the Civil service issued a Code of Practice on the Employment of People with Disabilities in the Civil Service which aimed to help departments and agencies to achieve equality of opportunity for people with disabilities and to make full use of the skills and abilities they possess.

1986: The Department of Trade and Industry launched the 'Concerned Technology' scheme which supported Information Technology projects such as information provision (e.g. through computer databases) for people with disabilities and the purchase of home work units for people with disabilities.

1986: The Department of Employment Group introduced two year Youth Training Scheme providing vocational training leading to specific qualifications. Premium grants were available for a number of high quality training places for young people with special needs, with additional funding for young people with disabilities with particular training needs. Other special arrangements for people with disabilities included extension of the YTS guarantee up to the age of 21 years for people with disabilities who needed to stay in full time education, relaxed eligibility criterial and residential training where appropriate.

1986: The Health and Safety Commission's action programme on occupational health encouraged employers to have access to occupational health advice. This assists job retention and job adaptation when people in work become disabled.

1987: The Building (Disabled People) Regulations 1987 came into force applying access regulations for people with disabilities to three additional categories of multi-storey premises: namely, factories, independent educational establishments and premises to which the public is admitted.

1987: Under the Department of Employment Group's New Job Training Scheme four special schemes were introduced to help people with disabilities gain maximum benefit from training. These were:

Special Aids to Employment;
Adaptations to Premises and Equipment;
Personal Reader Service for the Blind; and
Communication Service for the Deaf.

1987: The Department of Employment Group published its Asset Evaluation Report which identified the strength and weakness of Assets and Employment Rehabilitation Centres.

1987: The Department of Employment Group published its report on the Development of the Employment Rehabilitation Service.

1988: The Department of Health made available sophisticated "Environmental Control" equipment designed to be used in employment or education with the users' own computer.

1988: The Department of Employment Group evaluated its Sheltered Placement Scheme.

1988: Employment Training was introduced by the Department of Employment Group to help unemployed people gain the skills and experience needed to compete for jobs locally. Aspects of Employment Training which particularly assist people with disabilities, include relaxed eligibility criteria; individual training plans; in depth assessment; part-time training; residential training; and special help and provision where necessary.

1988: The Department of Employment Group's Special Training Provision was introduced as part of Employment Training to pay for the more specialised assessment and training needs of people with disabilities and could also be used for training lasting up to a maximum of two years where extra time was necessary.

1989: Local housing authorities given wide discretion under the Local Government Housing Act 1989 to approve disabled facilities grants for works to make a dwelling or building suitable for the accommodation, welfare or employment of a disabled occupant.

1989: The Department of Transport's "Transport and Disability—A Statement of Aims and Priorities" was issued setting out the improvements to public and private transport which have opened up new opportunities for people with disabilities and identifies the aims for the future.

1989: The Department of Employment Group published Building on Ability, a guide for training people with disabilities.

1990: The Department of Employment Group introduced Youth Training with new flexibilities for young people with disabilities.

1990: The Office for the Minister for the Civil Service updated its Code of Practice on the Employment of People with Disabilities in the Civil Service.

1990: The Department of Employment Group published a consultative document "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities" aimed at ensuring the Department's services meet the needs of people with disabilities in the 1990s.

1990: The Department of Employment Group published an evaluation of their special schemes for people with disabilities and consulted on the need for change.

1990: "Employment and Handicap" was published, reporting on research funded by the Department of Employment Group which was undertaken by the Social and Community Planning Research to estimate the size of the population of people with disabilities who might be eligible for or need help from Department of Employment Group services.

1990: The Department of Employment Group published a research paper on the policies and practices of employers entitled "The Employment of People with Disabilities".

1990: The Department of Social Security published "The Way Ahead" announcing its proposals for a new benefit (Disability Working Allowance) to provide better help and opportunities for people with disabilities wishing to work.

1990: The Department of Employment Group introduced a new symbol for employers to adopt to show their commitment to good policies for the employment of people with disabilities.
1990: The publication of the Disability Living Allowance and the Disability Working Allowance Bill.
1990: The Department of Employment Group announced its aim to make an offer of a place to unemployed people with disabilities on one of its four main employment and training programmes—Employment Training, the Enterprise Allowance Scheme, the Job Interview Guarantee and Jobclubs.
1991: The Scottish Office Education Department commissioned research into the post-school placement of children and young persons with Record of Needs, including how different educational placements influence a young person's later changes of employment.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will consider introducing a communicator service for employees who are deaf or hard of hearing, following his Department's evaluation of special schemes for people with disabilities.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 8 March 1991]:* The consultation period for the evaluation paper ended on 1 February 1991. My Department is currently analysing the responses received. We will consider carefully all suggestions made for changes to the schemes, including the suggestion that a communicator service should be introduced for employees who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what local monitoring arrangements he has in place to ensure that training and enterprise councils are aware of, and provide for, the special training needs of people with disabilities.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 8 March 1991]:* Each training and enterprise council is required to set out in its corporate and business plans how it intends to meet the needs of people with disabilities. These plans are subject to approval by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

Specific contractual requirements common to all TECs include providing appropriate training to people with special training needs, including those with a disability. My Department has produced guidance on how to plan for and deliver training to meet those needs.

TECs' performance against their plans will be regularly monitored by my Department. In addition, the Training Standards Advisory Service will be appraising the quality of training offered by TECs including provision for people with disabilities.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received about the closure of employment rehabilitation centres for disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 8 March 1991]:* My right hon. and learned Friend has received very few representations about the possible closure of individual employment rehabilitation centres.

The Government's intentions for assessment and rehabilitation services were set out in the consultative document "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities" published in June 1990. These involve improving geographical coverage and our capacity to respond flexibly to the needs of people with disabilities through establishing local employment service assessment teams and increasing the extent to which, particularly in rehabilitation, services are purchased from voluntary and other appropriate organisations.

Comments were invited on how the plans for developing rehabilitation might most effectively be implemented. Analysis of comments received on the consultative document is not yet complete.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration he has given to the recommendation of the Employment Select Committee's first report on disability and employment for full Government commitment to improving the 3 per cent. quota system; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 8 March 1991]:* My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has written to the Chairman of the Committee to express his pleasure at the participation of the Committee in the consultative process, to say that the Committee's report will be given full consideration along with all other responses received and to commit himself to keeping the Committee informed on progress on all the issues that it raised.

In the consultative document we made no firm proposals about the quota scheme, but invited comments on its merits and demerits. We are still considering the responses, including that of the Employment Committee.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the responses to the recent consultative document "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities" supported the introduction of legislation to outlaw unjustifiable discrimination on the grounds of disability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The consultative document invited comments on the merits and demerits of various legislative approaches to securing good practice in the employment of people with disabilities. A number of respondents have expressed support for legislation which they describe in a variety of ways, some more precisely than others. It is not possible to state the percentage which support outlawing unjustifiable discrimination on the grounds of disability without the risk of oversimplifying or misinterpreting views and giving misleading information. We are still considering the comments we have received.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, following his consultation on the employment and training of disabled people, he will consider introducing a legislative framework on the employment of disabled people.

Mr. Jackson: In the consultative document "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities" we sought comments on the merits and demerits of the existing legislative framework on the employment of disabled people and possible legislative alternatives. We are still considering the responses we have received.

Census Enumerators

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the effect of advertising for census enumerators in jobcentres has been on the seasonally adjusted increase in unemployment figures in January.

Mr. Jackson: The effect, if any, is likely to have been extremely small because recruitment began in early January and for the vast majority of jobs advertised the period of employment will not commence until late March.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the lifting of Crown immunity from Government Departments in respect of the 3 per cent. quota of jobs for disabled people.

Mr. Jackson: The Government's consultative document "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities" invited comments on the merits and demerits of the quota scheme. We are presently considering the response to the consultations.

Chemical Testing

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has formulated any response to the European Community Commission's EINECS proposal on chemical testing.

Mr. Forth: There is no EINECS proposal on chemical testing. EINECS is the European inventory of existing commercial chemical substances, a list of approximately 100,000 chemicals which were on the European Community market between 1 January 1971 and 18 January 1981. Such substances are exempt from the notification scheme for new substances established by the sixth amendment to the European Community dangerous substances directive.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which committees of the European Community on which Her Majesty's Government are represented are currently reviewing the subject of chemical testing.

Mr. Forth: Her Majesty's Government are represented on three main committees which review industrial chemical testing. Those currently in existence are:

The competent authorities committee for the implementation of directive 79/831/EEC.

The national co-ordination committee for testing methods which oversees all testing methods.

The technical progress committee which is responsible for approving changes in legislation for testing methods.

P and O

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what response he has made to the ruling of the International Labour Organisation in respect of the dismissal of staff involved in an industrial dispute with the P and O shipping company in 1988; what is the relationship between the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and the ILO conventions on freedom of association; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: There has been no such ruling. Having considered certain complaints from the National Union of Seamen, the International Labour Organisation's committee on freedom of association—CFA—has made certain recommendations. The CFA has referred these to the ILO committee of experts. The Government will continue to respond fully to all parts of the ILO supervisory machinery on this matter as and when appropriate.

The Government remain convinced that nothing in United Kingdom general employment legislation—including the provisions of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, as subsequently amended—is incompatible with guarantees afforded by ratified ILO conventions.

Members of the European Parliament

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many letters he has received since 4 January 1990 from Members of the European Parliament concerning local or national matters; and if he will make it his practice where the former are concerned to provide the hon. Member for the local constituency with copies of any such correspondence for his or her information.

Mr. Forth: A total of 96 such letters were received between 4 January 1990 and 1 March 1991. Where Members of the European Parliament raise matters in correspondence which are exclusively of local interest, the practice is to reply suggesting that the MEP should refer the matter to the hon. Member for the constituency concerned. As with other correspondence, replies to such communications would normally be copied to the hon. Member concerned only if the MEP had himself copied his letter in this way.

North of England Building Society

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will invite the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service to meet the North of England building society and the Banking, Insurance and Finance Union to discuss arrangements by which the request of the building society's staff to be represented by the union could be considered.

Dr. Bray: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will invite the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service to meet the North of England building society and the Banking, Insurance and Finance Union to discuss arrangements by which the wishes of the building society's staff to be represented by the union can be met.

Mr. Forth: No. In any matter of this kind, it is entirely for the parties concerned to decide whether or not to seek the assistance of the independent Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much the Devon and Cornwall TEC budget for adult training has been reduced in the current year; what plans he has to reinstate these cuts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The contract with Devon and Cornwall TEC is at present subject to negotiation.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from TECs over delays in announcing financial arrangements for the current year and over the withdrawal of approval for courses without prior consultation or notice.

Mr. Jackson: I have received several representations from TECs on a variety of financial issues. It is for TECs themselves to decide on the arrangements for contracting with training providers.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which training and enterprise councils have signed operational contracts since July 1990; and if he will list the organisations represented on the TEC.

Mr. Jackson: The following training and enterprise councils have signed operational contracts since 1 July 1990:

South East
Essex
Hampshire
Heart of England
Isle of Wight
Kent
Milton Keynes and North Buckinghamshire

London
AZTEC

South West
Gloucestershire
Somerset

West Midlands
Birmingham
Coventry and Warwickshire
Staffordshire
Walsall

East Midlands and Anglia
CAMBSTEC (Central and South Cambridgeshire)
Greater Peterborough
Norfolk and Waveney
Suffolk
Southern Derbyshire

Yorkshire and Humberside
Barnsley and Doncaster
Bradford and District
Leeds
Rotherham
Sheffield
Wakefield

North West
Bolton and Bury
Manchester
Stockport and High Peak
METROTEC (Wigan)

Northern
County Durham
Northumberland

Wales
Gwent
Mid Glamorgan
North East Wales
North West Wales
Powys
South Glamorgan
West Wales

TEC board members are directors in their own right and do not serve as representatives of any organisation. An up-to-date list of directors of each operational TEC is held in the House of Commons Library.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to support smokers in his Department to give up smoking on the eighth No Smoking Day on 13 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: A number of localised initiatives will be taking place and literature has been widely distributed. My Department provides support throughout the year to smokers who wish to give up and will continue to do so.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Flakt System

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the Flakt system to recover and recycle flue gases from waste incineration plants; and if he will evaluate its applicability to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Leigh: The Flakt system is one of a number of systems for cleaning flue gases.

I understand that Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, which is involved in the enforcement of pollution control legislation relating to waste incineration, is aware of the class of pollution abatement system to which the Flakt type belong. However, it is for individual operators of plants which produce flue gases, rather than my Department or the inspectorate, to evaluate particular technologies which may help such plants to meet the requirements of pollution control legislation.

Unsolicited Sales Literature

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will introduce legislation to ban the sending of unsolicited sales literature by fax.

Mr. Redwood: The branch systems licence under the Telecommunications Act 1984 provides for people not wishing to receive unsolicited sales literature by fax to place their fax numbers on a special register. Anyone sending such unsolicitied material to a number on the register will be in breach of the licence and ultimately the Director General of Telecommunications can remove the right to operate under the licence from a persistent offender, making him unable to use his telephone systems. The arrangements for the register are being finalised by the director general in discussion with interested parties.

Newspapers

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he proposes to refer the current arrangements for the distribution of newspapers, together with the recently introduced reduction of terms to retailers, to the Director of Fair Trading and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Office of Fair Trading is currently looking at various aspects of newspaper wholesaling, including distribution arrangements, carriage charges and the reduction in terms to retailers recently introduced for certain national newspapers. The director general will decide in the light of these inquiries whether further action

under the competition legislation is warranted. It would not be appropriate for me to speculate what the outcome of these inquiries will be.

EC Insurance Directive

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the third insurance directive of the EC will come before the Council of Ministers; and whether it is the intention of the EC that this directive will be subject to the Cumul rule.

Mr. Redwood: The European Commission sent its proposal for the third non-life insurance directive to the Council of Ministers on 27 July 1990. The proposal for the third life insurance directive will be sent to the Council shortly. The Commission has proposed that the third non-life directive should be adopted by the Council in the course of 1992 and the third life directive by December 1992. Both directives propose the abolition of the ability of member states to restrict Cumul.

EC Trade Marks

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress his Department has made in seeking to secure the planned new EC trade marks office in a United Kingdom location; and what consideration he has recently given to specific United Kingdom sites, including the London borough of Harrow.

Mr. Leigh: The location of the Community trade marks office has become linked with the wider issue of the location of other Community bodies, on which there has been no progress in recent years. In view of the uncertainty in timing, no consideration has recently been given to specific sites. However, the United Kingdom bid to locate the office in London remains on the table.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he expects the United Kingdom to meet its obligations under the Community trade marks harmonisation directive before 31 December; and when he expects to publish new domestic trade marks legislation to implement this and related objectives.

Mr. Leigh: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) on Friday 1 March, *Official Report*, column *656*.

Post Office Staff

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will direct the Post Office to act in accordance with best practice in the matter of relocating displaced Post Office staff in Quadrant.

Mr. Leigh: The reorganisation of Quadrant is an operational matter for Post Office management and it would not therefore be appropriate for me to comment on the relocation of staff.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will meet the chairman of the Post Office to discuss the changes which took place among senior Post Office Quadrant staff in 1990 and the reasons for departures of staff.

Mr. Leigh: Matters of appointment and termination of employment of Post Office staff are a matter for the Post Office and its employees.

Members of the European Parliament

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many letters he has received, since 4 January 1990, from Members of the European Parliament concerning local or national matters; and if he will make it his practice, where the former are concerned, to provide the hon. Member for the local constituency with copies of any such correspondence for his or her information.

Mr. Sainsbury: DTI Ministers have received 78 communications from Members of the European Parliament since 4 January 1990. Where Members of the European Parliament raise matters in correspondence which are exclusively of local interest, the practice is to reply suggesting that the MEP should refer the matter to the hon. Member for the constituency concerned. As with other correspondence, replies to such communications would normally be copied to the hon. Member concerned only if the MEP had himself copied his letter in this way.

National House Building Council

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to make a statement on the National House Building Council reference made to him recently.

Mr. Redwood: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission report "Structural Warranty Services in Relation to New Homes" was published on 6 March 1991. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library of the House together with a copy of the Department's press notice announcing publication. At the time of publication the Secretary of State also announced a period of consultation on possible changes to the rules of the National House Building Council, to eliminate the adverse effects identified by the Commission.

Coffee

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what date he received the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the soluble coffee market.

Mr. Redwood: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of soluble coffee for retail sale within the United Kingdom was received on 8 January 1991. It was published on 8 March 1991 and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Digital Exchanges

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what estimate he has of investment in integrated services digital networks in Wales; and if he will list by geographical location the networks so far completed in Wales and those for which definite plans exist;

(2) what estimate he has of investment in integrated services digital network 2 in Wales; and if he will list by geographical location the integrated services digital network 2 installations in Wales and those for which definite plans exist.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* The information requested is primarily for the telecommunications companies concerned.

British Telecom offers two types of ISDN service, ISDN 2 for small to medium-sized organisations, and ISDN 30 for large organisations. ISDN 2 is currently available in Cardiff, Cwmbran, Llanrumney, Neath, Newport Gwent, Port Talbot, Rhyl, Swansea and Wrexham. By the end of March 1991, the service should also be available in Llanelli, Maeglas and Pembroke. By the end of 1991, British Telecom plans to make ISDN 2 available in every major high street and business centre, subject to identified market demand. ISDN 30 is now available to all large organisations whose digital switchboards can be connected to a local digital exchange.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what estimate he has of investment in the installation of digital exchanges in Wales; and if he will list by geographical location the exchanges so far installed in Wales and those for which definite plans exist;

(2) what estimate he has of investment in the upgrading of cabling in Wales.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 5 March 1991]:* The information requested is primarily for the telecommunications companies concerned. British Telecom has a running investment programme of approximately £100 million per annum for network modernisation in Wales and the Marches. Almost every major town is now served by a digital exchange. In addition, Mercury's digital trunk network extends to Swansea, Cardiff and Newport.

Telephone Cables (Al Jubayl)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will request the Saudi Arabian Government to speed up the provision of a telephone cable in order to operate the 20 Mercury telephones waiting to be installed in Al Jubayl.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 7 March 1991]:* I am informed that Mercury Communications Ltd. is now in the process of providing equipment so that its 20 payphones in the Al-Jubayl area may become operational. The complete system is scheduled to be in service within 10 days.

International Space University

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's bid to obtain the siting of the international space university in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 8 March 1991]:* The British National Space Centre has offered a grant towards the costs of holding the 1991 session of the international space university in the United Kingdom. The Government would welcome the presence of ISU here this year, but space industry sponsorship will also be sought.

CIVIL SERVICE

International Organisations

44. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he is encouraging more civil servants to apply for postings in international organisations of which Britain is a member.

Mr. Renton: We attach great importance to Britain's being properly represented in international organisations. With that in mind we have launched the European fast stream which is aimed at preparing British candidates for the recruitment competitions of the European Community institutions.

"Next Steps" Agencies

45. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how the "next steps" initiative will affect services to the general public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: "Next steps" is already delivering improved service to the public. We have recently published a White Paper—Cm 1261—giving many examples of what agencies are doing to consult their customers and give better service. We should see more and more of this.

Civil Service College

46. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how equal opportunities is incorporated in training at the Civil Service college.

Mr. Renton: Equality of opportunity is an integral part of each of the management development, fast stream, and personnel management training programmes. Management skills courses in this area are also provided for line managers and equal opportunities officers.

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will take steps to ensure that there will be adequate funds for and co-ordination of the London child care project, the proposed central London nursery and the London ring; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The office of the Minister for the Civil Service provides appropriate co-ordination for the London child care project. Decisions on establishing and funding child care facilities are for Departments and agencies. In total, there are now 10 nurseries and over 70 play schemes in operation across the country, with more planned.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Traffic Statistics

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of vehicles passing along Hightown road in Newtownabbey between Mallusk road and Upper Hightown road per 24-hour period; and what was the maximum and minimum hourly traffic flows at the latest available date.

Mr. Hanley: Latest traffic survey figures for the Hightown road between Mallusk road and Upper Hightown road are:

Date of survey	*Total traffic flow vehicles per day*	*Maximum vehicles per hour*	*Minimum vehicles per hour*
18 February to 1 March 1991	3,433	169	3

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of vehicles per

24-hour period passing along *(a)* the A26 between Antrim and Ballymena, *(b)* the B59 between Doagh and the A36, *(c)* the B98 between the A26 and the B59 and *(d)* the B53 between the A26 and the A36; and what were the maximum and minimum hourly traffic flows in each case for the latest available date.

Mr. Hanley: Some of the information requested is not available. Traffic survey figures that are available for the roads in question are:

Date of survey	*Total traffic flow vehicles per day*	*Maximum vehicles per hour*	*Minimum vehicles per hour*
(a) January 1991	15,568	1,695	21
(b) August 1980	1,847	206	[1]
(c) July 1982	2,002	[1]	[1]
(d) June 1990	752	[1]	[1]

[1] Not available.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of vehicles in Newtownabbey passing along *(a)* the Hightown road between Hamin park and Glengormley, *(b)* the Antrim road between Glencairn park and Glengormley, *(c)* the Ballyclare road between Glencairn drive and Glengormley per 24-hour period; and what were the maximum and minimum hourly traffic flows in each case at the latest available date.

Mr. Hanley: In November 1988 the maximum hourly traffic flows for the roads in question were:

Location	*Maximum vehicles per hour*
Hightown road	714
Antrim road	712
Ballyclare road	718

The remainder of the information requested is not available.

Downshire Hospital, Downpatrick

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions have been held with staff and trade union representatives about the continuing retraction of mental health services in the Downshire hospital, Downpatrick, located in the Down and Lisburn unit of management.

Mr. Hanley: The changes in services at Downshire hospital, which are fully in line with the Department of Health and Social Services regional strategy, have been the subject of detailed discussions with staff on the site. The Down and Lisburn unit of management's draft business plan 1991-92, which reflects the Eastern board's response to the regional strategy, was discussed with the Northern Ireland committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions on 29 October 1990 and I understand that a further meeting has been offered. Alongside the formal trade union consultation process, three seminars have been held in the last month with staff on the site.

Rural Development

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many area co-ordinators will be appointed to the rural development division of the Department of Agriculture; and where they will be located;

(2) what is the membership and terms of reference of the recently established Rural Development Council for Northern Ireland;

(3) when the Department of Agriculture will publish a summary, conclusions and recommendations in respect of the work of the interdepartmental committee on rural development.

Mr. Hanley: I have asked officials to prepare a summary of the work, conclusions and recommendations of the interdepartmental committee on rural development. This will be available for publication when the pressures of establishing the Rural Development Council and the co-ordination structure for rural development within the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland permit.

Work to establish a Rural Development Council is under way with the intention to have it in operation early in the 1991-92 financial year. Membership will be drawn from a wide spectrum of rural interests and I will make a further statement as soon as possible.

While the number of co-ordinators ultimately required will depend on the workload which arises, initially three will be appointed and located in the south, west and north of the Province.

Rural Housing

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions have taken place about the allocation of funding to the Housing Executive to enable it to execute a programme to address increasing rural unfitness; and if the Government will allocate special funding to undertake a programme of rural rehabilitation.

Mr. Hanley: Rural housing unfitness is a complex problem largely confined to private owner-occupied properties. The means of tackling it is therefore through the renovation grants scheme and the executive's continuing grants programme which is targeted on those individuals and properties most in need. Funding for the executive's grants programme has been provided in response to its annual stategy review which supports its bid and is discussed as part of the public expenditure survey process.

The executive recently issued a consultative document "Leading the Way" as a means of reviewing its rural housing policies and has conducted an extensive series of meetings with various interested local groups. Following an analysis of the detailed responses to this exercise the executive will be presenting its proposals to the Department for further consideration and discussion.

Education and Libraries Boards

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many field officers have been employed by each of the education and library boards in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years;

(2) what has been the cost of employing field officers by each of the education and library boards in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of field officer posts in each board's curriculum support service in 1989-90 and 1990-91 and the associated estimated cost was as follows:

	Number of posts	*1989-90 Estimated cost (£ thousands)*	*Number of posts*	*1990-91 Estimated cost (£ thousands)*
Belfast	30	409	38	568
Western	48	677	56	880
North Eastern	43	615	53	799
South Eastern	42	582	50	777
Southern	43	632	51	786

Figures are not available for earlier years.

Cancer

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether there is any evidence that the incidence of cancers has increased in recent years in the coastal areas of Northern Ireland as compared with inland areas.

Mr. Hanley: Information on the incidence of cancer is not normally collected on the basis of whether a person lives in a coastal or inland area. However, an independent committee investigating patterns of disease with a possible association with radiation which reported in 1989 found no evidence of a higher incidence of childhood leukaemia in coastal compared with inland areas.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any evidence that the incidence of cancers has increased in areas affected by the fallout from Chernobyl.

Mr. Hanley: None.

Family Credit

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in how many cases ex-gratia payments have been made in respect of claims for family credit; and what were the criteria on which such ex-gratia payments were made.

Mr. Hanley: Only one ex-gratia payment has been made since the introduction of family credit in April 1988.

An ex-gratia payment is made where the Department of Health and Social Services is satisfied that an officer has wrongly advised a person and this has resulted in loss of benefit; where a person has provided all the information required but the Department of Health and Social Services failed to take the necessary action; and where it is clear that a person gave the Department of Health and Social Services information that indicated prima facie entitlement to benefit but the Department failed to follow it up.

Pensioners

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of pensioners in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: At 31 March 1990, the latest date for which figures are available, 215,604 people were receiving retirement pension and non-contributory retirement pension.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many pensioners in Northern Ireland are in receipt of income support.

Mr. Hanley: On 31 May 1989, the latest date for which information is readily available, the number of income support recipients aged over 65—men—and 60—women—was 55,680.

Source: 5 per cent. sample.

Security Force Operations

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in how many instances ex-gratia payments have been made in response to claims for compensation as a result of security force operations or installations; and what were the criteria on which these payments were made.

Dr. Mawhinney: Ex-gratia compensation is paid by the Police Authority for Northern Ireland where property was damaged in the course of action by Army technical officers to clear suspect explosive devices. The criteria for making such payments are:—

(i) that the RUC gave instructions for the ATO's action;

(ii) that the RUC are satisfied that the claimant was not criminally involved in the incident;

(iii) that there were no explosives found in the vehicle or property.

Payments have been made under this scheme since 1982. In the 1989-90 financial year compensation was paid in 148 cases and in this financial year to 31 December 1990 compensation has been paid in 108 cases. Ex-gratia payments made by the Ministry of Defence are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans his Department has to help smokers give up smoking on No Smoking Day; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Health Promotion Agency and health and social services boards are responsible for promoting good health in Northern Ireland. They are involved with other organisations in drawing public attention to No Smoking Day and the hazards of smoking, in encouraging smokers to stop on that day, and in assisting and supporting those who wish to give up smoking altogether. I was pleased to launch the campaign leading up to No Smoking Day recently. Other initiatives being taken include the widespread distribution of material, the provision of clinics to help smokers give up the habit and the organisation of numerous local events throughout Northern Ireland to promote No Smoking Day.

Motor Vehicles

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will introduce legislation to ensure that no accident-damaged motor vehicle which has been written off by an insurance company can be imported into Northern Ireland, repaired and/or re-registered and sold without first undergoing an MOT examination.

Mr. Hanley: No. Decisions about write-offs are taken on economic grounds and many vehicles involved in road accidents are not written off. It is the responsibility of the individual to ensure that his or her vehicle is roadworthy.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cereals

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what the tonnage and average price of grain exported from the United Kingdom was *(a)* generally and *(b)* separately for each country to which grain was exported in 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Curry: The table shows the tonnage and value in 1989 and 1990 of United Kingdom exports of cereals. The list of individual countries shown is restricted to those for which the amount exported was in excess of 100,000 tonnes in either year. Total value has been provided instead of price because of the difficulty of providing meaningful comparative figures for the latter.

United Kingdom exports of cereals[1]

Country	*1989*		*1990*	
	Tonnage (000 tonnes)	*Value (£000)*	*Tonnage (000 tonnes)*	*Value (£000)*
EC countries of which:	1,768	208,404	2,804	334,364
Belgium-Luxembourg	450	52,821	720	85,346
Federal Republic of Germany	489	56,670	72	9,245
Greece	27	3,336	112	13,761
Irish Republic	127	16,390	145	18,751
Italy	303	35,542	724	83,814
Netherlands	332	38,642	605	71,824
Spain	[2]	7	419	50,206
Non-EC countries of which:	4,794	370,691	3,700	282,151
Bangladesh	164	14,502	—	—
Bulgaria	164	11,206	—	—
China	258	27,090	713	59,425
Cuba	321	25,598	184	10,653
Egypt	52	5,767	175	11,308
German Democratic Republic	363	26,679	36	2,597
Iran	608	49,463	135	10,321
Iraq	130	11,163	—	—
Norway	157	11,939	47	3,739
Saudi Arabia	452	31,719	139	9,956
Soviet Union	1,682	120,098	1,687	132,952
TOTAL	6,562	579,095	6,504	616,515

[1] Excluding rice.
[2] Less than half the units shown.

Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many days' supply of grain are currently in store in the United Kingdom *(a)* in intervention storage and *(b)* in all storage; and what the figures were for each of the past three years.

Mr. Curry: United Kingdom intervention stocks of cereals in mid-February 1991 represented around 12 days' supply compared with 11 days, 20 days and 25 days at the middle of February 1990, 1989 and 1988 respectively.

The latest available information on the quantity of grain in commercial storage is in the form of estimates of stocks of wheat, barley and oats at 31 December 1990. Adding these estimates to the intervention stocks at the time gives total storage figures representing about 238, 256, 286 and 286 days' supply for December 1990, 1989, 1988 and 1987 respectively.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest estimate of the stocks of grain which will be in store at the end of June *(a)* in Britain, *(b)* in the EC and *(c)* in the world, expressed in tonnes and days' supply; and what is the latest estimate of the stocks of grain at the present time in (i) Britain, (ii) the EC and (iii) the world expressed in tonnes and days' supply.

Mr. Curry: Current estimates of cereals likely to be in store in the United Kingdom and the European Community as a whole at the end of the 1990-91 marketing year on 30 June 1991 are as follows:

	Million tonnes	*Days' supply*
United Kingdom	3	55
European Community	31	79

These figures are based on the Commission of the European Communities balance sheet for cereals.

The International Wheat Council's estimate of world stocks of grain is an aggregate of national figures based on different definitions of marketing years and therefore does not relate to a particular date. However, the council's latest estimate for world stocks for the end of the 1990-91 crop year is 242 million tonnes or around 62 days' supply.

The latest estimate of current stocks of grain in the United Kingdom is for 31 December 1990 when the total was 13 million tonnes, representing about 238 days' supply. Estimates for the European Community and the world are not available.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was *(a)* the total amount paid by each member state of the EEC in cereals co-responsibility levy for each year since the co-responsibility levy has been operative, expressed in both the member state's national currency and in pounds sterling and *(b)* the total tonnage of cereals produced in each member state of the EEC, showing in each case how much per tonne the co-responsibility levy represents.

Mr. Curry: The latest information provided by the Commission of the European Communities on cereals co-responsibility levy receipts in each member state was given to my hon. Friend on 18 December 1990, *Official Report* column *133*. The sums collected are expressed in budgetary ecus. It is not possible accurately to convert them into national currencies and sterling because no information is available on the timing of levy payments over the course of each year.

Commission figures for annual cereals production in each member state where co-responsibility levy was collected are set out below, as is the levy collected divided by national production. It should be noted, however, that there is not an exact correspondence between the year in which grain is harvested and the following year's levy receipts. Nor is levy necessarily collected in the country of origin of the grain.

	1985-86		*1986-87*		*1987-88*		*1988-89*	
	Production MT	*Receipts divided by production ECU/T*	*Production MT*	*Receipts divided by production ECU/T*	*Production MT*	*Receipts divided by production ECU/T*	*Production MT*	*Receipts divided by production ECU/T*
Belgium	2·1	2·48	2·3	8·24	1·9	7·27	2·2	5·86
Denmark	8·0	0·23	8·0	1·51	7·3	1·32	8·1	4·37
Germany	25·9	0·65	25·5	2·55	23·8	5·58	27·1	2·48
Greece	4·3	0·20	5·3	0·28	5·1	1·19	4·6	1·35
France	56·1	0·18	50·1	2·07	52·2	5·84	55·9	5·57
Ireland	1·8	0·43	1·8	2·30	2·0	4·70	2·0	3·34
Italy	17·1	0·59	17·8	2·10	17·4	1·93	16·6	3·39
Luxembourg	0·1	0·69	0·1	4·19	0·1	2·80	0·1	3·00
Netherlands	1·1	0·70	1·3	17·01	1·1	18·37	1·2	5·62
Spain	20·3	—	16·0	2·42	19·8	1·72	23·1	3·03
United Kingdom	22·5	0·43	24·5	2·56	21·7	3·31	21·1	5·50

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current state of the cereal sector.

Mr. Curry: The 1990 United Kingdom cereals harvest is estimated to have been 22·4 million tonnes. Yields were higher than in 1989 and the quality of both wheat and barley crops were good, with a marked increase in supplies of malting barley. Ex-farm prices for breadmaking wheat have been 5 to 11 per cent. higher than last year for most of the season, feed wheat prices 4 to 7 per cent. higher and feed barley prices 2 to 6 per cent. higher; premium malting barley prices have generally been 7 to 12 per cent. lower than last season. By the end of February some 146,000 tonnes of grain had been offered into intervention. Provisional figures show exports of 4·2 million tonnes by mid-February. The net farm income for cereal farms in the United Kingdom is forcast to have risen in real terms over the last two years.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what the total tonnage and average price of imported grain from each country which exported grain to the United Kingdom was in 1990;

(2) what the total tonnage and average price per tonne of all cereals imported into the United Kingdom was in 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Curry: In 1989, the United Kingdom imported 5,102,000 tonnes of cereals valued at £361,486,000. Information for 1990 is shown in the table in total and by country. The list of individual countries is restricted to those for which the amount imported was in excess of 50,000 tonnes in 1990. Total value has been provided instead of price because of the difficulty of providing meaningful comparative figures for the latter.

United Kingdom imports of cereals[1]

Country	*Tonnage (thousand tonnes)*	*Value (£ thousands)*
EC countries of which:	2,213	314,645
Belgium-Luxembourg	79	10,424
Denmark	76	12,046
Greece	92	14,278
France	1,530	215,888
Irish Republic	255	32,683
Spain	127	20,686
Non-EC countries of which:	610	60,297
Argentina	119	9,553
Canada	320	33,754
South Africa	101	8,011
Unites States of America	66	7,997
Total	2,823	374,942

[1] Excluding rice.
Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the level of imports into the United Kingdom of *(a)* cereals and *(b)* cereal substitutes in each year since 1979.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is as follows:

Volume of United Kingdom imports of cereals and cereal substitutes ('000 tonnes)

	Cereals[1]	*Cereal substitutes*[2]
1979	6,187	432
1980	5,339	519
1981	4,191	1,382
1982	3,747	2,129
1983	3,245	1,440
1984	2,769	1,049
1985	3,308	1,037
1986	3,517	1,036

	Cereals[1]	Cereal substitutes[2]
1987	3,521	1,091
1988	3,370	1,144
1989	5,102	833
1990	2,823	1,235

[1] Excluding rice.
[2] As defined in Annex D of EC Regulation 2727/75.

Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Sheep Dip

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many reports of damage to farm workers have been received as a result of handling or being exposed to organophosphorous sheep dip.

Mr. Maclean: The Department has received 55 reports of suspected adverse reactions affecting farmers and farm workers following exposure to organophosphorous sheep dips since 1985. Five of these concern a product withdrawn from the market in 1986.

Somerset Moors

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions officials of his Department have had with the Somerset trust for nature conservation regarding water levels on the Somerset moors.

Mr. Curry: Our officials have received representations from the Somerset trust for nature conservation pressing for a higher water level regime on the Somerset moors. Its views will be fully taken into account in my current review of the ESA policy.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what provisions are contained in Somerset levels ESA agreements on the maintenance of water levels to assist nature conservation.

Mr. Curry: The agreements require that, where rhyne water levels are within the farmers' control, suitable levels must be maintained for grazing livestock between 31 March and 1 November and that at no time are the ditches or rhynes allowed to dry out.

Food Prices

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the proportion of the value of food which has gone to *(a)* the producer and *(b)* the processor, wholesaler and retailer in each year since 1973.

Mr. Curry: I have no information to add to that given to my hon. Friend on 29 March 1990, *Official Report*, column *255*.

Members of the European Parliament

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many letters he has received since 4 January 1990 from Members of the European Parliament concerning local or national matters; and if he will make it his practice where the former are concerned to provide the hon. Member for the local constituency with copies of any such correspondence for his or her information.

Mr. Curry: We have received a number of inquiries during the period. Where Members of the European Parliament raise matters in correspondence which are exclusively of local interest, the practice is to reply suggesting that the MEP should refer the matter to the hon. Member for the constituency concerned. As with other correspondence, replies to such communications would normally be copied to the hon. Member concerned only if the MEP had himself copied his letter in this way.

Irradiated Food

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has received applications for approval for licensing irradiation plants in the United Kingdom; if he will list any plants which have received such approval; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have received inquiries, but no formal application has yet been made.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set out the process for the approval of plants in the United Kingdom which will irradiate food; what is the name of the committee which will consider such approvals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Applications for licences will be considered by a committee of officials of the Argiculture and Health Departments of the countries concerned. The committee will include scientists and administrators with expertise in the fields of medicine, radiation science, toxicology, microbiology, nutrition, and food hygiene. The committee will seek such other advice as it considers necessary. The recommendations of the committee will be considered by the Agriculture and Health Ministers acting jointly.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answers to the hon. Member for South Shields of 20 December, *Official Report*, column *297*, whether he has now *(a)* given approval to irradiation plants in non-EC countries or *(b)* given official authorisation to irradiation plants in EC countries to import irradiated foods into the United Kingdom; and if he will list all such plants.

Mr. Gummer: I have nothing to add to the answers given to the hon. Member on 20 December 1990, at column *297*.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Amos: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to support smokers in his Department to give up smoking on the eighth No Smoking Day, on 13 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: All staff in my Department have been advised of No Smoking Day. We are soon to introduce a smoking policy with restrictions on areas where smoking is permitted. All staff will be told that welfare officers in the Department have been given training which will enable them to advise and give practical help to anyone who wishes to stop smoking.

Butter

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields of 26 February, *Official Report*, column *433*, whether any butter from the United Kingdom has been or is due to be exported to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Gummer: No butter was exported from the United Kingdom to the USSR in January, the latest month for which data are available. I am not aware of any future exports.

Infant Formulae

Miss Lestor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if Her Majesty's Government propose to support European directive iii/3712/90/EN revision 3 on infant formulae and follow-up foods; and what are its implications for labelling of such foods.

Mr. Maclean: The Government have been pressing, and will continue to do so, for amendments to the text of the draft directive to align it more closely with the World Health Organisation international code on the marketing of breast milk substitutes. Nevertheless, mindful of the important compositional, nutritional, health and safety controls in the draft we do not rule out a United Kingdom vote in favour of the directive. If adopted, for the first time there will be specific labelling controls laid down in law for infant formulae and follow-on formulae.

Food Hygiene

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement regarding the implications of the Ministry of Agriculture's research at Torry for the planned implementation of the Food Hygiene (Amendment) Regulations 1990.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to my reply on Tuesday 26 February to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan).

SCOTLAND

Mink Farms

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many licences were issued for mink farms for each region in Scotland for each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Region or Islands area	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Central	1	1	1	1	1
Grampian	2	2	1	1	1
Lothian	1	1	1	—	—
Shetland	1	—	—	—	—
Strathclyde	2	2	3	2	3
Tayside	2	2	2	2	1
TOTAL	9	8	8	6	6

Local Authorities Legislation

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those Acts passed by Parliament since 1979 concerning *(a)* local government finance and *(b)* local authority duties, powers and responsibilities that relate to Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The following Acts passed since 1979 have contained provisions relating to local government finance in Scotland:

Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980
Local Government and Planning (Amendment) Act 1981
Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1981
Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982
Local Authorities (Expenditure Powers) Act 1983
Rating and Valuation (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 1984
Local Government Act 1986
Local Government Finance Act 1987
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987
Local Government Act 1988
Local Government Finance Act 1988
Local Government and Housing Act 1989
Caravans (Standard Community Charge and Rating) Act 1990

The second part of the hon. Member's question could be answered only at disproportionate cost given the wide range of local authority activities affected by legislation since 1979.

Parking

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the regulations applying to the conditions relating to whether vehicles are allowed to park on a double yellow line.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Double yellow lines give effect to a traffic regulation order made under the provisions of sections 1, 2, 4, 9 or 14 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to prohibit or restrict the waiting of vehicles for at least eight hours during the period between 7 am and 7 pm on at least four days per week. The timing and direction of the prohibition or restrictions are displayed on plates placed at regular intervals along the length of the carriageway so restricted. It is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend to make orders prohibiting or restricting the waiting of vehicles on trunk roads and of the local authorities for their roads. The terms of each order may vary according to the circumstances for which it is required.

School Tests

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the total annual cost of the national tests in primary schools, including all aspects of design, compilation, printing, marking, standardisation and collation of results.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on 6 February 1991 at col. *87*.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the exact arrangments to be made for transferring primary seven test results to secondary schools; when and by whom a decision was made on this; and when the decision was communicated to the regional councils, COSLA and the unions.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 require test results from 1992 onwards to be entered in the pupil's progress record. This document goes with a pupil throughout his or her school career. The intention to pass the P7 test results of pupils to secondary schools was made clear in the consultation document "Curriculum and Assessment: A Policy for the 90s" issued in November 1987.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he obtained from *(a)* the General Teaching Council, *(b)* the Scottish Examination Board and *(c)* the Scottish Council for Research in Education on national primary tests.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The General Teaching Council and the Scottish Council for Research in Education responded to the consultation document "Curriculum and Assessment: A Policy for the 90s". Tests have been developed through the primary assessment unit of the Scottish Examination Board.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who is responsible for the design of the national tests for primary school children; and what recommendations were made to him by Her Majesty's inspectorate about the tests, the subjects to be included and validation and standardisation of the tests.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The preparation of test units, including their validation and standardisation, is the responsibility of the primary assessment unit of the Scottish Examination Board. Representatives of Her Majesty's inspectorate maintain close liaison with the unit. The intention to introduce tests in language and mathematics was announced in the consultation document, "Curriculum and Assessment: A Policy for the 90s" issued in November 1987.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what organisations or individuals have contacted him expressing *(a)* support and *(b)* opposition to national tests in primary schools.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) on 6 March 1991 at columns *281-82*.

Rural Housing

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his office has considered the views of the housing committee of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities in response to the policy statement on rural housing published by Scottish Homes; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. The views of the housing committee of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities are in response to the Rural Strategy document issued by Scottish Homes.

It is therefore for Scottish Homes to consider the views put forward by the convention and respond accordingly.

Cold Weather

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information and statistics he has from health boards in Scotland relating to increases in cold-related diseases during periods of cold weather; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information and statistics on cold-related diseases during periods of cold weather are not held centrally.

Members of the European Parliament

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many letters he has received, since 4 January 1990, from Members of the European Parliament concerning local or national matters; and if he will make it his practice to provide the hon. Member for the local constituency with copies of any such correspondence for his or her information.

Mr. Lang: One hundred and six. There are no plans to copy such items of correspondence to the hon. Members for the constituencies concerned.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans his Department has to provide support to smokers seeking to give up smoking on No Smoking Day on 13 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In Scotland the main responsibility for health education and the prevention of ill health lies at present with the Scottish Health Education Group. The group is supporting No Smoking Day through sponsorship of a free telephone helpline to provide support to smokers seeking to give up smoking. In addition the United Kingdom No Smoking Day Committee, on which the group is represented, has distributed supportive materials to over 1,000 organisations in Scotland, including health boards, local authorities, youth organisations and large businesses.

Child Care Law

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the recommendations of the committee set up to review child care law in Scotland and in particular to the recommendations relating to the issue of parental access to children in care.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We are considering the recommendations of the review, including those of parental access, in the light of the comments that we have received.

Place of Safety Orders

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) in respect of place of safety orders executed in Scotland in 1990, what information he has on the number of occasions the relevant children's hearing considered the order on *(a)* the same day as execution, *(b)* the following day, *(c)* two days after execution, *(d)* three days after execution, *(e)* four days after execution, *(f)* five days after execution, *(g)* six days after execution and *(h)* seven days after execution;

(2) what information he has regarding the number of place of safety orders executed in Scotland in 1990.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Latest available information is for the calender year 1989, when 1,329 place of safety authorisations were made. Of those 1,238 resulted in a hearing taking place. Figures showing the number of days a child was detained in a place of safety prior to a hearing are as follows:

	Number
1 day[1]	115
2 days	101
3 days	125
4 days	197
5 days	160
6 days	221
7 days	319

[1] Includes detentions which are shorter than 24 hours.

Intervention Stores

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current level of intervention food stores by commodity, respectively, at the most recent date for which figures are available in public and private storage, respectively.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer Tuesday 5 March 1991]:* Information on a United Kingdom basis is deposited regularly in the Library of the House. Information on stores located in Scotland as at 31 January 1991 is given in the table. Comparable United Kingdom figures are shown in brackets.

	Tonnage			
Food commodity	*Public storage*		*Aided private storage*	
Beef	5,570	(81,016)	Nil	(Nil)
Butter	Nil	(22,474)	Nil	(974)
Lamb	Nil	(Nil)	Nil	(598)
Pigmeat	Nil	(Nil)	Nil	(137)
Wheat	Nil	(35,011)	Nil	(Nil)
Barley	298,896	(616,011)	Nil	(Nil)
Rye	Nil	(203)	Nil	(Nil)

Further inquiries about operational aspects of intervention should be addressed to the chief executive of the intervention board.

Forestry Commission

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about his plans for the sale of the Forestry Commission.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 7 March 1991]:* Our policy on the disposal of Forestry Commission woodlands was set out by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for Scotland on 16 June 1989 columns at *544-45*.

Kelvin Valley

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has had on the proposed line of the M80 through the Kelvin valley; and how many of these representations *(a)* favoured and *(b)* opposed the Kelvin valley option.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 March 1991]:* The route through the Kelvin valley is one of two routes assessed by the consulting engineers in the feasibility study submitted recently to the Scottish Office Environment Department. The respective merits of these are currently under consideration and only after a preferred route is identified will draft road orders be published. At that stage representations will be invited.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his proposals for the line of the M80 through the Kelvin valley.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 March 1991]:* Discussions on the feasibility study received from the Scottish Office Environment Department's consulting engineers are still continuing. On completion of these formal presentations will be made to regional and district councils and other affected parties. Thereafter, a decision will be taken on the preferred route for the M80.

Nurses

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many nurses are employed by each of the health boards *(a)* at each grade and *(b)* in total.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 7 March 1991]:* The latest available information held centrally for the number of nurses employed at 30 September 1990 by each of the health boards at each grade and in total is given in the tables.

Qualified nurses: by status, grade and health board: at 30 September 1990

Number

	Scotland	*Argyll and Clyde*	*Ayrshire and Arran*	*Borders*	*Dumfries and Galloway*	*Fife*	*Forth Valley*	*Grampian*
Management	583	96	12	9	9	15	23	30
CANO[1]	8	1	—	1	—	—	1	—
Director of nursing[1]	70	12	2	2	3	3	3	6
Senior nurse 1-6	234	7	9	1	6	6	13	19
Senior nurse 7-8	5	1	—	—	—	1	—	3
Scale I	116	51	—	2	—	4	1	—
Scale H	114	23	—	—	—	—	1	2
Scale G	31	1	—	2	—	1	4	—
Scale F	5	—	1	1	—	—	—	—
Teachers	905	53	39	13	26	45	43	94
Grade 7	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Grade 6	6	1	—	—	—	1	1	—
Grade 5	8	—	1	—	1	—	—	1

	Scotland	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Borders	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Forth Valley	Grampian
Grade 4	27	4	2	2	2	1	2	2
Grade 3	103	2	3	2	5	5	4	8
Grade 2	469	27	20	7	14	21	23	45
Grade 1	286	19	13	2	4	17	13	37
Clinical grades	40,905	2,907	2,343	777	1,275	2,376	2,228	4,442
Scale I	445	10	30	11	23	41	33	71
Scale H	1,014	82	44	24	36	58	46	84
Scale G	8,135	656	481	155	233	442	454	731
Scale F	3,516	412	318	121	129	119	104	324
Scale E	13,7400	738	750	244	436	826	850	1,092
Scale D	10,298	739	506	131	336	623	557	1,549
Scale C	3,757	270	214	91	82	267	184	591

Number

	Greater Glasgow	Highland	Lanark-shire	Lothian	Orkney	Shetland	Tayside	Western Isles
Management	111	15	108	98	1	5	49	2
CANO[1]	1	—	1	—	—	1	1	1
Director of nursing[1]	14	2	5	8	—	—	9	1
Senior nurse 1-6	63	10	25	40	1	3	31	—
Senior nurse 7-8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Scale I	5	2	11	38	—	1	1	—
Scale H	15	1	58	8	—	—	6	—
Scale G	10	—	8	4	—	—	1	—
Scale F	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Teachers	243	31	66	165	—	1	86	—
Grade 7	2	—	1	2	—	—	—	—
Grade 6	2	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Grade 5	1	1	1	1	—	—	1	—
Grade 4	7	1	—	3	—	—	1	—
Grade 3	26	11	8	20	—	—	9	—
Grade 2	135	6	42	90	—	—	39	—
Grade 1	70	12	14	49	—	1	35	—
Clinical grades	8,690	1,763	3,780	5,716	174	169	3,982	283
Scale I	71	40	15	67	2	—	26	5
Scale H	265	52	56	128	3	7	125	4
Scale G	1,825	367	715	1,230	43	44	684	75
Scale F	632	212	249	514	26	17	321	18
Scale E	3,047	728	1,315	2,179	22	28	1,381	104
Scale D	2,290	309	892	1,309	38	20	953	46
Scale C	560	55	538	289	40	53	492	31

[1] Chief area nursing officers and directors of nursing services may be classified either as nursing staff or administrative staff—those shown in this table are classifed as nursing staff.

Qualified nurses: by status, grade and health board: at 30 September 1990

Whole-time equivalent

	Scotland	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Borders	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Forth Valley	Grampian
Management	576·8	96·0	11·5	7·7	9·0	15·0	22·6	30·0
CANO[1]	8·0	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	1·0	—
Director of nursing	70·0	12·0	2·0	2·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	6·0
Senior nurse 1-6	232·1	7·0	8·5	0·5	6·0	6·0	12·6	19·0
Senior nurse 7-8	5·0	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	3·0
Scale I	115·5	51·5	—	2·0	—	4·0	1·0	—
Scale H	113·0	23·0	—	—	—	—	1·0	2·0
Scale G	28·7	1·0	—	1·2	—	1·0	4·0	—
Scale F	4·5	—	1·0	1·0	—	—	—	—
Teachers	886·0	52·8	37·0	13·0	25·5	44·5	42·9	91·0
Grade 7	6·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0
Grade 6	6·0	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	1·0	—
Grade 5	8·0	—	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	1·0
Grade 4	27·0	4·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	1·0	2·0	2·0
Grade 3	102·4	2·0	3·0	2·0	5·0	5·0	4·0	8·0
Grade 2	462·0	27·0	19·0	7·0	14·0	21·0	22·9	44·2
Grade 1	274·6	18·8	12·0	2·0	3·5	16·5	13·0	34·8
Clinical grades	34,738·1	2,426·6	2,026·8	660·6	1,056·2	2,055·1	1,851·2	3,453·8
Scale I	444·7	10·0	30·0	11·0	23·0	41·0	33·0	71·0

	Scotland	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Borders	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Forth Valley	Grampian
Scale H	1,004·9	79·8	44·0	24·0	36·0	57·9	45·6	83·1
Scale G	7,600·3	605·7	456·9	146·6	218·7	421·4	436·2	682·6
Scale F	2,935·7	323·7	276·4	93·9	107·4	96·5	82·7	244·2
Scale E	11,296·8	592·4	614·7	200·0	333·8	683·8	672·2	882·8
Scale D	8,460·0	583·4	437·7	112·7	280·5	530·6	449·1	1,083·9
Scale C	2,995·7	231·6	167·1	72·4	56·8	223·9	132·4	406·2

Whole time equivalent

	Greater Glasgow	Highland	Lanark-shire	Lothian	Orkney	Shetland	Tayside	Western Isles
Management	109·6	15·0	107·0	97·5	1·0	5·0	47·9	2·0
CANO[1]	1·0	—	1·0	—	—	1·0	1·0	1·0
Director of nursing[1]	14·0	2·0	5·0	8·0	—	—	9·0	1·0
Senior nurse 1-6	63·0	10·0	24·5	40·0	1·0	3·0	31·0	—
Senior nurse 7-8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Scale I	5·0	2·0	11·0	37·5	—	1·0	1·0	—
Scale H	15·0	1·0	57·5	8·0	—	—	5·5	—
Scale G	9·1	—	8·0	4·0	—	—	0·4	—
Scale F	2·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Teachers	234·8	30·5	65·4	162·9	—	1·0	84·7	—
Grade 7	2·0	—	1·0	2·0	—	—	—	—
Grade 6	2·0	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	—
Grade 5	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	—	—	1·0	—
Grade 4	7·0	1·0	—	3·0	—	—	1·0	—
Grade 3	26·0	11·0	7·4	20·0	—	—	9·0	—
Grade 2	130·8	6·0	42·0	89·3	—	—	38·8	—
Grade 1	66·0	11·5	14·0	47·6	—	1·0	33·9	—
Clinical grades	7,629·4	1,474·1	3,191·5	4,987·5	152·0	148·9	3,423·7	200·7
Scale I	70·7	40·0	15·0	67·0	2·0	—	26·0	5·0
Scale H	263·3	49·3	56·0	127·1	3·0	7·0	124·8	4·0
Scale G	1,688·3	326·3	671·8	1,135·8	41·7	42·4	659·6	66·3
Scale F	563·0	179·9	191·1	440·0	20·8	14·1	289·0	13·0
Scale E	2,618·7	578·8	1,083·3	1,831·2	19·9	23·1	1,099·4	62·7
Scale D	1,962·4	258·8	745·1	1,129·6	29·4	17·1	812·4	27·3
Scale C	463·0	41·0	429·2	256·8	35·2	45·2	412·5	22·4

[1] Chief area nursing officers and directors of nursing services may be classified either as nursing staff or administrative staff—those shown in this table are classified as nursing staff.

DEFENCE

The Gulf

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British fatalities were incurred in the conflict with Iraq; what were the circumstances in which each such death occurred; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) on 8 March, at column *330*.

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the civil service contributions to the military effort in the Gulf.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the opportunity to pay tribute to the very great efforts that have been and are still being made by the civil service in support of all operations in the Gulf.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent 1st Armoured Division has been dependent on assistance from non-United Kingdom helicopters during the Gulf conflict.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The 1st Armoured Division operated as an integral part of the United States 7th Army Corps and, as such, British commanders were able to call on United States helicopter assistance. British Army and RAF helicopters undertook similar missions in support of United States ground forces.

Radiation

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a breakdown for *(a)* Rosyth dockyard, *(b)* Devonport dockyard, *(c)* Aldermaston atomic weapons establishment and *(d)* Coulport RNAD of individual radiation dose exposures for workers in the bands (i) 0 to 10, (ii) 10 to 15, (iii) 15 to 20, (iv) 20 to 30, (v) 30 to 40 and (vi) greater than 40 mSv for the year 1990.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The final radiation dose exposures for 1990 in respect of workers at these establishments are not yet available.

War Widows' Pensions

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will explain the rules which govern the restoration of a widow's pension in circumstances where a woman has been widowed a first time and granted a Ministry of Defence pension, subsequently remarries, so losing her Ministry of Defence pension, and is then widowed a second time and seeks restoration of her Ministry of Defence pension.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Under the rules both of the armed forces pension scheme and of the principal civil service pension scheme, a widow loses her entitlement to a widow's pension on remarriage. Any subsequent resumption of payment is discretionary, but a pension may be restored to a widow on second widowhood if she is worse off after her second husband's death, without her former public service widow's pension, than she was on first widowhood with that pension.

Discretion to restore the pension lies with the Ministry of Defence in respect of the armed forces pension scheme, and with Her Majesty's Treasury in respect of the principal civil service pension scheme. In both cases, account is taken of all the widow's financial circumstances, including any pension entitlement which may accrue to her from her second marriage.

Members of the European Parliament

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many letters he has received since 4 January 1990 from Members of the European Parliament concerning local or national matters; and if he will make it his practice where the former are concerned to provide the hon. Member for the local constituency with copies of any such correspondence for his or her information.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has received six letters from Members of the European Parliament about local or national matters since 4 January 1990. If there is no European Community content in the MEP's letter and a constituency interest predominates, the MEP would be advised to refer the case to the MP for the constituency concerned.

Missiles

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the reasons for the delay so far in the issue of the invitation to tender—ITT—for ASRAAM—the advanced short-range air-to-air missile.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is taking longer than we hoped to finalise the terms of the ITT because of the complexities associated with this procurement.

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent so far by his Department on the ASRAAM project.

Mr. Alan Clark: This information is classified.

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends to preserve the family of weapons now covering the advanced short-range and medium-range air-to-air missiles.

Mr. Alan Clark: We are currently discussing with the United States the status of the family of weapons memorandum of understanding.

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether any missile other than BAe's ASRAAM proposal meets the specification of staff requirement (air) 1234.

(2) whether the British Aerospace ASRAAM proposal meets the specification of staff requirement (air) 1234.

Mr. Alan Clark: The evaluation of responses to the ITT will determine which proposals meet the specification of SR(A) 1234.

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when an invitation to tender for ASRAAM will be released to industry.

Mr. Alan Clark: The ITT will be issued as soon as possible.

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department intends to proceed with a European solution to the ASRAAM requirement.

Mr. Alan Clark: We plan to seek competitive proposals for solutions to our advanced short-range missile requirements.

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated benefit to the United Kingdom of the export potential of ASRAAM.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is too early to say.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to support smokers in his Department to give up smoking on the eighth No Smoking Day on 13 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department is publicising national No Smoking Day by the distribution of some 2,000 posters and by a message to all staff encouraging them to give up smoking. The Department's policy is to discourage smoking at the workplace. Counselling is available for those who wish to give up.

Territorial Army

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the number of personnel in the Territorial Army in 1979, 1985 and 1991.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The strength of the Territorial Army, including the Home Service Force was, as at 31 January in each year, 59,103 in 1979, 73,462 in 1985 and 75,135 in 1991.

Gulf Casualties

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what pension or other payments will be made *(a)* to the relatives of British service men killed in the Gulf war, and *(b)* to service men disabled in the Gulf war.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Pensions and other benefits are payable in respect of casualties of the Gulf conflict under the provisions of the armed forces pension scheme.

In respect of personnel killed these take the form of lump sums and a pension to an eligible widow(er), with an additional pension in respect of each eligible child up to a maximum of four; where there is no eligible widow(er), benefits in respect of any eligibile children are increased. A lump sum is payable into the estate of a service man or service woman who leaves neither an eligible widow(er) nor an eligible child.

Personnel invalided as the result of injury which is attributable to service receive a lump sum or sums and, where disability is assessed at 20 per cent. or more or qualifying service given is at least two years, a pension.

The amounts payable are related to service rank held and also, in the case of personnel discharged as the result of injury, to the assessed degree of disability. In certain circumstances the length of service given is also relevant.

Benefits are also payable under the provisions of the war pensions scheme administered by the Department of Social Security.

Main Battle Tank

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will announce the awarding of the contract for main battle tanks for the British Army; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 8 March at columns *290-91*.

SOCIAL SECURITY

State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 4 February, *Official Report*, columns *58-59*, on the real value of SERPS, if he will give the figures for the scheme as it was before the Social Security Act 1986 changes, but otherwise on the same basis.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the table. It is important to note that calculations of this nature can provide only a hypothetical view of the distant future based, as they are, on unchanged assumptions about economic variables and policies.

Amounts of additional pension at award in 1990 price terms pre 1986 act basis weekly amounts of additional pension payable on retirement on 6 April each year

Year	UEL[1]	Average earnings	Half average earnings
1990	48·65	31·85	12·70
1991	53·20	34·95	13·90
1992	57·55	38·10	15·15
1993	62·15	41·50	16·65
1994	66·70	44·90	18·00
1995	71·35	48·40	19·45
1996	76·25	52·25	21·15
1997	81·10	56·00	22·75
1998	86·00	59·90	24·45
1999	87·25	60·85	24·85
2000	88·75	61·95	25·45
2001	90·10	62·95	25·95
2002	91·55	64·00	26·45
2003	93·00	65·05	26·95
2004	94·50	66·20	27·55
2005	96·05	67·35	28·15
2006	97·55	68·40	28·65
2007	99·10	69·55	29·20
2008	100·65	70·70	29·80
2009	102·30	71·90	30·40
2010	103·90	73·05	30·95
2011	105·50	74·25	31·55
2012	107·20	75·45	32·20
2013	108·85	76·65	32·75
2014	110·55	77·90	33·35
2015	112·30	79·20	34·00
2016	114·10	80·55	34·70
2017	115·90	81·85	35·35
2018	117·65	83·10	36·00
2019	119·55	84·50	36·70
2020	121·35	85·80	37·35
2021	123·30	87·25	38·05
2022	125·20	88·65	38·75
2023	127·15	90·05	39·45
2024	129·15	91·50	40·20
2025	131·10	92·95	40·90
2026	133·15	94·45	41·65
2027	135·25	95·95	42·40
2028	135·50	97·20	43·05
2029	135·85	98·30	43·55

From 1990 onwards 5 per cent. prices and 6·5 per cent. earnings assumed.

[1] UEL = Upper Earnings Limit.

Unemployed Persons (Costs)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he makes of the average cost to the Treasury of each unemployed person in unemployment benefit and lost revenues from taxes and national insurance.

Mr. Jack: In 1990-91 the estimated average weekly cost of unemployment benefit per person was £40·35. Estimates of national insurance and tax revenue forgone are not available.

War Widow's Pensions

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will explain the rules which govern the restoration of a widow's pension in circumstances where a woman has been widowed a first time and granted a war widow's pension, subsequently remarries and loses her war widow's pension, and is then widowed a second time and seeks restoration of her war widow's pension.

Miss Widdecombe: War widow's pensions cease on remarriage. Widows of ranks other than officers receive a gratuity equal to one year's war widow's pension, but may not have their pension restored if widowed through non-service causes a second time. Officers' widows do not receive a gratuity, but if widowed a second time, may have their war widow's pension reinstated subject to need. In effect this means that any other income is topped up to the level of war widow's pensions. A joint working group set up in 1985 with the Council of British Service and Ex-Service Organisations agreed that there was a need for a change in these provisions. However, there was no consensus of opinion about what changes should be made to these very long-standing provisions; and it was decided to leave matters as they were.

Members of the European Parliament

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many letters he has received since 4 January 1990 from Members of the European Parliament concerning local or national matters; and if he will make it his practice, where the former are concerned, to provide the hon. Member for the local constituency with copies of any such correspondence for his or her correspondence.

Mr. Jack: Between 4 January 1990 and 6 March 1991 we received 26 such letters. Where Members of the European Parliament raise matters in correspondence which concern exclusively local matters, our normal practice is to reply suggesting that the MEP refers the matter to the hon. Member for the constituency concerned. As with other correspondence, replies to such communications would normally be copied to the hon. Member concerned only if the MEP had himself copied his letter in this way.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to support smokers in his Department to give up smoking on the eighth No Smoking Day on 13 March; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department has undertaken extensive publicity to make staff aware of no smoking day, including Health Education Authority posters on all notice boards, articles in house magazines, reminders in weekly circulars and competitions to encourage staff to give up smoking. In addition, under the Department's established policy on non-smoking, staff are allowed paid time off to attend recognised courses to help them stop smoking.

Social Fund Loans

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of income support claimants are now repaying social fund loans; and what is the total outstanding loan debt.

Mr. Scott: At 31 January 1991, 10 per cent. of income support claimants were repaying social fund loans; the total debt outstanding was £135 million.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current level of repayment of social fund loans; and if he will remove the cash limit on local office loan budgets where repayment levels are high.

Mr. Scott: From April 1990 to the end of January, £105 million was recovered from loan expenditure. We have no plans to remove the limits on local office loan budgets, but additional budget allocations are made where appropriate.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 6 March to the hon. Member for Wakefield, whether, if a suitable person acting on behalf of the resident placed in a care home trust is a local authority social worker, the resident would be eligible for income support.

Miss Widdecombe: Eligibility for income support is not affected by the person acting as appointee, but is based solely on the circumstances of the individual claimant.

Delayed Payments

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what steps have been taken by his Department to inform hon. Members of the Department's compensation scheme for delayed payments;

(2) what system exists for compensating those whose pension or benefit is paid more than a year late; and if he will publish the rules which govern such a system;

(3) how many individuals received compensation payments for delayed payments for each of the years for which figures are available; and how many claims for such payments were unsuccessful.

Miss Widdecombe: Ex-gratia compensation may be paid when payment of benefit amounting to £50 or more has either been delayed for 12 months or longer, or interrupted for at least three months, because of clear and unambiguous official error. If claimants do not themselves raise the matter, the Department's local offices are required to identify cases eligible to be considered for such compensation. These arrangements are in accordance with the general principles concerning ex-gratia payments in "Government Accounting", the Treasury's guide to accounting and financial procedures in government. Each case is decided within those general principles, taking into account its particular facts and circumstances, which vary widely from case to case. The annual reports of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration have drawn attention to the availability of compensation.

Payments have been made as follows:

Year	*Number of individual payments*
1989-90	385
1988-89	529
1987-88	911
1986-87	654
1985-86	540
1984-85	171

Information on the number of unsuccessful cases is not available.

Child Support

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what period or periods he intends to prescribe as the maximum for reductions of benefit under clause 22 of the Child Support Bill; and whether adjudication officers and social security appeal tribunals will be given unfettered discretion to decide, within the prescribed maxima, the amount and duration of such reduction.

Mr. Jack: Every child has a right to care from his or her parents, and the payment of child maintenance is one crucial way in which parents fulfil their responsibilities towards their children. A caring parent who is in receipt of income support, family credit or any other prescribed benefit will be required to co-operate with the Child Support Agency in obtaining maintenance for his or her children from the absent parent, unless there is good cause not to do so. Where there is no good cause, and the caring parent fails to fulfil this requirement, his or her benefit will be reduced.

The detailed operation of the arrangements for which clause 22 makes provision, and which will in due course be set out in regulations, is still under consideration.

Family Credit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much has been spent on advertising family credit in each year since 1988-89; and what is the expected expenditure in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Jack: The information is as follows:

	£
1988-89	3,061,000
1989-90	5,835,000
1990-91	[1]3,894,000
1991-92	[2]3,600,000

[1] This includes £1·5 million for the current TV advertising campaign drawing the attention of 6·8 million families to the

personalised message about family credit which now appears in child benefit order books. This tells the family that they may be able to get family credit if their income is less than the figure quoted in the message which is individual to that family.

[3] Expected.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many family credit awards were current, and what was the caseload including backdated awards at the end of each month since April 1989, for employees and self-employed people, respectively.

Mr. Jack: The available information is as follows:

	Number of family credit awards current at end of month[1]	*Caseload (including backdated awards) as at end of month*		
		Employees	*Self-employed*	*Total*
April 1989	251,897	235,820	43,160	278,980
May 1989	235,751	255,420	44,620	300,040
June 1989	263,480	263,200	45,520	308,720
July 1989	275,414	268,140	45,080	313,220
August 1989	281,734	269,100	44,440	313,540
September 1989	288,631	273,560	44,700	318,260
October 1989	278,122	268,880	43,660	312,540
November 1989	274,194	257,660	43,080	300,740
December 1989	263,135	249,760	41,340	291,100
January 1990	265,548	255,300	44,100	299,400
February 1990	278,392	261,960	44,860	306,820
March 1990	281,559	263,360	45,920	309,280
April 1990	280,898	267,240	46,760	314,000
May 1990	268,933	267,940	47,260	315,200
June 1990	275,250	272,360	47,480	319,840
July 1990	279,856	277,620	48,200	325,820
August 1990	281,414	—	—	[2]324,000
September 1990	282,019	—	—	[2]326,000
October 1990	280,744	—	—	[2]326,000
November 1990	293,343	—	—	[2]324,000
December 1990	284,429	—	—	[3]
January 1991	281,250	—	—	[3]
February 1991	288,924	—	—	[3]

[1] A breakdown between employees and self-employed is not available.
[2] Provisional totals: no breakdown between employers and employed at this stage.
[3] Meaningful figures not yet available because of claims not yet decided.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest information he has as to the number of employees and self-employed people, respectively, who are eligible for family credit; and whether he will arrange a special examination of 1989 and 1990 family expenditure survey returns, similar to that carried out on the 1988 return.

Mr. Jack: The latest information about the number of families eligible for family credit is from the special examination of family expenditure survey returns for 1988. This showed that the total eligible population of employees at that time was about 500,000. Reliable estimates of the number of self-employed who are eligible are not possible from family expenditure survey data. It is clear from administrative information and other research that families are moving into and out of eligibility for family credit all the time, so that the composition of the eligible population is constantly changing.

The special examination of the 1988 family expenditure survey returns, which cost over £10,000, was undertaken in early 1989 because we were considering a major advertising campaign. The actual size of the eligible population at any one time is therefore only one, albeit important, factor which needs to be considered. We have no plans to arrange a special examination of family expenditure survey returns for 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* new claims and *(b)* renewal claims for family credit were made in each month since April 1989; and how many and what percentage were successful, distinguishing, for both new and renewal claims, between those made by employees and those made by self-employed people.

Mr. Jack: The available information is as follows:

	Claims registered			*Decisions made which resulted in an award of family credit*			
				Number		*Percentage of all decisions*	
Date	*New*	*Renewal*	*Total*	*New*	*Renewal*	*New*	*Renewal*
May 1989	94,900	30,162	125,062	20,484	18,703	35·4	86·7
June 1989	79,906	35,340	115,246	39,721	34,057	40·0	86·5
July 1989	41,671	25,639	66,948	26,599	23,405	47·8	86·5
August 1989	37,059	25,639	62,698	23,675	24,483	51·4	86·5
September 1989	47,534	33,110	80,644	25,696	28,802	51·6	86·7
October 1989	39,629	40,729	80,358	21,693	28,817	53·0	84·0
November 1989	45,523	36,790	82,313	21,497	33,580	51·6	82·2
December 1989	42,890	28,054	70,944	18,687	25,007	47·2	81·4
January 1990	43,471	35,301	78,772	20,701	29,524	46·6	82·4
February 1990	46,288	29,824	76,112	23,680	28,092	50·9	83·9

Date	Claims registered			Decisions made which resulted in an award of family credit			
				Number		Percentage of all decisions	
	New	Renewal	Total	New	Renewal	New	Renewal
March 1990	50,906	39,025	89,931	26,273	31,688	50·5	85·4
April 1990	41,118	35,568	76,686	18,225	24,569	52·2	88·3
May 1990	50,119	43,033	93,152	24,279	34,919	55·0	88·4
June 1990	43,528	26,937	70,465	20,622	26,199	53·8	87·7
July 1990	45,967	29,357	75,324	24,536	27,574	53·0	87·0
August 1990	53,147	39,596	92,531	24,905	29,122	52·5	86·0
September 1990	42,702	34,328	76,546	20,362	25,680	50·5	84·3
October 1990	41,590	40,269	81,625	24,196	33,652	53·4	83·8
November 1990	50,339	47,119	97,458	31,208	46,533	54·9	84·3
December 1990	21,479	21,486	42,965	13,214	19,702	54·5	85·0
January 1991	27,541	41,158	40,405	17,442	31,130	50·6	84·1
February 1991	47,350	34,148	81,498	21,749	31,972	52·4	85·0

Note:

1. The figures are for the four or five weeks ending on the last Friday of each month.
2. Separate information for employees and self-employed people is only available at disproportionate cost either for claims or for decisions made.

Disability

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place in the Library the full detailed secondary analysis of the reports of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on the prevalence of disability which relate to the number of disabled people who need special diets and their eligibility or ineligibility for the new lower care component of disability living allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: When devising the lower rate care component of the disability living allowance, we looked at the OPCS evidence about people who said that they had care needs in connection with bodily functions or key daily tasks, but who would not be eligible for either of the existing rates of attendance allowance. We then looked more closely at the circumstances of these people to see whether we had identified a sensible target group. In particular we looked at what other disabilities these people suffered from—including whether they needed a special diet. The evidence suggests that, as with the existing rates of benefit, the new lower rates are convenient means of identifying people with a whole range of disabilities.

TRANSPORT

Bristol Channel

17. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the arrangements for liaison between his Department and the Ministry of Defence in the Bristol channel area; and if he will make a statement on the work of Her Majesty's coastguard on Friday 22 February 1991 when shipping was advised to clear the area during a simulation exercise on the jettisoning of bombs by B52 bombers.

Mr. McLoughlin: Close liaison between my Department and the Ministry of Defence is maintained by the maritime rescue co-ordination centres of Her Majesty's coastguard at Falmouth and Swansea and the joint RAF-Royal Navy maritime HQ at Plymouth.

Her Majesty's coastguard had neither knowledge of, nor involvement in, any exercises in the Bristol channel area on 22 February 1991.

Channel Tunnel

19. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about discussions with British Rail about a channel tunnel freight terminal in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Freeman: The location of channel tunnel freight terminals is a commercial matter for British Rail. I understand that it expects to decide later this year between two possible sites to serve Greater Manchester for the start of tunnel operations.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report of the consultants W. S. Atkins on the evaluation of channel tunnel rail link options; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Freeman: W. S. Atkins published on 4 March its interim report to British Rail proposing the detailed methodology for British Rail's comparison of the options for the rail link. I have placed a copy in the Library.

28. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive details of the British Rail proposals for the route of the high-speed rail link to the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: In April or May.

Auxiliary Coastguard Service

20. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on the review of the auxiliary coastguard service.

Mr. McLoughlin: As intended, the review has attracted numerous representations, mostly addressed to the coastguard regional controllers.

Network SouthEast

22. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on Network SouthEast's achievements against its performance objectives in this year.

Mr. Freeman: There are parts of NSE where quality of service is not yet up to the standard passengers have a right to expect, although there has been a general improvement

during 1990-91. As NSE's investment programme comes to fruition, quality of service on all routes should show further improvements.

Traffic Speed, London

23. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated current speed of traffic in London; what are his future projections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Speeds vary between areas, from around 11 mph in central London—with little variation through the working day—to 17 mph and 20 mph in the peak and off-peak in outer London. These figures indicate that average speeds on London's major roads are about 16 mph in the peak periods and 19 mph during the rest of the day. We do not produce forecasts of overall traffic speeds.

Rural Railways

24. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to review rural railway investment.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. It is for the British Railways Board to carry out any such review.

Road Construction

25. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many road schemes are under construction in the current financial year.

Mr. Chope: In the current financial year 107 schemes have been or will be under construction. The total length is some 337 miles with a value of over £1·5 billion.

Toll Roads

26. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his policy towards the inclusion of privately toll-funded stretches within the national roads programme.

Mr. Freeman: We are confident that the private sector has a worth while and increasing part to play in the provision of new roads infrastructure in the United Kingdom.

British Rail Vehicles

27. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many new vehicles British Rail currently has on order.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail has on order 111 locomotives, 606 electric multiple units, 490 diesel multiple units, 70 coaches, 745 wagons, and 14 channel tunnel trains consisting of 252 coaches and 28 power cars.

London Regional Transport

29. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what levels of investment he expects to see in London Regional Transport during 1990-91; and what they were in 1989-90.

Mr. Freeman: Investment by London Transport in 1989-90 was £443 million. Investment this year is forecast to be £630 million—an increase, in cash terms, of over 40 per cent.

London Underground

30. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will next meet the chairman of London Underground to discuss the operation of the London underground.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) earlier today.

M4

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate of the date on which construction works for the widening of the M4 between the M25 and Swindon will start; and if he will make a statement on the progress of preliminary works.

Mr. Chope: We have three separate scheme commissions looking at the options for widening the length of M4 betweeen the M25 and Swindon. All three are progressing satisfactorily and we aim to make announcements about preferred options before the end of the year. Because timing is heavily dependent on the type of works proposed the planned programme will be part of those announcements.

Footpaths (Cycling)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on the control of the use of footpaths by cyclists; how many injuries to pedestrians on footpaths caused by cycles there have been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: It is illegal to cycle on footpaths; the exclusive right of way is on foot. The responsibility for the control and use of footpaths rests with individual local authorities. The Department has published advice on aspects of shared use by pedestrians and cyclists in local transport note 2/86—HMSO—copies of which have been placed in the Library. Figures for injuries caused by cyclists to pedestrians on footpaths are not collected centrally.

Buttermere Valley (Parking)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will call in under reserve powers available to him the decision of Cumbria county council to restrict parking in the Buttermere valley.

Mr. Chope: No. This is essentially a local highways issue. The authority would be expected to comply with those sections of the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 and traffic signs manual covering environmentally sensitive areas.

Pipelines

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *309*, what will be the capacity of the new pipeline from Goyt valley to Audenshaw; and what percentage of treatment capacity at Denton could be met by this supply at any given time.

Mr. Chope: The pipeline will be capable of transferring 44 megalitres of untreated water per day to the Audenshaw

reservoirs. This will enable North West Water to maintain the existing 28-day emergency supply. Treatment capacity should remain the same.

North Devon Link Road

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many compensation claims have been submitted in respect of the North Devon link road steps 2(a) and 2(b); in which years they were submitted; how many are still outstanding; and, where a figure has been agreed, how long it takes for payment to be made.

Mr. Chope: A total of 132 claims have been received: 58 date from 1986, 69 from 1987, 4 from 1988 and one from 1989; 118 are still outstanding, of which 22 are in the last stages of legal completion. Advance payments are available on request from the date entry is taken and 92 claimants have received at least one such payment. The figures exclude the 1 ft square plots at Great Western green where 129 claims out of 130 remain outstanding.

Once compensation is agreed, it takes an average of six months to complete the legal processes and make the final payment, but this time can be affected by a number of factors outside the Department's control. Claims attract interest, at statutory rates, from the date of entry on to the land until payment is made.

Public Transport Infrastructure

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many applications for section 56 grants under the Transport Act 1968 his Department has received; and in how many of these cases grants have been provided;

(2) if he will list those applications for section 56 grants under the Transport Act 1968 which have been successful indicating in each case the project concerned, the level of support provided and the date on which the grant application was approved.

Mr. Freeman: Since 1985, when such grants became available for large new public transport infrastructure projects, there have been 12 applications. Of these, three have been approved and a further four are under consideration. A number of promoters have been in contact with the Department about the possibility of grants for other projects, but have not made full applications. The successful applications are listed in the table.

Project	*Date approved*	*Grant £ million*
Merseyrail safety work	March 1989	0·3
Manchester Metrolink	October 1989	[1]53·0
Sheffield Supertram	December 1990	[2]

[1] Approximate figure; grant is being paid towards 50 per cent. of eligible costs within a cash ceiling.
[2] Exact figure not yet determined.

Bicycle Lights

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that all bicycles are sold with working front and rear lights.

Mr. Chope: I refer to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) on 1 March, at column 625.

Members of the European Parliament

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many letters he has received since 4 January 1990 from Members of the European Parliament concerning local or national matters; and if he will make it his practice, where the former are concerned, to provide the hon. Member for the local constituency with copies of any such correspondence for his or her information.

Mr. McLoughlin: Ministers at the Department of Transport have received 134 written communications from Members of the European Parliament since 4 January 1990 that concern local or national matters. If there is no Community content at all in the MEP's letter and a constituency interest predominates it is our general practice to suggest that the MEP should refer the case to the hon. Member for the constituency concerned. As with other correspondence, replies to MEPs' letters would normally be copied to the hon. Member concerned only if the MEP had himself copied his letter in this way.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to support smokers in his Department to give up smoking on the eighth No Smoking Day on 13 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Posters advertising No Smoking Day and information leaflets will be displayed in all the Department's main offices throughout the country, and an article will be placed in the Department's in-house journal. Guidance has been given to all staff on damage to health caused by smoking. Welfare officers are on hand to give help and advice to staff who wish to give up smoking and on the availability of classes for this purpose. However, in the end it is a matter of individual choice.

Heathrow-Glasgow Flights

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his decision on the appeal by British Midland Airways against unfair competition on the Heathrow to Glasgow air service.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering British Midland Airways' appeal against the Civil Aviation Authority's decision in respect of services on the London Heathrow to Glasgow, Edinburgh and Belfast routes. His decision will be announced as soon as possible.

Earphones

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will commission a study into the effects of wearing earphones connected to transistor radios or cassette players on the safety of pedestrians and cyclists using public roads.

Mr. Chope: No. The highway code for young road users already contains advice about the potential danger of wearing personal stereos.

M1-M62 Link

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement with regard to the proposed route of the M1-M62 link road in West Yorkshire.

Mr. Chope: I hope that, following consultation on route options later this year, it will be possible to announce a preferred route in 1992.

Buses, London

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to announce his plans for the deregulation of the London bus market.

Mr. Rifkind: I have today published the consultation paper "A Bus Strategy For London" which sets out our plans for the deregulation of the London bus market together with a range of proposals aimed at making bus services in London more attractive to passengers. The closing date for comments is 7 May.

The Government are firmly committed to the future of bus services in London. Deregulation will bring more competition between more operators which will increase the choice and quality of services available to the passenger. However, deregulation will require primary legislation to safeguard the future of the concessionary fares scheme for London as a whole, and to alter London Transport's statutory duties to make them more compatible with a deregulated bus industry. Primary legislation must await a suitable opportunity, so I am unable yet to give any firm indication of timing.

THE ARTS

Area Museum Councils

31. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what proposals he has to improve the relationship between the work of the Museum and Galleries Commission and the area museum councils.

Mr. Renton: The Museums and Galleries Commission enjoys a good working relationship with the area museum councils in the United Kingdom. From the grant-in-aid it is to receive from the Office of Arts and Libraries in 1991-92, the commission has allocated nearly £3·3 million to the area museum councils in England. This represents an overall increase of 15 per cent. on the allocations for 1990-91.

Museums and Galleries (Refurbishment)

36. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he is taking to ensure that the necessary refurbishment of museums and galleries is being systematically and professionally undertaken.

Mr. Renton: I have commissioned Arup Research and Development to conduct a survey of the building renovation needs of the museums and galleries which I sponsor. I expect to receive its report in summer 1991.

School Libraries

38. **Mrs. Heal:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he plans to update the Office of Arts and Libraries' report entitled "School Libraries: The Foundations of the Curriculum".

Mr. Renton: This report was produced by the Library and Information Services Council for England. It has no plans to update it, but the council maintains a regular interest in school libraries and associated services.

Greater London Arts

39. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next plans to meet the chair of the Arts Council to discuss the financial support for Greater London Arts.

Mr. Renton: I meet the chairman of the Arts Council regularly to discuss a wide range of matters affecting the performing arts. The funding of Greater London Arts is a matter for the Arts Council, and the chairman has kept me closely informed of developments.

Tobacco Companies (Sponsorship)

Mr. Amos: To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the current annual total of sponsorship of the arts by tobacco companies; if he will list these individually; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Business sponsorship of the arts in the United Kingdom now stands at over £35 million a year. The current annual total of sponsorship by tobacco companies is not known. Arts organisations take their own decisions in choosing what sponsorship to accept.

Tobacco Industry

Mr. Amos: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many meetings he, his predecessor or his Department's officials have had with representatives of the tobacco industry since 1 January 1989; and if he will list the dates, venues and purpose of each meeting.

Mr. Renton: No meetings have taken place with representatives of the tobacco industry during the period in question.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Amos: To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to support smokers in his Department to give up smoking on the eighth No Smoking Day on 13 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I welcome the proposed No Smoking Day. The Office of Arts and Libraries has permanent restrictions on smoking in the workplace. Counselling is always available, for smokers and for those who wish to give up the habit, through the departmental welfare officer.

British Library

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he expects the British Library to be completed by the agreed date; and whether the works will be within budget.

Mr. Renton: Work on the new British Library building at St. Pancras is on schedule for the planned opening of the first phase in 1993 and for completion in 1996. The project is proceeding within budget. The Government are investing £450 million in the project which will bring together most of the Library's London-based stocks and reading rooms on a single site, and will provide vastly improved facilities and better conservation.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 12 March 1991

THE ARTS

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the number of workplaces for civil servants in the Office of Arts and Libraries; what proportion of the total number have an on-site nursery facility; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide a holiday play scheme; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide after-school child care facilities; what charges are made for use of any facility; what the net cost has been for the provision of these facilities; and what estimate he can make of any future expenditure.

Mr. Renton: Staff of the Office of Arts and Libraries are employed at Horse Guards road, SW1 and in St. Christopher house annex, Sumner street, SE1. Neither has an on-site nursery or after-school child care facilities. A survey carried out in 1989 by the Cabinet Office, which provides personnel and welfare services to my office, found that there was a low level of interest in such facilities.

The Westminster holiday play scheme operates in the Government offices, Great George street, however, and is available to the staff of my Department.

TRANSPORT

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of workplaces for civil servants in his Department; what proportion of the total number have an on-site nursery facility; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide a holiday play scheme; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide after-school child care facilities; what charges are made for use of any facility; what the net cost has been for the provision of these facilities; and what estimate he can make of any future expenditure.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department of Transport has 797 workplaces for civil servants, of which 43 house more than 50 staff each. An on-site nursery is provided at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre in Swansea. Holiday playschemes will be available to DTp staff in Birmingham, Coventry, Exeter, Bristol, Manchester, Nottingham, Swansea and central London in or near the workplace. After-school child care facilities are not provided. Typical charges for holiday play schemes are under £5 per child per day. The nursery charges parents £44·50 per child per week. Net costs for the provisions of these facilities, most of which are run in conjunction with other employers, are modest but precise figures are not readily available. Departmental policy is to continue to expand provision in co-operation with other Government Departments and private employers where this offers value for money.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether Her Majesty's Government was consulted by the European Commission over the grant of a £200 million loan to Eurotunnel; and if he will take steps to establish the conditions under which this loan was approved by the Commission.

Mr. Freeman: The European Commission has kept the Government informed of Eurotunnel's application for a loan and the conditions under which the loan would be made. Council approval is required before the loan is granted.

London Underground

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on the new safety instructions issued to London Underground staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: None. These are revisions to existing safety instructions which London Underground has discussed with the Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate and the London fire and civil defence authority, whose comments have been incorporated in the draft revisions.

Driving Tests

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are to introduce a course by bicycle as part of the standard driving test, to ensure that drivers are aware of cyclists through experience; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: None, but a test candidate's awareness of the consideration required towards cyclists and other road users forms a critical part of the driving examiner's road safety assessment on test.

London Red Routes

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library the map used in Committee on the Road Traffic Bill that showed likely red routes in Greater London.

Mr. Chope: I have arranged for copies of the map that was referred to in Committee to be placed in the Library. The map does not, however, show proposals for priority routes in central London. We shall be giving further consideration to these and other proposals before we undertake formal consultation on the priority route network. An explanatory note has been added to the map.

Lower Lea Bridge

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state what features to facilitate bus services he expects to incorporate in the rebuilt roads on either side of the new Lower Lea bridge.

Mr. Freeman: The rebuilding of roads on either side of the Lower Lea road crossing is being carried out by the London Docklands development corporation and the borough councils concerned. It will be for them to decide what features to help buses should be provided.

In planning improvements on the nearby A13 trunk road at the Ironbridge and Canning Town we shall be consulting London Transport and the boroughs on the additional facilities that might be provided to assist buses and bus users without jeopardising safety.

Auxiliary Coastguard Service

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to discuss the outcome of the review of the auxiliary coastguard service with the hon. Members for South Hams and for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) before reaching any decisions.

Mr. McLoughlin: I will be ready to meet my hon. Friends to discuss the outcome of the review of Her Majesty's coastguard sector organisation and auxiliary coastguard service before reaching any decisions.

Newbury Bypass

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the progress of the Newbury bypass.

Mr. Chope: Following the decision anounced in July 1990 to adopt a western bypass of the A34 at Newbury, the Department has consulted on minor modifications to the route and side road alterations and will announce the outcome shortly. This will be followed by the publication of further draft orders including a compulsory purchase order for the land needed for the scheme. The draft orders will be open to objection and representations in the usual way and if necessary a further public inquiry will be held. Subject to the satisfactory completion of these procedures the scheme is on target for tender invitation and the start of construction in 1993.

Rail Electrification

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of authorisation for the provision of electrification and the provision of rolling stock from the Leeds to Bradford and Aire Valley railway system.

Mr. McLoughlin: We are reserving resources to enable a start to be made on the provision of the infrastructure, and are at present considering proposals for the acquisition of the rolling stock.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EC Software Directive

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will make it his policy to seek amendment to the EC draft software directive to ensure that computer interfaces do not become subject to copyright;

(2) if he will make it his policy to seek amendment to the EC draft software directive to ensure that an interface is defined objectively and not by the computer or software manufacturer.

Mr. Leigh: The directive would oblige member states to extend copyright protection to the expression of a computer program but not to ideas and principles underlying the program. This corresponds with existing copyright law in the United Kingdom. Interface specifications will not therefore acquire copyright protection as a result of the directive. The directive already employs the term "interface" in an objective sense and does not therefore give the creator of a computer program the right to define what part of the program constitutes an interface for the purposes of the directive.

Film Industry, France

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has had with the European Commission about the provision of state aids to the French state-owned film and TV production company, Société Francaise de Production.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend has had no such discussions. Approval by the Commission for the recapitalisation of the Société Francaise de Production did not involve consultation with member states.

Cross-Media Promotion

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has received the report of Mr. John Sadler into standards of cross-media promotion.

Mr. Lilley: I have today published the Sadler report into standards of cross-media promotion as Cm. 1436. I am very grateful for the careful research and analysis which Mr. Sadler has carried out in response to my predecessor's request and I welcome the publication of the report.

Before I take a final decision on my course of action I should be very interested to hear views from anybody who wishes to comment, particularly those who would be affected by his recommendations. Comments should reach my Department by 19 April, after which I will announce my plans.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) of 5 March, *Official Report*, columns *88-89*, what steps he proposes to ensure that the selected tenderers on his short list to take over the insurance services group of the ECGD have adequate capital resources;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 5 March, what consultations he has had with the parent companies of trade indemnity to make its status on the short list for the trade sale of the insurance services group of the ECGD conditional on additional capital resources being provided.

Mr. Sainsbury: Shortlisted bidders have been requested to meet the DTI (insurance division) to discuss their plans for the business and capital requirements for the new company. The business will need sufficient capital to satisfy the regulatory requirements of the DTI and prudential requirements. For reasons of commercial confidentiality, it would not be appropriate to disclose details of discussions with any of the companies invited to tender.

Whisky

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations Her Majesty's Government has made to the authorities in Taiwan in respect of the discriminatory effect of their tax regime on imports of Scotch whisky.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* The authorities in Taiwan are well aware of the United Kingdom's dissatisfaction. Her Majesty's Government have no formal dealings with the Taiwan authorities, but the British Overseas Trade Board's area advisory group for Taiwan, the Anglo Taiwan trade committee, takes every opportunity to draw our concerns on this matter to their attention, both in Taipei and London and will continue to do so. The Government have also raised the matter with the European Commission.

Post Office Staff

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the extent to which the measures applicable to postal and catering executive grades, as set out in P1 U0012, have been followed in the Royal Mail's reorganisation of Quadrant.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 8 March 1991]:* The appointment and, where necessary, both the relocation and termination of employment of Post Office employees are operational matters for the Post Office.

Northern Region

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will list for the constituencies of Tynemouth, Langbaurgh, Darlington and Stockton, South those companies granted regional selective assistance since June 1983, together with the amounts involved.

Mr. Leigh: The information requested is available only at disproportionate cost. However, details of grant recipients were published quarterly in "British Business" up to September 1989 and thereafter in the Department of Employment "Gazette". The publication dates for the relevant issues of the journals are set out in the table.

Dates when RSA offers were published in 'British Business' by financial year

		Date
1983-84		
Q1	—	18 November 1983
Q2	—	17 February 1984
Q3	—	6 July 1984
Q4	—	13 July 1984
1984-85		
Q1	—	14 September 1984
Q2	—	23 November 1984
Q3	—	22 February 1985
Q4	—	28 June 1985
1985-86		
Q1	—	30 August 1985
Q2	—	29 November 1985
Q3	—	28 February 1986
Q4	—	6 June 1986
1986-87		
Q1	—	26 September 1986
Q2	—	28 November 1985
Q3	—	27 March 1987
Q4	—	19 June 1987
1987-88		
Q1	—	28 August 1987
Q2	—	27 November 1987
Q3	—	26 February 1988
Q4	—	13 May 1988
1988-89		
Q1	—	2 September 1988
Q2	—	9 December 1988
Q3	—	3 March 1989
Q4	—	30 June 1989
1989-90		
Q1	—	1 September 1989

Note:
Publications contain details of all offers of £5,000 or more after a first payment had been made. Offers below that level are confidential.

Dates when RSA offers were published in The Department of Employment Gazette

		Date
1989-90 Continued		
Q2	—	January 1990
Q3	—	April 1990
Q4	—	July 1990
1990-91		
Q1	—	October 1990
Q2	—	January 1991

Note:
Publications contain details of all offers of £75,000 or more after a first payment had been made. Offers below that level are confidential.

EC Grants

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will outline the basis of the additionality conditions as applied by the United Kingdom Government in the context of the terms of EC grants and payments as set out in Community legislation; and if he will list those Community countries that follow the same procedures as the United Kingdom.

Mr. Leigh *holding answer 11 March 1991]:* The Government take into account expected levels of Community receipts when setting their expenditure programmes, which are thus higher than they would otherwise be. The detail of public expenditure planning systems varies from member state to member state within the Community.

ENERGY

International Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if Her Majesty's Government will increase the United Kingdom grant to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. The International Atomic Energy Agency's budget is agreed annually by the board of governors and is confirmed at the general conference. The

United Kingdom's contributions are calculated on the basis of the United Nations formula for establishing the scale of contributions to international organisations.

Value for Money

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what measures of performance are employed by his Department to ensure value for money.

Mr. Wakeham: The Department of Energy ensures value for money by setting a variety of demanding financial and performance targets and monitoring the results. "The Government's Expenditure Plans Within the Energy Sector 1991-92 to 1993-94"—Cm. 1505—gives examples of the performance measures against which departmental programmes are evaluated. It also provides details of efficiency savings against administration costs. Targets relating to departmental purchasing are recorded in the "CUP Annual Targets and Savings Return".

Mining Licences

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he intends to review the current arrangements for governing the distribution of licences to mine coal *(a)* in deep mines and *(b)* in licensed mines.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: British Coal is reviewing its licensing procedures in the light of increases in the limits applicable to licensed opencast and deep mine operations introduced by the Coal Industry Act 1990.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newport, West of 4 March, *Official Report*, column *17*, how much of the plutonium arising from foreign spent fuel to which he refers was reprocessed prior to 1973; and what safeguards applied to civil nuclear materials at Sellafield prior to United Kingdom accession to the European Atomic Energy Community on 1 January 1973.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Approximately half a tonne of the plutonium referred to by the hon. Member was reprocessed before 1973. Prior to this date, civil nuclear material at Sellafield was subject to the United Kingdom's own system of accountancy and control.

Electricity Generation

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the cost per unit of electricity generated at current fuel input prices *(a)* at National Power's coal-fired stations, *(b)* at National Power's oil-fired stations, *(c)* by National Power's gas turbine generators, *(d)* at Nuclear Electric's advanced gas cooled reactor stations and *(e)* at Nuclear Electric's Magnox reactor stations.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This is a matter for the companies concerned.

Radioactive Wastes

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newport, West of 4 March, *Official Report*, column *17*, whether the conditioned wastes to which he makes reference include both low and intermediate-level radioactive wastes arising from reprocessing foreign spent fuel.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The conditioned waste referred to in my reply to the hon. Member comprises high, intermediate and low-level waste. As I indicated, it is planned to return all high-level waste as soon as practicable after vitrification. In respect of some of the less radioactive wastes, however, there may be other options worthy of study—for example, whether it would be sensible to substitute an equivalent quantity, in radiological terms, of higher-level wastes.

Licensed Coalmines

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether he intends to revise upwards the maximum number of employees allowed to work below ground at licensed coalmines;

(2) what are the maximum permitted numbers of employees to work below ground in a licensed coalmine *(a)* in any single shift, *(b)* in any 24-hour period and *(c)* in any production week.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Coal Industry Act 1990 raised the limit on the number of men that could be employed to work underground in a licensed deep mine from 30 to 150. The Government have no plans to raise this limit further.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Israel

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government are proposing to the United Nations Security Council regarding violations by the Israeli Government of *(a)* the Geneva conventions and *(b)* United Nations Security Council resolutions, regarding their treatment of Palestinian people.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: United Nations Security Council resolution 681 of 20 December 1990 provides a basis for continuing activity by the council on the protection of the Palestinian population of the occupied territories. As required under the resolution, the secretary general will shortly be reporting to the council on the matter.

NATO

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of NATO towards applications to join it from former Warsaw pact countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None of the former Warsaw pact countries have applied to join NATO. There is, however, general agreement within the alliance that membership for former Warsaw pact countries is not a practical option. Nonetheless, the declaration of the NATO summit held in London in July 1990 invited the Soviet Union and all the other countries of the Warsaw pact to establish regular diplomatic liaison with NATO. All the countries concerned have taken up this invitation.

Mecca Tunnel Disaster

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held with the Saudi Arabian Government regarding compensation to the families of British citizens known to have died in the tunnel disaster at Mecca on 2 July 1990.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any progress has been made with the Saudi Arabian Government in tracing British citizens missing since the tunnel disasters of 2 July 1990.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Saudi Arabian authorities are still unable to trace the three missing British pilgrims. They informed the consulate-general in Jedda on 10 March 1991 that they had been able to produce better quality photographs of victims of the tragedy which may assist identification. The British embassy in Riyadh and consulate-general in Jedda have provided all available information to the Saudi authorities and continue to press them to pursue their efforts to identify the missing victims.

Commission for the Restitution of Monetary Gold

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings of the tripartite commission for the restitution of monetary gold have been held since 29 May 1985; and what was discussed.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There have been four formal meetings of the tripartite commission for the restitution of monetary gold since the beginning of 1985. The proceedings of the commission are confidential.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much gold, by value and weight, is under the control of the tripartite commission for the restitution of monetary gold: and where it is stored.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The tripartite commission holds a little over 7 tonnes of gold, in the Federal Reserve bank in New York and in the Bank of England. The total value is approximately US $85 million.

Kurds

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings have been held with representatives of Kurdish political parties from *(a)* Iran, *(b)* Iraq, *(c)* Syria and *(d)* Turkey; what support has been offered to them; and what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards demands for Kurdish self-determination.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We believe that the Kurdish people should enjoy proper representation and respect for human rights in all of the countries in which they live. But as a signatory to the treaty of Lausanne of 1923, which established the present boundaries in the area, we cannot seek support for the establishment of a separate Kurdish state within these boundaries.

Iraq

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what occasions since March 1988 Her Majesty's Government's diplomatic representatives in Iraq met the Government to discuss *(a)* human rights violations, *(b)* the rights of Kurdish people, *(c)* the arms trade and *(d)* trade between the United Kingdom and Iraq.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Until they were withdrawn on 12 January, members of the British embassy in Baghdad were in regular contact with the Iraqi authorities and took many opportunities to raise our concerns with them about human rights violations in Iraq, including in relation to the Kurds. They also discussed trade between the United Kingdom and Iraq and our concern about Iraq's alleged attempts to acquire arms illegally in the United Kingdom.

Albanian Gold

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any recent discussions have taken place with the Government of Albania regarding the various claims in respect of the award of the International Court of Justice in 1949 following the incident in the Corfu channel and the Albanian gold held in the Bank of England.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: British and Albanian officials met in November and December of last year to discuss outstanding bilateral issues.

Kuwait

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions have been held with the Emir of Kuwait concerning representative democracy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 26 February, at column *463*.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Payroll Giving

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give an indication of the growth of the number of people taking advantage of the payroll giving to charity scheme since its inception, the corresponding amount of revenue forgone by the Treasury and the previous comparable estimates given by him.

Mr. Maude: Estimates are as follows:

Payroll giving scheme

Year	*Donors (thousands)*	*Donations (£ million)*	*Cost of tax relief (£ million)*
1987-88	55	1·0	0·3
1988-89	120	3·5	1·0
[1]1989-90	190	7·0	2·0
[1]1990-91	250	10·0	3·0

[1] Provisional.

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number of workplaces for civil servants in the Treasury, Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise; what proportion of the total number have an on-site nursery facility; how many and what proportion of workplaces

provide a holiday play scheme; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide after-school child care facilities; what charges are made for use of any facility; what the net cost has been for the provision of these facilities; and what estimate he can make of any future expenditure.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is as follows:

	Treasury	*Inland Revenue*	*Customs and Excise*
Workplaces	6	668	530
On-site nursery			
Number	[4]	[2]	[3]
Proportion (per cent.)	17	0·5	0·2
Holiday play scheme			
Number	[1]	26	24
Proportion (per cent.)	[1]	3·9	4·5
After school care	0	0	0

[1] The Treasury has no on site holiday play schemes at present, but it is involved in play schemes in the immediate vicinity of three of its workplaces.
[2] In addition Inland Revenue has one off-site shared nursery and a further two on-site and three off-site nurseries being developed.
[3] In addition Customs and Excise have reserved places in five other nursery schemes and a further three on-site nurseries are being developed.
[4] From 1 April.

Small Businesses

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many small businesses have registered for VAT in the northern region; how many have deregistered; and what is the surplus or deficit, for each year since 1983.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Statistics cover all businesses registering or deregistering for value added tax although in practice most could be termed small ones. The local VAT offices in Carlisle, Newcastle upon Tyne, Middlesbrough and Washington covers areas in addition to the northern region of Tyne and Wear, Cleveland, Durham, Cumbria and Northumberland. The number of VAT registrations and deregistrations processed by those offices was:

Year	*New registrations*	*Deregistrations*	*Net change*
1985	7,461	7,521	− 60
1986	7,745	7,343	+ 402
1987	7,926	6,652	+1,274
1988	9,756	7,232	+2,524
1989	10,449	7,594	+2,855
1990	9,073	7,819	+1,254

Records go back only to 1985.

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many small businesses have registered for VAT in the constituencies of Tynemouth, Langbaurgh, and Darlington and Stockton, South; how many have deregistered; and what is the surplus or deficit, for each year since 1983.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Statistics cover all business registering or deregistering for value added tax although in practice most could be termed small ones. The local VAT offices in Newcastle upon Tyne, Middlesbrough and Washington cover areas in addition to those listed. The number of VAT registrations and deregistrations processed by those offices was:

Year	*New Registrations*	*Deregistrations*	*Net Change*
1985	6,051	6,244	− 193
1986	6,303	5,867	+ 436
1987	6,345	5,358	+ 987
1988	7,854	5,746	+2,108
1989	8,409	5,998	+2,411
1990	7,290	6,357	+ 933

Records go back only to 1985.

Bankruptcy

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many petitions for bankruptcy have been originated by the VAT office for each year since 1985.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The following petitions for bankruptcy have been made by Customs and Excise for the years in question with orders made shown alongside:

	Petitions	*Orders made*
1985	1,622	883
1986	2,022	1,082
1987	1,456	895
1988	2,253	1,025
1989	2,905	987
1990	4,452	1,259
1991	396	[1]140

[1] (January only).

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list, for each year that PEPs have been in operation *(a)* the number and proportion of people with PEPs who are on the higher rate of tax and the number on the basic rate and *(b)* the cost to the Exchequer in total of PEPs and per person with a PEP.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* Information on personal equity plans is available only in respect of the number of plans and the amounts invested. Estimates of the direct revenue costs are as follows:

	Total (£ million)	*Per Personal Equity Plan £*
1986-87	[2]	[2]
1987-88	5	10
1988-89	15	35
1989-90	20	25
1990-91[1]	45	35

[1] Provisional.
[2] Negligible.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each year that PEPs have been in operation *(a)* the number of people with PEPs, *(b)* the average holding per person in a PEP and the distribution of holdings and *(c)* the distribution of PEP holdings by region.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* Information is not available in the form requested.

The number of plans taken out since the introduction of personal equity plans is estimated as follows:

	Number
1987	270,000
1988	120,000
1989[1]	580,000
1990[2]	200,000
Total	1,170,000

[1] Includes the first quarter of 1990.
[2] Second and third quarters of 1990.

The average value of the investment in each plan at the end of the year is estimated as follows:

	£
1987	1,650
1988	1,950
1989-90	2,900

There is no information available on the distribution of the level of investments or the regional distribution of investors.

Profit-related Pay

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average income and the distribution of income of those in profit-related pay schemes.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* Average annual earnings of participants, including those working part-time, in registered profit-related pay schemes were about £12,500 in February 1991. I regret that information on the distribution of earnings is not available.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Amos: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to support smokers in his Department to give up smoking on the eighth No Smoking Day on 13 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* The no smoking policy in operation in my Department was set out in my reply on 7 February, at columns *171-72*. Self-help groups have been run to support smokers who wish to give up smoking, but there are no plans to take any further measures in support of No Smoking Day.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Slaughterhouses

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish the communications to his chief veterinary officer and to other Ministry officials by European Community veterinary inspectors about the common deficiencies of slaughterhouses they visited in 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: It would not be appropriate to publish this correspondence between EC Commission officials and officials in my Department, as the information requested includes confidential details of the commercial activities of certain companies. I will, however, write to the hon. Member further on this matter.

Veterinary Investigation Service

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the numbers of *(a)* veterinarian, *(b)* scientific, *(c)* administrative and *(d)* other posts that will be lost as a result of his decision to close and reorganise the Veterinary Investigation Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: An estimated 13 veterinary, 14 scientific, 11 administrative and 14 laboratory support posts will be lost when the reorganisation of the VI service is completed in three or four years' time. Everything possible will be done to help staff find alternative jobs and to keep redundancies to a minimum.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ghana

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid has been provided to Ghana over the past two years.

Mrs. Chalker: Information is as follows:

	£ thousand	
	1988	*1989*
Gross bilateral aid	32,976	50,206
Mulilateral aid attributable to United Kingdom	11,890	n.a.
of which through EC	2,130	n.a.

Figures for 1990 are not yet available.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what conditions have been attached to the granting of aid with regard to improvements in human rights in Ghana.

Mrs. Chalker: We have made it clear to the Ghanaian authorities that our decisions on the allocation of bilateral aid funds for Ghana will take account of the extent to which they develop accountable and democratic institutions and respect for human rights. We shall continue to urge them to introduce the necessary reforms to obtain these objectives.

Cyprus

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the figure of overseas aid provided over the last three financial years to the island of Cyprus; and what proportion of those sums has gone to the Turkish Cypriot sector.

Mrs. Chalker: Under the ODA's bilateral aid programme technical cooperation funds were provided as follows:

	£
1988-89	301,000
1989-90	231,000
[1]1990-91	266,000

[1] (Estimate).

About 42 per cent. of the allocations for the three years taken together were directed to the Turkish-Cypriot community.

In addition training awards were provided by the ODA under the Commonwealth scholarship and fellowship plan:

	£
1988-89	242,000
1989-90	233,000
1990-91	216,000

About 12 per cent. of the allocations for the three years taken together were for Turkish Cypriots.

Support has also been provided from aid and trade provision funds for two projects in the Republic of Cyprus, with annual disbursements as follows:

	£
1988-89	184,000
1989-90	674,000
1990-91	25,000

Iraq

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what humanitarian aid has been provided to Iraq since 15 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: In addition to emergency relief supplies provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross and funded from its Gulf appeal to which Her Majesty's Government contributed £2·5 million, the European Community has provided humanitarian aid through the ICRC totalling £2·5 milion. Britain's share of this is approximately £420,000.

A multi-agency United Nations mission is currently in Iraq to assess humanitarian needs. It will make recommendations to the secretary-general on emergency actions the United Nations might take. We will consider responding to any subsequent appeal for funding launched by the secretary-general.

Famine

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the number of people at risk from famine in Ethiopia and Sudan; how much British food aid has been made available; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The World Food Programme estimates that in Ethiopia there are some 7·45 million people in need of food aid and in Sudan around 7·7 million. Since September 1990 the Government have committed a total of 60,300 tonnes of food aid to Ethiopia, and 35,550 tonnes to Sudan. A total of 35,300 tonnes will have been delivered to Ethiopia by the end of March and 15,550 tonnes to Sudan. The balance will be supplied over the coming months.

DEFENCE

Gulf Fatalities

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will break down the fatalities of service men in the Gulf conflict by country of permanent residence within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Because of the mobile nature of service life, the information requested is not available. The country of residence of the next of kin of those who died while serving in the Gulf area or following evacuation to the United Kingdom for medical treatment is shown below:

Country	*Number of fatalities*[1]
England	[2]25
Scotland	4
Wales	[2]3
Germany	4

[1] Figures comprise fatalities which occurred between 2 August 1990 and 8 March 1991

[2] Figures include one civilian serving with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary

Gulf Forces

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans are being made for the return of British forces from the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The withdrawal of British forces from the Gulf will continue progressively, following the return of the first personnel on 10 March. The precise timing of the return of units will depend on circumstances. During the next few weeks, some RN personnel, 7th Armoured Brigade group, and the bulk of RAF combat aircraft will return.

Walter Somers Ltd.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence further to his answer of 6 March, *Official Report*, column *224*, what assessment was made by the Ministry of Defence metallurgical expert of the technical aspects of the steel tubes which Walter Somers Ltd, proposed to export to Iraq as a result of his two telephone conversations with the company.

Mr. Alan Clark: The two telephone conversations did not establish that the steel tubes had a military purpose.

Export Controls

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Ministry of Defence officials are involved in discussions with other countries as part of the co-ordinating committee for multilateral export controls.

Mr. Alan Clark: Yes.

Iraqi Defence Industry

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the effect of British exports of non-lethal defence equipment on the Iraqi defence industry.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is extremely unlikely that any United Kingdom defence equipment could have enhanced the capability of the Iraqi arms industry to any significant degree.

The Gulf

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the present arrangements for blueys and parcels posted to members of Her Majesty's forces in the Gulf will continue until they return.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no plans to change present arrangements.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Civil Scientific Research

7. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of gross domestic product the Government spend on civil scientific research; and what are the comparative figures in Japan and the United States of America.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In 1988 the United Kingdom Government spent 0·55 per cent of gross domestic product on civil scientific research. The corresponding figures for Japan and the United States of America were 0·45 and 0·39 per cent.

Qualifications

16. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he is considering for the reform of qualifications for 16 to 19-year-olds.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering advice from the School Examinations and Assessment Council on proposals for new general principles to govern A-level and AS syllabuses. The National Council for Vocational Qualifications is reforming vocational qualifications. We want many more young people to take the vocational route to higher qualifications and better jobs.

Students

17. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on financing the expansion of student numbers.

Mr. Alan Howarth: We welcome the continuing expansion of student numbers which, promoted by our policies, is spreading the benefits of higher education ever more widely. We are committed to supporting this with appropriate levels of public spending. At the same time, we look for further improvements in the efficiency of provision and continued broadening of the higher education system's funding base.

Nursery Education

18. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to improve the quality of nursery education as suggested in the report "Starting with Quality"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: "Starting with Quality" is concerned with the educational experience of three and four-year-olds across various settings. Much of it addresses the needs and responsibilities of local providers of services. We have, therefore, sent copies of the report to local education authorities, local authority social service departments and other interested bodies. In addition, the Department of Health and this Department plan to issue guidance on the implementation of the Children Act which will draw, where appropriate, on the report.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to increase the number of places available in nursery education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett).

Standard Spending Assessments

19. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what effect he has calculated the standard spending assessment for 1991-92 will have on the education service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney).

Teacher Training

20. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education regarding training for the teaching of reading as part of initial teacher training.

Mr. Fallon: Department of Education and Science officials and Her Majesty's inspectorate have regular discussions with the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education members and officers regarding many aspects of initial teacher training, including the teaching of reading.

Adult Education, Bury

21. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in relation to the provision of adult education in Bury.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend has received one representation with 33 signatures about the possibility that the Bury arts and crafts centre might be closed.

Further Education

22. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to extend the legislation for grant-maintained schools to include colleges of further education.

Mr. Eggar: The Education Reform Act 1988 introduced a number of significant changes in the funding, governance and management of colleges. My right hon. and learned Friend is watching carefully to see how those changes work out in practice. No possibility has been ruled out for the future.

Education Authorities

23. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will seek to move towards a system whereby education authorities are purchasers of education places other than providers thereof.

Mr. Fallon: Under local management of schools and more open enrolment, parents will now become the

effective purchasers of school education as funds follow pupils to the school of their choice. By April 1993 at least 85 per cent. of potential school budgets must be delegated to the school, and at least 80 per cent. of each budget must be allocated to pupil numbers.

Grammar Schools

24. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future of grammar schools.

Mr. Fallon: The organisation of school provision is a matter for individual local education authorities. My right hon. and learned Friend considers any proposals to reorganise schools, including proposals for the establishment or closure of grammar schools, on their merits. He has said that he would look very carefully at any proposals to close grammar schools or end selective education, taking full account of expressed parental wishes.

Scientific Research

25. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met Sir Mark Richmond to discuss the funding of scientific research; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend occasionally meets the chairman of the Science and Engineering Research Council. I have met Sir Mark Richmond twice recently. We discussed a number of matters including the funding of scientific research.

Students' Unions

26. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the responses which have been received from students' organisations and Scottish universities with regard to the future of students' unions.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I have received a number of responses to my letter of 29 November 1990. As the consultations are still in progress, it would be inappropriate for me to comment further.

Education Budgets

27. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of local education authority budgets is on average spent on the provision of central services and administration; and which authorities are the three highest and the three lowest in this respect.

Mr. Fallon: The latest information available relates to LEA spending on excepted items under local management of schools. According to authorities' budget statements, the average percentage of the LMS potential schools budget which is being withheld from schools in 1990-91, is some 16·2 per cent. Those budgeting to spent the highest percentages of the potential schools budget on discretionary excepted items are Westminster, 22 per cent., Kingston upon Thames, 21·5 per cent., and Haringey, 20·6 per cent. Those budgeting to spend the lowest percentages—so delegating the highest percentages to schools—are Bolton, 10·9 per cent., Berkshire, 12·3 per cent., and West Sussex, 12·5 per cent. Comparable information is not available for the FE or other education sectors.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average amount of external funding per pupil in grant-maintained schools for the current year; and what is the comparable figure for the last complete year before the same schools acquired grant-maintained status.

Mr. Eggar: Most recurrent funding for grant-maintained schools is paid through annual maintenance grant, the majority of which is a sum which seeks to replicate the amount which would have been allocated to the school had it remained under the control of the local education authority. Also within annual maintenance grant is a sum in lieu of central services previously provided by the authority which in the current financial year averaged an additional 16 per cent. The central services element of annual maintenance grant will be standardised at that rate in 1991-92.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools have (i) applied for and (ii) achieved grant-maintained status.

Mr. Eggar: The number of primary and secondary schools which have become grant-maintained or are proceeding through the GM process is as follows:

	Secondary	*Primary*	*Total*
Operating under GM status	50	0	50
Approved but not yet operating under GM status	14	0	14
Published proposals with decisions pending	23	2	25
Preparing GM proposals following ballots in favour of seeking GM status	23	11	34
Holding or committed to a ballot on GM status	30	13	43

Value for Money

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures of performance are employed by his Department to ensure value for money.

Mr. Eggar: This Department ensures value for money from its purchases by setting demanding savings targets and monitoring the results. These are recorded in the central unit on purchasing annual targets and savings return.

Hounslow

Mr. Ground: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what percentage of its potential schools budget the London borough of Hounslow is delegating to schools in the current financial year; and how much it will need to delegate to meet the proposed requirements in the draft circular on local management of schools;

(2) what effect the proposals contained in the draft circular on local management of schools will have on the amount delegated to schools by the London borough of Hounslow as against the current financial year.

Mr. Fallon: Hounslow local education authority is currently delegating to schools 81·6 per cent. of its potential schools budget. The draft circular issued in December 1990 proposed that from April 1993 a minimum of 85 per cent. should be delegated. On the basis of Hounslow LEA's 1990-91 budget statement, that would add about £1·76 million to school budgets—an average of about £23,000 per school.

Compulsory Schooling

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those countries which have compulsory schooling starting for a younger age group than in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Fallon: Compulsory education age limits are listed in the "UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1990". Of the 170 countries for which limits are given, Gibraltar is the only one where compulsory schooling starts at an earlier age than in the United Kingdom.

Purchase and Distribution

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many people in his Department are wholly or substantially involved in purchasing stores and distribution activities.

Mr. Eggar: This Department employs a central purchasing unit comprising six full-time purchasing staff and a publications distribution centre with 13 operatives.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the full annual cost, including overheads, of his Department's purchasing activity.

Mr. Eggar: This Department's central purchasing unit's full annual costs are approximately £165,000.

Welsh Plant Breeding Station

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the present state of the Welsh plant breeding station, Gogerddan, Aberystwyth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Progress in establishing the new Agricultural and Food Research Council institute of grassland and environmental research centred on the Welsh plant breeding station is well under way. Construction of new laboratory and associated facilities at the Aberystwyth site costing £5·1 million is now in progress.

The institute also includes sites at North Wyke in Devon and Bronydd Mawr near Brecon. An additional site at Trawsgoed will be purchased from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Buildings and facilities at the North Wyke and Trawsgoed sites are planned at costs of £1·6 million and £1 million respectively.

The new institute will provide the strategic science base to meet the environmental and land use challenges of the next century, and will be capable of attracting research supported by industry on the milk, beef and sheep sectors.

Physical Education

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on physical education and sport in schools.

Mr. Atkins: I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. and learned Friend's response to the interim report of the national curriculum physical education working group, a copy of which is in the Library. The Government's policies on physical education and sport in schools were also set out in my response to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) in the debate on the Adjournment on 28 February, *Official Report*, column 1211.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Homeless Claimants

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what instructions have been given to the staff on the use of the Thames North and Thames South offices in handling homeless claimants.

Miss Widdecombe: Staff engaged on income support operations have been advised that the offices at Thames North and Thames South cater for single men and women without a settled way of life or who normally reside in certain hostels or resettlement units. The offices are not intended for use by temporarily homeless or unemployed people who do not normally have an itinerant way of life and who have come to London and the south-east in search of work.

Order Books

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North of 7 March, when he expects to complete his consideration of a redesigned benefit order book.

Miss Widdecombe: We expect that a redesigned benefit order book will be available in 1992.

National Insurance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of social security expenditure was met by national insurance contributions for each of the years since 1961 for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement on future trends in this figure.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 7 February 1991]:* The table shows the percentage of social security benefit expenditure met by national insurance contributions for each year from 1960-61 to 1989-90, and the planned figure for 1993-94 which is taken from the 1991 departmental report. There are no figures available for later years.

Year	percent
1960-61	69·2
1961-62	72·3
1962-63	72·5
1963-64	74·3
1964-65	74·7
1965-66	77·0
1966-67	76·1
1967-68	75·2
1968-69	73·2
1969-70	72·5
1970-71	72·6
1971-72	72·7
1972-73	72·6
1973-74	74·5
1974-75	76·0
1975-76	75·2
1976-77	73·1
1977-78	70·7
1978-79	67·5
1979-80	65·7
1980-81	66·2
1981-82	63·0
1982-83	59·8
1983-84	58·6
1984-85	54·6
1985-86	53·9
1986-87	53·6
1987-88	53·2
1988-89	53·9
1989-90	54·4
1993-94	54·7

WALES

Public Appointments

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the full-time and part-time public appointments for which he is responsible, together with the salary and the date when each appointment is due for renewal.

Mr. David Hunt: The following appointments are salaried. All are part-time posts.

Name	Remuneration £	Current appointment ends
CARDIFF BAY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION		
Chairman:		
Mr. Geoffrey Inkin OBE	27,305	2 April 1993
Deputy Chairman:		
Councillor Lord Brooks of Tremorfa	15,406	4 May 1992
Members:		
Mrs. Mair Barnes	4,347	2 April 1993
Mrs. Honor Chapman CBE	4,347	2 April 1992
Mr. Alan Cox CBE	4,347	2 April 1993
Mr. Hugh Hudson-Davies	4,347	2 April 1993
Councillor T. Hunter Jarvie	4,347	1 May 1991
Councillor Paddy Kitson	4,347	4 May 1992
Councillor John Phillips	4,347	1 May 1991
Councillor Ron Watkiss	4,347	1 May 1991
Professor Richard Silverman	4,347	2 April 1992
Mr. James Beveridge	4,347	2 April 1992
There is one vacancy on the Board at present		
WELSH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY		
Chairman:		
Dr. Gwyn Jones	59,340	30 September 1991
Deputy Chairman:		
Sir Donald Walters	19,165	31 July 1992
Members:		
Mr. E. Glyn Davies	5,425	31 March 1992
Mr. Richard Brewster	5,425	30 September 1993
Mr. John Foley MBE	5,425	28 February 1994
Mr. Ralph Phillip Vinson Rees	5,425	31 December 1992
Mr. David Griffith Roberts OBE	5,425	31 December 1992
Mr. David Colyn Gardner	5,425	31 December 1992
Mr. David Malpas	5,425	31 December 1992
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES		
Chairman:		
Mr. Michael Griffith CBE	25,000	5 November 1993
Deputy Chairman:		
Professor David Q. Bowen	8,615	5 November 1993
Members:		
Professor Dennis Bellamy	5,385	5 November 1993
Councillor Morgan Chambers	5,385	5 November 1993
Dr. W. Allan Evans	5,385	5 November 1993
Mr. John Harrop	5,385	5 November 1993
Dr. Merylyn Hedger	5,385	5 November 1993

Name	Remuneration £	Current appointment ends
Mr. Tom Jones	5,385	5 November 1993
Mr. Merfyn Williams	5,385	5 November 1993
DEVELOPMENT BOARD FOR RURAL WALES		
Chairman:		
Mr. E. Glyn Davies	27,242	1 April 1992
Members:		
Mr. Robert Gee	5,385	1 April 1992
Mr. Ian A. Jones	5,385	1 April 1993
Councillor Veronica Hollis	5,385	1 April 1992
Councillor Andrew M. Leonard	5,385	1 April 1991
Mr. Jeffrey Morgan	5,385	1 April 1992
Mr. Edward Rae OBE	5,385	1 April 1993
Mr. Hywel Roberts	5,385	1 April 1992
Mr. Peter Saunders	5,385	1 April 1991
Councillor Michael W. Shaw	5,385	1 April 1991
Sir Donald Walters	5,385	1 April 1993
Councillor Roger Williams	5,385	1 April 1992
WALES TOURIST BOARD		
Chairman:		
Mr. I. Prys Edwards	30,000	31 July 1993
Members:		
Mrs. Lorna Minors	5,385	16 September 1991
Mr. Christopher L. Pollard OBE	5,385	14 April 1992
Mr. E. Glyn Davies	5,385	31 March 1992
Mr. David H. Griffith	5,385	16 September 1993
Mr. John Dunscombe	5,385	31 October 1992
Mr. Chris R. Jackson	5,385	18 December 1993
LAND AUTHORITY FOR WALES		
Chairman:		
Mr. Geoffrey D. Inkin OBE	26,990	25 November 1992
Deputy Chairman:		
Mr. John D. Allen CBE	7,660	29 December 1993
Members:		
Mr. R. P. V. Rees	5,385	29 December 1993
Mr. Graham Jones	5,385	29 December 1993
Mr. Ronald F. Watkiss CBE	5,385	29 December 1992
Mr. Walter Rhys-Webb	5,385	29 December 1993
Mr. Ray G. Owen	5,385	29 December 1992
Mr. Alan Edwards	5,385	29 December 1993
SPORTS COUNCIL FOR WALES		
Chairman:		
Mr. Ossie Wheatley	13,600	31 March 1993
Deputy Chairman:		
Mr. Tom Baxter-Wright	7,395	31 March 1993
HOUSING FOR WALES		
Chairman:		
Mr. John Allen CBE	24,880	1 December 1991
Deputy Chairman:		
Mr. Jonathan Evans	7,703	31 March 1991
Members:		
Mrs. Anne Mainwaring	3,372	1 December 1991
Mr. James Procter	3,372	1 December 1991
Professor Peter Williams	3,372	1 December 1991
Mr. Gilbert Lloyd	3,372	1 December 1991
Registration takes effect 31 March 1991		
CURRICULUM COUNCIL FOR WALES		
Chairman:		
Mr. Hywel I. Evans OBE	15,588	1 August 1991
TRAINING ENTERPRISE AND EDUCATION ADVISORY GROUP FOR WALES		
Chairman:		
Sir Mel Rosser	11,300	31 March 1992

Name	Remuneration £	Current appointment ends
HISTORIC BUILDINGS COUNCIL FOR WALES		
Chairman:		
The Marquess of Anglesey	3,535	31 March 1993
PLACE NAMES ADVISORY COMMITTEE		
Chairman:		
Professor Gwynedd Pierce	350	
Member:		
Mr. Tomas Roberts	250	
FAMILY HEALTH SERVICE AUTHORITIES		
CLWYD		
Chairman:		
Councillor Tom W. Jones	10,705	31 August 1992
Non executive members:		
Mr. Thomas Birchall	5,000	31 March 1993
Councillor Neil A. Formstone	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. Paul D. M. Griffith	5,000	30 November 1992
Mrs. Lynne Hughes	5,000	30 November 1992
Mr. William J. Ridgway	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. Christopher B. Swale	5,000	16 September 1994
Mrs. Irene J. Train	5,000	31 March 1993
Mrs. N. P. (Patsy) Woodward	5,000	30 November 1992
Dr. Peter Wykes	5,000	31 March 1994
DYFED		
Chairman:		
Mrs. Vanessa J. Bourne	10,705	31 May 1994
Non executive members:		
Mr. David Bentham	5,000	16 September 1994
Mrs. Anne Bowen	5,000	31 March 1993
Mrs. Brenda L. Davies	5,000	30 November 1991
Mr. Thomas Lloyd	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. T. O. S. Lloyd	5,000	16 September 1994
Mrs. Anne M. Morris	5,000	30 November 1992
Councillor Edwyn P. Parry	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. W. J. C. Roberts	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. David P. Williams	5,000	30 November 1992
GWENT		
Chairman:		
Mr. Kenneth R. C. Rew	10,705	31 May 1994
Non Executive Members:		
Mrs. Estelle Blake	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. David H. W. Davies	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. John A. Gallimore	5,000	30 November 1992
Mr. Stuart Geddes	5,000	31 March 1994
Dr. Gregory I. Graham	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. John F. Ingledew	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. D. Jones	5,000	31 March 1993
Councillor Peter J. Law JP	5,000	16 September 1994
Mrs. Patricia A. White	5,000	30 November 1992
GWYNEDD		
Chairman:		
Dr. John E. A. Kenrick	9,903	31 May 1994
Non Executive Members		
Mrs. E. Barlow	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. G. Morris Jones	5,000	30 November 1992
Mr. T. Jones	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. Barry J. Owens	5,000	16 September 1994
Dr. Ian Ellis Roberts	5,000	31 March 1993
Mrs. Lorna Scharer	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. Gwyn T. Thomas	5,000	30 November 1992
Mr. Richard N. Thomas	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. Richard Webb	5,000	30 November 1992
MID GLAMORGAN		
Chairman		
Mrs. Kathrin E. Thomas	10,705	31 August 1992

Name	Remuneration £	Current appointment ends
Non Executive Members:		
Mrs. Bridget Caroline Dimond	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. Peter Jenkins	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. Raymond W. Martin	5,000	30 November 1992
Mr. Ian Price	5,000	31 March 1994
Mrs. Dorothy Richardson	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. Victor Rizzo	5,000	30 November 1992
Dr. Bipin K. Shah	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. Edward H. Tiltman	5,000	16 September 1994
Dr. Eira Williams	5,000	16 September 1994
POWYS		
Chairman:		
The Hon. Anthony T. Lewis JP	9,903	31 May 1994
Non Executive Members:		
Mrs. Patricia A. Antill	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. David S. Baird-Murray	5,000	30 November 1992
Mr. Paul G. J. Davies	5,000	31 March 1994
Mrs. Margaret J. Dodd	5,000	30 November 1992
Miss Barbara Hughes	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. Hywel Davies	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. J. D. Roberts-James	5,000	31 March 1993
Dr. Ainsley Reid	5,000	31 March 1994
Mrs. Jean Ryder	5,000	16 September 1994
SOUTH GLAMORGAN		
Chairman:		
Dr. Richard G. Lloyd	10,705	31 August 1992
Non Executive Members:		
Mr. David Adams	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. Richard C. Daniel	5,000	30 November 1992
Mrs. J. Edwards	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. James H. Leighton	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. Illtyd R. Lloyd	5,000	30 November 1992
Miss Elizabeth J. Muir	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. Ian Phillips	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. Gerald Rapport	5,000	16 September 1994
Dr. Michael T. K. Wheeler	5,000	31 March 1994
WEST GLAMORGAN		
Chairman:		
Mr. Graham L. Jones	10,705	31 August 1992
Non Executive Members:		
Mrs. Jane V. Davies	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. Robert J. Davies	5,000	30 November 1992
Mrs. Margaret M. Evans	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. Alan L. Jones	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. Gerald Lawler	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. William G. Rees	5,000	30 November 1992
Mr. Gerald Thomas	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. Douglas S. Williams	5,000	30 November 1992
Dr. Eleanor M. Williams	5,000	31 March 1993
DISTRICT HEALTH AUTHORITIES		
CLWYD		
Chairman:		
Mrs. Anne Lloyd Roberts	17,610	31 July 1994
Non Executive Members:		
Professor T. M. Hayes	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Trefor G. Jones	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Terence J. McAllister	5,000	31 October 1992
Mr. John R. Slater	5,000	31 August 1994
Mrs. Angharad Waters	5,000	31 October 1992
EAST DYFED		
Chairman:		
Mr. James S. Thomas	15,659	31 July 1992
Non Executive Members:		
Mrs. Lynette George	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Emrys W. Jones	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Peter G. Price	5,000	31 October 1992

Name	Remuneration £	Current appointment ends
Mr. John Williams	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Owen J. Williams	5,000	31 October 1992
GWENT		
Chairman		
Mr. Roger Newton	17,610	31 July 1994
Non Executive Members:		
Mr. Richard J. Dilnot	5,000	31 August 1994
Dr. Gareth Jones	5,000	31 October 1992
Mrs. Fiona N. Peel	5,000	31 August 1994
Professor Alan Richem	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Roy C. Stevens	5,000	31 October 1992
GWYNEDD		
Chairman		
Mrs. Noreen L. Edwards CBE	15,659	31 July 1992
Non Executive Members:		
Mr. Dilwyn O. Evans	5,000	31 October 1992
Mr. R. Hefin Davies	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Graham Hulse	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Richard H. P. Oliver	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. John L. Williams	5,000	31 October 1992
MID GLAMORGAN		
Chairman		
Mr. Bryn Davies MBE CBE	17,610	31 July 1992
Non Executive Members:		
Dr. D. Eurof Evans OBE	5,000	31 October 1992
Mrs. Sandy Grant	5,000	31 October 1992
Professor Oliver P. Gray	5,000	31 October 1992
Mr. Derek W. C. Morgan	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. O. Graham Saunders OBE	5,000	31 August 1994
PEMBROKESHIRE		
Chairman:		
Captain Henry W. Phillips	13,812	31 July 1991
Non-Executive Members:		
Mrs. Rachel P. James	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. John E. Lloyd	5,000	31 August 1994
Rev. Thomas A. Thomas	5,000	31 October 1992
Dr. Edward R. Verrier Jones	5,000	31 October 1992
Mrs. Margaret Thomas	5,000	31 October 1992
POWYS		
Chairman:		
The Hon. Mrs. R. H. P. Price	13,812	31 July 1994
Non-Executive Members:		
Major Michael W. F. Dyer	5,000	31 October 1992
Mr. Hugh Hudson Davies	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. David G. Margetts	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Richard G. S. Mills	5,000	31 October 1992
Mr. C. J. Owen	5,000	31 October 1992
SOUTH GLAMORGAN		
Chairman:		
Mr. Alun S. Jones	17,610	31 July 1992
Non-Executive Members:		
Mr. Nigel J. Butcher	5,000	31 October 1992
Professor Sir Herbert L. Duthie	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Simon M. Jones	5,000	31 October 1992
Mr. John W. Phillips	5,000	31 August 1994
Lady Roisin M. Pill	5,000	31 August 1994
Professor Norman R. I. Robertson	5,000	31 October 1992
WEST GLAMORGAN		
Chairman:		
Professor William M. Williams	17,610	31 July 1991
Non-Executive Members:		
Mr. Peter D. Allen CBE	5,000	31 August 1994
Professor Arthur L. Bloom	5,000	31 October 1992

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
Mrs. Carolyn Kirby	5,000	31 October 1992
Mr. Colin C. Lea	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Mike Rosser	5,000	31 October 1992

Foster Parents

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in each Welsh county are currently *(a)* foster parents and *(b)* adult family placement carers.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not collected centrally.

Old Age Psychiatry

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) of 19 February, *Official Report*, column *90*, what factors caused the increase in hospital bed provision for old age psychiatry in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: In 1989 the Royal College of Psychiatrists formally recognised the psychiatry of old age as a separate sub-specialty. Consequently, consultants have been appointed to sub-specialist posts and a significant proportion of beds which prior to 1 April 1989 were classified generally under "mental illness" have been designated as "old age psychiatry" beds. In addition, there has been an underlying growth in the number of people over 75 cared for in mental illness hospitals, reflecting the increasing number of very elderly people in the population at large.

Fishing, Ceredigion

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the present state of the fishing industry in Ceredigion.

Mr. David Hunt: About 70 licensed vessels operate out of ports in Ceredigion, the majority on a part-time and/or seasonal basis. Over the period 1985 to 1989 the quantity of fish landed has remained fairly constant at around 50 tonnes, but the value has increased from £88,000 in 1985 to £216,000 in 1989.

Dentists

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dentists have left the national health service in Wales since the introduction of the new contract.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Numbers of dentists withdrawing from family health service authority lists are collected centrally only on an annual basis. A survey conducted in January and February of this year collected information on the provision of dental care. Out of 562 dentists contacted, which represents 62 per cent. of those on family health service authority lists at the time, three had ceased to provide NHS services since 1 October 1990.

History

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had from teachers of history concerning the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Representations have been made from time to time on a variety of matters concerning the national curriculum by individual history teachers, or via the Association of History Teachers in Wales.

More recently representations have been made by 10 individual history teachers or teachers responding through their local education authority and the Association of History Teachers in Wales on the draft order for history in the national curriculum and on the proposals for the study of all national curriculum subjects by pupils aged 14 to 16 years—key stage 4.

Following the extensive consultation which has taken place, an order for history will shortly be placed before the House under the provisions of the Education Reform Act. In due course proposals for the study of all national curriculum subjects at key stage 4 will be published for consultation.

Shotton Steelworks

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make an official visit to Shotton steelworks in Clwyd.

Mr. David Hunt: I regularly visit the Clwyd area, but I have no present plans to visit Shotton steelworks.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many health service trusts there are in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: None yet.

Welsh Office Initiatives

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the implementation of the urban programme, urban development grant, the programme for the valleys and the Cardiff Bay development corporation.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I am pleased to announce the publication of the 1988-89 annual report of the urban programme, urban development grant, programme for the valleys and Cadiff Bay development corporation. The report details the contribution these schemes are making towards alleviating the problems of economic and social deprivation in Wales. Copies of the report have been placed in the Library of the House.

Constructors Tern

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what additional funding he proposes to make available to South Glamorgan health authority to compensate for additional borrowing costs arising from the receivership of Constructors Tern.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: There is no question of the South Glamorgan health authority having to borrow money as a result of Constructors Tern being taken into receivership.

Hospitals, South Glamorgan

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of South Glamorgan health authority concerning a review of his approval of the authority-proposed third major district general hospital.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: None.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the numbers employed in each Welsh regional health authority's administration office.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information, on a comparable basis, on the numbers of staff working in district health authorities' headquarter units is not available centrally.

NHS Land Sales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what additional funding he proposes to make available to South Glamorgan health authority to compensate for the level of surplus land sales being below expectations.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: None. Under current arrangements South Glamorgan health authority has full responsibility for the sale of surplus property. It is for the authority to manage its land sales programme and realise its expectations.

The Gulf

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what additional funding he proposes to make available to South Glamorgan health authority to compensate for additional costs arising from bed disposition arising from the Gulf war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Department has written to the relevant district health authorities inviting them to submit substantiated claims for compensation for preparations made for possible receipt of Gulf war casualties. This is in line with undertaking given previously by the Government. South Glamorgan health authority has submitted a claim which is currently being considered by the Welsh Office.

SCOTLAND

Non-fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will apply the non-fossil fuel obligation to Scotland as it is applied in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no current plans to do so.

Scottish Enterprise

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has considered the terms of transfers of employment currently being offered by Scottish Enterprise to Training Agency staff; whether these meet the terms of guarantee given; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend approves, in conjunction with Her Majesty's Treasury, certain specific aspects of the terms of employment which will apply to Scottish Enterprise staff. It is a matter for Scottish Enterprise itself to ensure that the terms of individual offers of employment, taken as a whole, comply with paragraph 16(3) of schedule 1 to the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Act 1990. The 1990 Act provides for any dispute as to whether the terms of paragraph 16(3) have been complied with to be resolved by an industrial tribunal and this is not, therefore, a matter for my right hon. Friend's consideration.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the categories of hospital and the aspects of their work, which enjoy Crown immunity.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The NHS and Community Care Act 1990 provides for the removal from 1 April 1991, with limited exceptions, of those Crown immunities currently applied to hospitals managed by health boards and the state hospital. The exceptions are as follows:

(a) exemption from the requirement to carry insurance against injury or disease sustained as a result of employment as required by the Employers Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969 since the NHS makes equivalent arrangements for staff under the NHS (Injury Benefit) Regulations 1974;

(b) immunity from motor vehicle taxation for NHS vehicles under the Vehicles (Excise) Act 1971;

(c) the retention of Crown status for the purposes of Section 48 of the Copyright, Designs and Patients Act 1978 which relates to Copyright on material communicated to the Crown in the course of public business;

(d) immunity from the requirement to effect third party insurance under the Road Traffic Act 1988.

NHS trusts will not be Crown bodies, but any hospitals under their control will also benefit from the remaining immunities listed above with the exception that immunity from the requirement to effect third party insurance is limited to ambulances only. Hospitals in the private sector will continue, as at present, to be required to meet all relevant statutory obligations.

Achondroplasia

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of hospitals in Scotland providing facilities for the treatment of achondroplasia.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Treatment for those who suffer from this disease will be provided in a number of departments of major acute and children's hospitals, particularly orthopaedic departments. There is, however, no one unit dedicated to the treatment of this particular disease.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what share incentives will be offered to employees and pensioners when the two Scottish electricity companies are privatised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Government attach particular importance to the opportunity which privatisation will provide for employees to become shareholders in Scottish Power plc and Scottish Hydro-Electric plc. The special offers to employees will comprise:

1. *A Free Offer*

Employees will be offered free shares to a fully paid value of about £140, plus shares at a fully paid value of about £2 for every year of continuous service in the electricity supply industry up to a date close to flotation.

2. *A Matching Offer*

Employees will also be offered two free fully paid shares for every share bought at the offer price on a matching basis up to a maximum fully paid value of about £460 worth of free shares. Under this element of the package, if an employee bought shares with a fully paid value of £230, he would receive free shares to a fully paid value of £460.

3. *A Discount Offer*

Employees will be able to buy shares up to a maximum fully paid value of about £1,250 of additional shares at a discount of 20 per cent. from the offer price.

4. *A Priority Offer*

Employees applying for shares will be treated on a priority basis, over the general public, up to an individual fully paid limit of shares worth about £15,350. This may be subject to scaling down if the number of shares in either company applied for by employees and pensioners exceeds a prescribed proportion of the total number of shares on offer.

The free and matching share offers will be available to employees who satisfy certain minimum qualification periods of length of employment and hours worked per week. The discount and priority offers will be available to each person employed at a date close to flotation.

We have decided that pensioners of the companies should be able to apply on a priority basis, over the general public, for shares up to a fully paid limit of about £15,350, subject to any necessary scaling down.

We have also made special arrangements for employees and pensioners of Scottish Nuclear Ltd., which will not be floated on the stock exchange. Employees and pensioners of Scottish Nuclear will receive offers of shares in Scottish Power plc. on terms similar to employees and pensioners of ScottishPower.

Further details of the share offer arrangements will be made available to employees and pensioners in due course, including those resulting from Inland Revenue, stock exchange and other requirements applying to these offers.

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if any works of art have been accepted in lieu of inheritance tax since he last made an announcement.

Mr. Lang: I am pleased to announce that the following works have been accepted in lieu of inheritance tax;

Item	*Amount of tax satisfied* £
Four old master drawings (by Mirola, Barocci, Cortona and Reni)	64,490
Harpsichord by Burkat Shudi	35,000
Portraits of Charles Hope and Professor Hill by Sir Henry Raeburn	48,439

The four old master drawings have been allocated to the National Gallery of Scotland. The Raeburn portrait of Charles Hope has been allocated to the Scottish national portrait gallery. The Shudi Harpsichord and the Raeburn portrait of Professor Hill have yet to be allocated.

Child Care Law

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he proposes legislation to implement any of the recommendations of the committee set out to review child care law in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* Once we have assessed the recommendations of the review in the light of the many comments received we shall decide which can be accepted and how they can be implemented, by primary legislation, by regulations or by guidance.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received following upon the publication of the report of the committee set up to review child care law in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* To date, a total of 83 responses have been received from a wide range of organisations and individuals. We are analysing these responses carefully before making any decisions on the individual recommendations of the review.

RECHAR

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the representations that have been made to the European Community by his office in order to ensure that the provisions of Community regulations on additionality are fully met in respect of RECHAR programmes in eastern and western Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 8 March 1991]:* My office has made no representations to the European Commission on this matter. However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has written to the European Commission on the question of additionality and RECHAR.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Property Identification

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether it is the policy of his Department to mark property with an indelible mark or similar means of identification.

Dr. Mawhinney: Where practicable, certain items of value are marked and serial numbers recorded.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Northern Ireland Office last conducted a survey of the ethnic origins of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: In June 1988 the home civil service completed a four-year programme of ethnic origin surveys covering all staff then in post. The Northern Ireland Office has continued to monitor staff who join the home civil service group in the Department and to update its records. The Northern Ireland Office is an equal opportunity employer and this is emphasised in all recruiting

campaigns and advertising. The Northern Ireland civil service is not required to monitor the ethnic origins of staff, nor has it plans to do so.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what percentage of officers in each grade (1 to 7) and overall in the Northern Ireland Office are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Northern Ireland civil service employs 12,416 female staff which constitutes 42 per cent. of the service. The Northern Ireland office—NIO—now employs 86 women in the Home Civil Service—HCS—staff group which constitutes 43·6 per cent. of the total.

The detailed information sought is as follows:

Grade	*Number of females*		*Percentage*	
	NICS	*HCS*	*NICS*	*HCS*
1	—	—	—	—
2	—	—	—	—
3	1	—	2·5	—
4	—	—	—	—
5	14	—	7·6	—
6	51	—	28·4	—
7	74	3	8·3	5

Twenty-one full-time members and one part-time member of staff—11 per cent.—in the home civil service group of the NIO are from ethnic minorities. The Northern Ireland civil service is not required to monitor the ethnic origins of its staff.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at the Northern Ireland Office.

Dr. Mawhinney: The home civil service and the Northern Ireland civil service are fully committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all applicants including any from ethnic minorities. The Northern Ireland Office is an equal opportunity employer and this is emphasised in all our recruiting campaigns and advertising. If direct recruitment for certain senior posts in the NIO were to be necessary, it would be conducted with guidance from the Civil Service Commission. Within Northern Ireland itself, religion is a more significant equality of opportunity consideration than ethnic origin. Consequently the Northern Ireland civil service has not taken any specific action to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment.

Civil Servants

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many of the civil servants employed by his Department were born in a foreign state;

(2) how many civil servants in Northern Ireland, other than those in the Northern Ireland Office, were born in a foreign state.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what restrictions operate in the employment of *(a)* foreign nationals, *(b)* Commonwealth citizens and *(c)* citizens of the Irish Republic, as (i) civil servants, or (ii) public servants in Northern Ireland; and whether such restrictions are uniformly applied throughout the United Kingdom.

Dr. Mawhinney: To be eligible for appointment to the Northern Ireland civil service, a candidate must be a Commonwealth citizen, although the Civil Service Commissioners may in exceptional circumstances decide to grant exemption from this requirement. The discretionary powers exercised by commissioners have included recruitment to scarcity occupations where suitably qualified candidates were not available and where an applicant has been closely associated with Northern Ireland or where the post is considered not to be covered by article 48(4) of the treaty of Rome.

To be eligible for appointments in the home civil service, candidates must be Commonwealth citizens, British protected persons or citizens of the Republic of Ireland.

Radioactivity

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the intensity of radioactivity present in the *(a)* soil, *(b)* peat, *(c)* grasses and *(d)* heather in the areas of (i) Glenshane, County Londonderry, (ii) Belraugh, County Londonderry and (iii) Glenwherry, County Antrim when the effect of the radioactive discharges from Chernobyl were first measured and showing the present levels in each of those areas; and what is his estimate as to when those levels will have fallen to the point where all restrictions on the movement of sheep can be removed.

Mr. Hanley: The soil-to-plant-to-animal transfer of radio caesium is complex and influenced by so many factors that vegetation levels would not be a reliable indicator on which to base firm conclusions. It is only through systematic monitoring of sheep populations in the restricted areas that appropriate data can be acquired to manage a restricted area. It is on the basis of such data that the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland was able to reduce the size of areas under restriction in Co. Londonderry. It is not possible to predict how long restrictions will remain in place. They will be lifted as soon as it is possible to do so without compromising the food chain, but we might still have to wait a considerable time before that is possible.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the acreage in each of the areas of Glenshane, County Londonderry, Belraugh, County Londonderry, and Glenwherry, County Antrim named in SR(NI), 1991, No. 8 Public Health, Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) Order (Northern Ireland) 1991; if he will indicate the reduction in acreage in each case from the order superseded by this order, and the acreage at present under forestry plantations which were planted (i) before and (ii) since the discharge of radioactive material from Chernobyl; and if he will show for each of the designated areas the number of sheep kept on them.

Mr. Hanley: The information is as follows:

	Glenwherry	Glenshane	Belraugh
Acreage in areas designated in SR 1991 No. 8	8,620	10,487	1,305
Reduction in acreage from SR 1987 No. 367	—	247	943
Number of breeding ewes in current restricted areas	7,000	14,000	1,300
Acreage under forestry in current restricted areas which was planted—			
(i) Before Chernobyl accident	165	1,099	—
(ii) After Chernobyl accident	172	195	—

Fish

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what information he has as to the present stocks of *(a)* salmon, *(b)* sea trout, *(c)* brown trout, *(d)* pollan, *(e)* perch, *(f)* bream and *(g)* pike in (i) Lough Neagh, (ii) upper Lough Erne and (iii) in lower Lough Erne; and what were the comparable figures five, 10, 20 and 30 years ago;

(2) if he will publish a table to show *(a)* the number and type of nets or other commercial fishing engines in freshwater lakes and rivers operating in Northern Ireland in the 1990 season, *(b)* the species taken by each such engine, or from each fishery and the weight of each species taken, *(c)* the value of such fish by species from each fishery and *(d)* the comparable figures for 1985, 1980 and 1970;

(3) what size of *(a)* salmon, *(b)* sea trout, *(c)* pollan, *(d)* brown trout, *(e)* perch, *(f)* bream and *(g)* pike could escape through the mesh of the net mesh sizes allowed for use in the commercial freshwater fisheries of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally but I will write to the hon. Gentleman when the information has been obtained and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to *(a)* the minimum, *(b)* the maximum and *(c)* the average size and weight of brown trout from Lough Neagh which spawn in the lough's catchment area; and whether such fish spawn annually or biannually.

Mr. Hanley: The minimum size of spawning trout corresponds to the minimum size at maturity for males. This is of the order of 20 to 25 cms in size and 5 to 6 oz in weight. No data are available on maximum or average sizes or weights. These trout tend to spawn annually.

River Dun (Breakwater)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the breakwater at the mouth of the River Dun was erected, when planning permission was sought, and granted; and whether any objections were made to his Department about this structure.

Mr. Hanley: The breakwater at the mouth of the River Dun was constructed in 1987. Planning permission for the breakwater was sought on 14 January 1988 and attracted six objections. This planning application was withdrawn on 27 April 1988. A new planning application was submitted on 16 January 1989. Four objections to this application were received. Planning permission was granted on 5 July 1989.

Social Security

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of benefit payments paid by *(a)* order book, *(b)* Girocheque, *(c)* automated credit transfer and *(d)* payable order during the year 1989-90.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

	Number
(a) order books	29,589,904
(b) girocheques	3,999,309
(c) automatic credit transfers	492,579
(d) payable orders	83,780

The payable order figure relates only to payments of retirement and widows benefits. Another 118,724 payable orders were issued but benefit payments cannot be disaggregated from the total of administrative and benefit payments.

Fair Employment Agency

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of discrimination against *(a)* Roman Catholics and *(b)* Protestants the Fair Employment Agency has found in each of the years since its establishment.

Mr. Hanley: The information is as follows:

Findings of unlawful discrimination made by Fair Employment Agency

Year	Protestant	Roman Catholic
[1]1976-1979	1	4
1979-80	—	3
1980-81	—	2
1981-82	2	2
1982-83	—	4
1983-84	2	5
1984-85	2	6
1985-86	4	1
1986-87	—	12
1987-88	—	3
1988-89	—	6
1989-90	1	6

[1] In the first three years of the agency's existence composite figures only were produced (end March).

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the cost of supporting the Fair Employment Agency in each of the years since its foundation.

Mr. Hanley: The costs of supporting the Fair Employment Agency and Fair Employment Commission over the period 1976 to 1991 were as follows:

	£
1 September 1976—31 March 1977	40,850
1 April 1977—31 March 1978	81,605
1 April 1978—31 March 1979	116,000
1 April 1979—31 March 1980	154,000
1 April 1980—31 March 1981	189,000
1 April 1981—31 March 1982	201,000
1 April 1982—31 March 1983	226,300
1 April 1983—31 March 1984	228,000
1 April 1984—31 March 1985	258,000
1 April 1985—31 March 1986	288,000
1 April 1986—31 March 1987	383,000
1 April 1987—31 March 1988	512,000
1 April 1988—31 March 1989	769,900
1 April 1989—31 March 1990[1]	1,309,000
1 April 1990—31 March 1991[2]	1,519,000

[1] The Fair Employment Agency was renamed Fair Employment Commission by Section 1 of the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1989 with effect from 1 January 1990.

[2] First full year of the Fair Employment Commission.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many allegations of discrimination have been referred to the Fair Employment Agency in each of the years since its foundation.

Mr. Hanley: The information is as follows:

Complaints of Unlawful Religious and/or Political Discrimination received by the Fair Employment Agency

Year	*Number*
[1]1977	120
1978	120
[1]1979	120
1979-80	42
1980-81	49
1981-82	50
1982-83	33
1983-84	71
1984-85	81
1985-86	81
1986-87	86
1987-88	87
1988-89	125
[2]1989-90	138

[1] In the first three years of the agency's existence composite figures only were produced.

[2] The Fair Employment Tribunal is empowered to hear complaints of acts of alleged discrimination against individuals, on grounds of religious belief or political opinion, where those acts occurred on or after 1 January 1990. The Fair Employment Agency's power to adjudicate in such complaints relates only to those complaints where acts of alleged discrimination occurred before 1 January 1990.

[3] End of March.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of discrimination have been found against *(a)* Roman Catholic and *(b)* Protestant employers by the Fair Employment Agency in each of the years since its foundation.

Mr. Hanley: The commission does not keep statistics about whether employers involved in individual complaints of discrimination are perceived to be Protestant or Roman Catholic.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for 12 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an Audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Private R and D

Dr. Bray: To ask the Prime Minister if he will outline the reconciliation between the figure for expenditure on research and development in private industry made by the Ministry of Defence of £1,202 million for 1988-89 as shown in table 2b of the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development 1990" and the amount received by industry from the Department in 1989 of £630 million according to table 7 of the Central Statistical Office's "Business Bulletin" issue 14/91.

The Prime Minister: Reasons for the apparent difference between the two estimates of defence research and development expenditure are provided in the Cabinet Office's "Annual Review of Government Funded R and D 1990" (page 18, paragraph 2). As indicated in paragraph 18 of the Government's reply (Cm 1467) to the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology on Definitions of R and D (HL Paper 44), we intend to pursue further with industry the reasons for these differing assessments.

UN Children's Organisation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the Government's contribution to the United Nations Children's Organisation.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom made a voluntary contribution of £8·5 million to UNICEF's core budget in 1990. This was our largest ever contribution.

In 1990 we also paid £1·52 million to UNICEF in response to special appeals.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Act (Covenants)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions he has had an opportunity to enter into a covenant with a company holding an appointment under chapter 1 of part II of the Water Act 1989 for the purposes set out in section 152(7) of that Act; how many covenants have been entered into; on how many occasions he has declined to enter such covenants; and what were the reasons in each case.

Mr. Trippier: The Secretary of State has not entered into any covenants under section 152(7) or declined any recommendation that he should do so. The Department does not hold information on cases determined by the Countryside Commission under the general authorisation dated 1 September 1989 which do not require the Secretary of State's specific approval.

Land Disposal

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions the conditions of a consent or authorisation for the disposal of land, or an interest or right in or over that land, have been made in accordance with section 152(5)(a) of the Water Act 1989 to direct the disposal to a specified person where that land is situated in a national park, the Broads, an area of outstanding natural beauty or a site of special scientific interest and has not been acquired compulsorily.

Mr. Trippier: The Secretary of State has not received any recommendation from the Countryside Commission to direct disposal to a specified person under section 152(5)(a).

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received any requests from *(a)* water undertakers, *(b)* statutory bodies or *(c)* voluntary bodies to revise or amend the general authorisation dated 1 September 1989 issued under section 152 of the Water Act 1989 concerning the disposal of land in a national park, the Broads, an area of outstanding natural beauty or a site of special scientific interest.

Mr. Trippier: The Countryside Commission, the Nature Conservancy Council and the Office of Water Services have all expressed the view that the general authorisation should be revised. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has written to us to the same effect; but we have not received any letters from water undertakers.

Water Quality

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the supply areas and parameters for which the drinking water inspectorate has made provision to allow drinking water supplies to exceed the water quality standards laid down under the Water Act.

Mr. Trippier: Copies of relaxations authorised by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment under regulation 4 of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989 have been placed in the Library of the House.

Water Charges

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what levels of increase in water charges have been agreed between the Government and the water companies over the next nine years;

(2) what estimate of inflation has been used in the calculation of water charges for the next nine years.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment set limits (K factors) on the extent to which water charges may be increased over and above the increase in the retail prices index for the 10 years from 1 April 1990. Lists of the K factors for each water and water and sewerage company were deposited in the Library of the House. In determining the K factors assumptions were made about future inflation levels, but the K factors themselves would have been affected very little by alternative inflation assumptions. Responsibility for overseeing water charges and for any amendments to the K factors for a company falls to the Director General of Water Services.

Environmental Protection Act

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when general guidance notes for local authorities on the implementation of part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 will be published.

Mr. Trippier: The Department intends to send pre-publication copies of general guidance notes for the implementation of part I of the Environmental Protection Act to local authorities this month, and I will send a copy to the hon. Member. The notes will be published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office as soon as possible thereafter.

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if special financial resources will be allocated to local authorities to enable them to implement the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act.

Mr. Baldry: An additional £11 million in capital allocations has been allocated in 1991-92 to waste disposal authorities in England for improvements to landfill sites and other disposal facilities to enable them to meet the higher standards that will be required by the Environmental Protection Act. Further provision is planned for future years. As with all new duties falling on local authorities, the revenue consequences of the Environmental Protection Act, have been reflected in the 1991-92 revenue support grant settlement.

Landfill Sites

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish *(a)* the number of landfill sites in England and *(b)* a list of those sites that have been visited by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, together with the dates of those visits.

Mr. Trippier: It is the responsibility of waste disposal authorities to issue waste disposal licences and to ensure that any conditions of the licences are met. Information on the number of landfill sites in England is therefore not held centrally.

I will write to the hon. Member about the second part of her question.

Water Pipes

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the cost of placing responsibility for all water pipes with the water companies.

Mr. Trippier: We have no plans to make water companies responsible for any water pipes other than those already vested in them, and have therefore not prepared any estimates of the cost of doing so.

Genetically Modified Organisms

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information on genetically modified organisms, which have been released to the environment, is currently available to the public; whether this information is available centrally; and whether the information includes a description of the genetically modified organisms, the name and address of the releaser, the purpose of the release, the location of the release, a summary of the risk assessment, methods and plans for monitoring, and methods and plans for emergency response.

Mr. Trippier: My Department has no current arrangements for making such information available to the public. Provision for public registers of information about genetically modified organisms is, however, made in part VI of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The location of such registers and the particulars of the matters to be included on them will be prescribed in regulations under part VI on which my right hon. Friend will consult later this year. Meanwhile the operative regulations for the control of all activities using genetically modified organisms are the Genetic Manipulation Regulations 1989, which are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Site Authorisation

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who has responsibility for issuing authorisation to sites with a mixture of part A and part B processes.

Mr. Trippier: The Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations 1991, which were laid before the House today, contain a series of rules for determining the control authority in cases such as those where there is a mixture of part A and part B processes on the same site. It will depend, among other matters, on whether the processes are undertaken by the same operator and whether they fall within the same section of schedule 1 to the regulations. The rules are explained in "Integrated Pollution Control—A Practical Guide" which was published on 28 February and a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may, exceptionally, direct, under section 4(4) of the Environmental Protection Act, that processes are transferred from local authority to national inspectorate (air only) control.

Cryptosporidiosis

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive reports from the communicable disease surveillance centre and the drinking water inspectorate in connection with the recent outbreak of cryptosporidiosis in Humberside.

Mr. Trippier: I understand that a report from the outbreak control team is imminent. When it is available the drinking water inspectorate can continue its investigation.

Helicopters

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether planning permission is required to allow helicopters to land on the tops of buildings.

Mr. Yeo: This will depend on the details of what is proposed, and is for the local planning authority to judge in the first instance.

Recycling

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the supplementary credit approval scheme for funding recycling projects in England and Wales was established; what funds are available to it; and over what time scale the scheme operates.

Mr. Baldry: Supplementary credit approvals for investment in recycling facilities are being made available from 1991-92 for local authorities in England only. We have made provision for a further £30 million of such supplementary credit approvals in 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Drinking Water

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what factors he considered before deciding not to review the permissible level of lead in drinking water; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend considered whether any new evidence or considerations had become available.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what time scales are to be afforded to water suppliers in order to meet *(a)* the informal standards on pesticides, and *(b)* all other health-related, toxic or microbiological, standards in the EC drinking water directive, such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, solvents and lead.

Mr. Trippier: The standards set in the EC drinking water directive have been incorporated into the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989. Most water supplies already meet most of the standards in the regulations. The supplies that do not yet comply are the subject of remedial action which will generally bring them into compliance by 1995. This remedial action is set out in undertakings given by the companies under section 20 of the Water Act 1989 and copies of these are in the Library. The only standards set by the regulations in respect of pesticides are the ones in the EC directive and it is to those standards that the actions specified in the relevant undertakings relate.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many authorisations have been granted for departures from his Department's regulations for drinking water quality; and if he will list these departures, together with time scales for their remediation.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has authorised 719 relaxations under regulation 4 of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989. Most of them contain provision for work to be carried out to achieve the relevant standard by, at latest, 1995. The remainder are subject to review by 1994. Copies of the relaxations have been placed in the Library of the House.

Access to Information

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to implement the EC directive of 7 June 1990 on the freedom of access to information on the environment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Government fully support the directive. Indeed, we played a full part in the discussions which resulted in its formulation. The United Kingdom is committed to implementing the directive in domestic law by the end of 1992, and my Department will shortly be issuing a consultation paper on ways of achieving this.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to prevent ships carrying cargoes of dangerous disposable waste from entering British ports.

Mr. Trippier: No. There are already effective safeguards in respect of the import of hazardous waste. Under the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988 a disposer may not accept an import of hazardous waste unless his disposal authority has approved the dispatch of the waste from the country of production.

Nitrogen Oxide (Monitoring)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to increase the number of nitrogen oxide monitoring stations.

Mr. Trippier: Plans to expand the monitoring of air quality in the United Kingdom were announced in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance" last September.

As a first step an enhanced urban monitoring network is to be put in place this year. It will include an increased number of stations for monitoring nitrogen oxides.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much public expenditure in total will be available for housing action trusts in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 and in subsequent years; and how much specifically has been earmarked for housing action trusts if they proceed in *(a)* Waltham Forest, *(b)* Hull and *(c)* elsewhere.

Sir George Young: Present planned public expenditure provision for housing action trusts is £10·3 million in 1991-92, £67·3 million in 1992-93 and £69·0 million in 1993-94. Planned provision for 1994-95 will be announced in autumn 1991 following the 1991 public expenditure survey. Specific annual allocations for individual trusts have not yet been made. The amount needed by a trust in a particular year can be determined only when the trust has been established and has drawn up its corporate plan.

Environmental Health Officers

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many qualified environmental health officers are currently employed by local authorities in England; how many vacancies for such officers exist; and what action he is taking to ensure that a sufficient number of officers will be available in future.

Mr. Key: Information on the numbers of qualified environmental health officers is not collected by my Department. It is for each local authority with powers in this field to decide how many officers are needed and to make arrangements for recruiting them.

Leybucht Bay Judgment

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 7 March, *Official Report*, column *243*, when he expects the official English translation of the Leybucht Bay judgment to be available to him.

Mr. Trippier: Responsibility for the production of the official English translation of the judgment rests with the European Court of Justice. I cannot forecast when this will be available.

Community Charge

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many residents in Wolverhampton in the current financial year have benefited from transitional relief in the payment of their community charge;

(2) how many residents in Wolverhampton will benefit from the community charge reduction scheme.

Mr. Key: About 16,500 people in Wolverhampton are benefiting from transitional relief in 1990-91. Information on the number of people in each charging authority area who will benefit from the community charge reduction scheme in 1991-92 will be available once authorities have submitted their grant claim forms.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if police officers living in section houses in the metropolis where the rates were paid by the receiver are eligible to receive a reduction in their community charge.

Mr. Key: Entitlement to the automatic reduction is not affected by the fact that the rates had been paid by another person.

Local Government Finance

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grant per poll tax payer has been given in Lewisham, Hammersmith and Fulham and Ealing.

Mr. Key: Government grants, consisting of revenue support grant, specific grants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge benefit grant and transitional relief grant, are per head of relevant population in 1990-91, £738 in Lewisham, £765 in Hammersmith and Fulham and £667 in Ealing.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grant per poll tax payer is received by Chorley, Pendle, West Lancashire, Chester, Blackpool and Swindon.

Mr. Key: Government grants, consisting of revenue support grant, special grants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge benefit grant and transitional relief grant, are per head of relevant population in 1990-91 as follows:

Government grants per head of relevant population

	£
Chorley	255
Pendle	329
West Lancashire	297
Chester	213
Blackpool	290
Thamesdown	237

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many standard poll tax payers are registered in *(a)* Wigan, *(b)* Salford, *(c)* Bolton and *(d)* Westminster.

Mr. Key: The available information reported by local authorities is as follows:

Number of unoccupied properties on the community charges register subject to a standard community charge at 1 June 1990, including properties subject to a standard charge with a multiplier of zero

	Number
Wigan	4,302
Salford	3,006
Westminster	18,607

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grant per poll tax payer is received by *(a)* Liverpool, *(b)* Wirral and *(c)* Sefton.

Mr. Key: Government grants, consisting of revenue support grant, special grants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge benefit grant and transitional relief grant, are per head of relevant population in 1990-91, £814 in Liverpool, £439 in Wirral and £325 in Sefton.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grant per poll tax payer is received by Bradford local authority and Wandsworth local authority for 1990-91.

Mr. Key: Government grants, consisting of revenue support grant, special grants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge benefit grant and transitional relief grant, are per head of relevant population in 1990-91, £613 in Bradford and £677 in Wandsworth.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grant per poll tax payer is received by each of the local authorities in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Key: Government grants, consisting of revenue support grant, special grants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge benefit grant and transitional relief grant, are per head of relevant population in 1990-91, as follows:

Government grants per head of relevant population

	£
Bolton	416
Bury	278
Manchester	866
Oldham	505
Rochdale	459
Salford	565
Stockport	267
Tameside	347
Trafford	349
Wigan	306

Mr. Duffy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grant per poll tax payer is received by *(a)* each of the four metropolitan local authorities in South Yorkshire and *(b)* each of the Scarborough and Bridlington local authorities.

Mr. Key: Government grants, consisting of revenue support grant, special grants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge benefit grant and transitional relief grant, are per head of relevant population in 1990-91, as follows:

	Government grants per head of relevant population £
Barnsley	323
Doncaster	338
Rotherham	275
Sheffield	309
Scarborough	180
East Yorkshire	260

London Borough of Ealing

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his oral answer of 27 February, *Official Report*, column 967, what is the total additional assistance that has been given to the London borough of Ealing towards its housing revenue account; which Ministers took part in the negotiations; and under what authority and for what specific purposes the assistance was given.

Sir George Young: The Department has agreed to advance the London borough of Ealing £5 million of housing revenue account subsidy from 1992-93 to 1991-92 to give the council more time to overcome the problems created by the previous Labour administration's setting of a totally unrealistic budget. The advance of subsidy is being provided under sections 80 to 87 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) considered and approved the London borough of Ealing's request.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage level of rent increase has been applied in Ealing since May 1990 for council house tenants.

Mr. Yeo: I understand that since May 1990 the London borough of Ealing has increased council rents once, in January 1991 by 38·6 per cent., eqivalent to £10·77 per week.

Employment Land

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, for the purpose of county structure plans and local plans, employment land is deemed to include land for all types of employment such as industry, retail, commercial and leisure.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* No. Plans should make distinctions between different types of employment-generating development, to the extent that they have different implications for land use. Retail development, for example, will often have different implications from industrial use. Further advice is given in the relevant planning policy guidance notes.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Dangerous Criminals

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on how he intends to ensure that offenders who are a persistent danger to women receive tougher sentences.

Mr. John Patten: The Criminal Justice Bill strengthens the court's powers to protect the public from persistent violent and sexual offenders. Courts will be able to impose a custodial sentence or a longer one than justified by the seriousness of the offence upon a sexual or violent offender who poses a risk of serious harm to the public. They will also be able to order longer and more intensive supervision for sex offenders following their release from custody or when they are sentenced to a community penalty.

Gambling

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest figures, expressed in £ million per annum and £ per head of the population, for gambling in the United Kingdom on *(a)* off-course and on-course betting, *(b)* amusement machines, *(c)* casinos, *(d)* bingo, *(e)* football pools and *(f)* small lotteries.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Estimated figures for gambling turnover (i.e. amount staked) in the financial year 1989-90 are tabulated below. Those for off-course betting, pool betting and bingo are based on returns to Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. Those for casinos and lotteries are taken from the annual report of the Gaming Board for Great Britain, although the latter includes only those lotteries registered with the board. The estimates for on-course betting and gaming machines cannot be calculated directly and should be treated with extreme caution. The turnover per head per annum is based on an estimated population of 57·2 million.

	Estimated turnover/year £ million	*Turnover/ head/year £*
Off-course betting	5,734	100
On-course betting	743	13
Gaming machines	3,494	61
Casinos	1,881	33
Bingo	807	14
Pools	715	12·5
Lotteries	23	0·4

Lotteries

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether the completion of the internal market in the European Community after 1992 will have any impact on the controls imposed by United Kingdom law on the distribution and sale of lottery tickets produced by other member countries;

(2) whether it is the policy of Her Majesty's Government, in the context of the completion of the single market, to maintain national legislation on gambling games on grounds of public morality and consumer protection.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Commission's White Paper programme for the completion of the single market does not contain proposals for the harmonisation of gambling legislation. So far as we are aware, the Commission does not at present have plans to bring forward any such proposals. It is Her Majesty's Government's policy that controls on gambling are matters for national authorities.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has contacted the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany on the distribution of Suddeutschen Klassenlotterie tickets in the United Kingdom; and whether he has asked that Government to withdraw authorisation of that lottery in Germany.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have discussed with the Federal Republic of Germany possible means of preventing the distribution of Suddeutsche Klassenlotterie tickets in the United Kingdom. The director of the lottery has drawn to the notice of the lottery's agents that the mass promotion of the lottery in another country where that is unlawful is contrary to the rules under which the agents operate. We shall continue to liaise with both the director and the relevant authorities in Germany about examples of agents promoting the Suddeutsche Klassenlotterie in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what measures he has taken to prevent the unauthorised sale of foreign lottery tickets in the United Kingdom;

(2) what representations he has recently made to Governments of member countries in the European Community to prevent the unauthorised sale of lottery tickets in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Together, where appropriate, with the Gaming Board for Great Britain, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, a number of measures are taken to prevent or curtail the promotion of foreign lotteries in the United Kingdom.

Representations are, if necessary, made to the authorities in the country concerned. Of European Community countries, such representations have been made to the Federal Republic of Germany. Representations have also been made to the authorities in Austria, as a result of which that country's national lottery has undertaken to cease their promotional activities in this country, and to the authorities in British Columbia, Canada.

If advertisements for foreign lotteries appear in magazines published here, the provisions of our law are drawn to the attention of the publishers who have previously undertaken not to publish such advertisements again. In addition, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise have seized substantial quantities of promotional letters intended to be posted individually here but imported in bulk.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on lottery sales, in £ million per annum, in EC countries.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We do from time to time receive information about expenditure on gambling in other EC countries, but we do not at present have any consistent or reliable figures for lottery sales. Such figures may in due course be available as part of a study now being conducted on behalf of the European Commission.

Visitors

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of visitors admitted to the United Kingdom in each month of 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is given in the table:

Ordinary and business visitors[1] admitted to the United Kingdom 1990

Month	Total
January	338,000
February	351,000
March	472,000
April	508,000
May	645,000
June	793,000
July	896,000
August	726,000
September	636,000
October	534,000
November	422,000
December	398,000
Annual total	6,720,000

[1] Excluding European Community nationals.

Immigration (Carriers' Liability)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total amount paid *(a)* by airlines and *(b)* by ferry operators under the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 in each month of 1990: and how much remains outstanding in unpaid penalties in respect of notices served in *(a)* 1988, *(b)* 1989 and *(c)* 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The accounting system does not differentiate between airlines and ferry operators; the analysis requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. The total amount paid by all carriers in each month of 1990 was as follows:

	£
January	234,000
February	198,000
March	368,000
April	59,000
May	339,000
June	250,000
July	202,000
August	221,000
September	210,000
October	415,000
November	670,000
December	241,000
Total	3,407,000

The following amounts remain outstanding in respect of notices served in each of the following years:

	£
1988	1,203,000
1989	2,201,000
1990	5,943,000

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate *(a)* how many notices were served under the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987, *(b)* in how many cases representations were made and *(c)* in how many cases discretion was exercised.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The total number of notices issued to carriers (for example airlines and sea operators) to 31 January 1991 was 26,604. Representations were made by carriers to the ports in 7,179 cases. Discretion was exercised in 5,627 cases, either as the result of written representations made by carriers after receipt of a notice or on subsequent review at immigration service headquarters.

Asylum

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has on the number of applications made for asylum in each European Community country in (i) 1980, (ii) 1988, (iii) 1989 and (iv) 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is given in the table:

Applications for asylum in European Community countries[1]

	1980	1988	1989	1990[2]
Belgium	2,700	5,100	8,100	12,950
Denmark	50	4,650	4,600	5,300
Federal Republic of Germany	107,800	103,100	121,300	193,050
France	13,700	31,600	58,750	56,050
Greece	1,800	8,400	3,000	4,400
Italy	2,450	1,300	3,350	4,750
Netherlands	3,200	7,500	13,900	17,600
Portugal	n.a.	350	150	100
Spain	n.a.	3,300	2,850	6,850
United Kingdom	2,350	5,250	16,300	30,000

[1] Information is not available for the Republic of Ireland and Luxembourg.
[2] Some of the 1990 figures are provisional estimates.
n.a. = not available.

Criminal Responsibility

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he has any plans to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 years;

(2) what factors were taken into account in deciding to establish the age of criminal responsibility at 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans to raise the age of criminal responsibility. It was raised from eight years to its present level of 10 years by the Children and Young Persons Act 1963.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is giving any consideration to changing the age of criminal responsibility to fall into line with other European member states after 1992.

Mr. John Patten: The arrangements for dealing with young offenders differ between the member states of the European Community. There is no common age of criminal responsibility.

Wormhoudt Massacre

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr of 13 December 1990, *Official Report*, column *490*, if he has received a report from the German prosecuter following interviews with survivors of the Wormhoudt massacre of 5 October 1989, and other statements provided on 20 June 1990.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that the German prosecutor has not yet reached a decision on this case.

Immigration

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions have been held with other European Community Governments concerning the entry of Iraqi and Palestinian people to any member state since 15 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: During the hostilities there was a continuing exchange of information between European Community governments about the terrorist threat and measures to counter it, including the deportation or exclusion of individuals judged to pose a threat to security.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice is given to electoral registration officers on production of non-English language materials to promote electoral registration.

Mrs. Rumbold: In 1988 and 1989 we issued to electoral registration officers sets of model explanatory notes on the registration process in a number of ethnic minority languages, together with guidance on their use. The 1989 revision remains extant. In general, registration officers are themselves best placed to assess the needs of the local ethnic minority population and to produce their own material accordingly.

Juvenile Offenders

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the rates of juvenile offending per head of population in all EC countries in ascending order.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Iraqi Nationals

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Iraqi nationals have to undertake weekly reporting to police stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Four Iraqi nationals who are the subject of either deportation or illegal entry action are required to report weekly to the police; one other is required to report twice weekly. In addition, a number of Iraqis will have been instructed to report to the police at weekly intervals by immigration officers at ports and airports. Details are not available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date the Government proposes to make a statement on changes in immigration rules in respect of refugees and asylum-seekers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Asylum arrangements are under review, but it is too early to say when or in what way changes might be introduced.

Children and Young Persons Act

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there are plans to implement sections 4 and 5 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969.

Mr. John Patten: No. These provisions, which have never been implemented, will be repealed by the Criminal Justice Bill.

Mr. Les Huckfield

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of Merseyside as to the cost so far of investigations into the conduct of Mr. Les Huckfield.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of Merseyside on civil actions outstanding against him or his officers relating to Mr. Les Huckfield.

Mr. John Patten: No.

Children

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the steps the Government has taken to endorse parents' responsibility for their children's behaviour.

Mr. John Patten: The Criminal Justice Bill contains provisions designed to bring home to parents their accountability when their children offend. It contains provisions for parents' attendance at court with their children, for parents' payment of their children's fines and for parents to be bound over to look after their children properly.

Shop Squatting

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the practice known as shop squatting in vacant retail premises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have received representations from a number of hon. Members and others about squatting in vacant shops. We are examining the law as it affects the unlawful occupation of buildings generally to assess whether any change is needed, but we have not yet reached conclusions.

Hunting

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek a report from the chief constable of Hampshire on the total number of police involved in policing New Forest hunts on Boxing day and new year's day 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the chief constable that 23 uniformed officers and six special constables were in attendance when the New Forest hunt met on Boxing day 1990 and that 10 uniformed officers were deployed on new year's day 1991.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek a report from the chief constable of Hampshire on the number of occasions in 1990 when police video cameras were used to film hunt protesters in the New Forest.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the chief constable that the police used video cameras at 14 hunt meetings in 1990.

Homelessness

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what requests for financial assistance to be given in 1990-91 and 1991-92 he has received from Swansea Accommodation for the Single Homeless.

Mr. John Patten: Swansea Accommodation for the Single Homeless, supported by the West Glamorgan probation service, has applied for funding for five bed spaces for offenders in 1991-92. This is being considered. I am told that we received no request for 1990-91.

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of workplaces for civil servants in his Department; what proportion of the total number have an on-site nursery facility; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide a holiday play scheme; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide after-school child care facilities; what charges are made for use of any facility; what the net cost has been for the provision of these facilities; and what estimate he can make of any future expenditure.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Home Office employs staff in some 320 workplaces throughout the country. Nursery provision is generally focused on areas which have considerable concentration of staff: it is already available in Croydon and in Bootle and will shortly be available in Westminster and north London. Holiday play schemes are also available in Croydon, Bootle and Westminster as well as at Peterborough, but there is no current provision for after school child care. The Department contributes to the cost of the existing provision and would expect to continue to so subsidise any future similar initiatives in which its local managers are prepared to invest. There is no central record of costs nor estimate of future costs.

EMPLOYMENT

Departmental Achievements

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the principal achievements of his Department since June 1987.

Mr. Jackson: Employment has continued to rise, and the work force in employment is now over 27·3 million, the highest ever level, over 2·3 million higher than in June 1987. Unemployment is just under 1 million lower than at the June 1987 election. The United Kingdom continues to have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the European Community. Only Germany, Luxembourg and Portugal have lower rates. The number of people who have been unemployed for more than 12 months has fallen by 59 per cent. since July 1987. Unemployment among the 18 to 24s is also down by over a third since October 1987. In December 1990 under-25s EC unemployment rate for the United Kingdom is 10·5 per cent. compared with the EC average of 16 per cent.

Over the last three years, the Government have radically reformed the framework within which training and enterprise are supported in Britain. We have created a network of local training and enterprise councils to give business a leading role in local training and economic development. We have stimulated the development of a comprehensive system of industry training organisations. Through the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, we have made substantial progress with the reform of vocational qualifications, producing a ladder of opportunity for individuals to climb to higher levels of competence.

The Government's training measures, now under the local direction of TECs, have helped substantial numbers of people. In recent years 2·7 million young people have benefited from youth training; 900,000 unemployed adults from employment training; and 850,000 from the technical and vocational education initiative. 84,000 students annually are now benefiting through the enterprise in higher education initiative. The growth of training in Britain in recent years is demonstrated by the 70 per cent. rise shown by the labour force surveys 1984-89 in the numbers of employees receiving training from their employers.

The technical and vocational education initiative (TVEI) has helped schools in all LEAs to make their curricula relevant to the world of work and has provided a substantial increase in the numbers of students obtaining a record of achievement.

Compacts, which are bargains between young people from inner city areas, schools, employers and training providers, are operational in 47 areas; 15 more are planned. In the first 29 areas over 50,000 students are covered by the job with training guarantee; over 300 schools are participating; over 5,000 employers are actively involved; and 25,000 jobs with quality training have been pledged for successful compacts graduates.

The education business partnerships initiative was launched in 1990 with plans to set up single partnerships in each TEC area to improve work relevant education opportunities and widen business involvement.

Following a successful pilot programme, career development loans were made available throughout Great Britain in July 1988 to help individuals pay for vocational training of their own choice. By the end of January 1991 over 15,000 people had invested some £44 million in their own future through training. More than four out of five people paying for their training using a career development loan go into or are already in jobs on finishing their training.

The number of small firms in Britain and the level of self-employment continue to rise rapidly. In 1988 and 1989 the number of VAT-registered firms grew by 152,000. The number of self-employed people rose by 520,000 between June 1987 and June 1990. Early indications for 1990 based on VAT registrations are that there continues to be a significant increase in the number of businesses.

Since 1987 we have continued our step-by-step approach to the reform of industrial relations and trade union law, which has helped to bring about the significant improvement in industrial relations during the 1980s.

The Employment Act 1988 gave union members the right to restrain their union from calling on them to take industrial action without a proper secret ballot, the right to inspect union accounting records, the right to elect all principal union leaders by secret postal ballot under independent scrutiny, and the right not to be unjustifiably disciplined by their union. The Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members was established to assist union members taking certain proceedings.

Employees were protected, in all circumstances, against dismissal for membership or non-membership of a trade union, and organising industrial action to establish or maintain any closed shop practice was made unlawful.

The Employment Act 1989 promoted equality of opportunity for women in employment, removed unnecessary restrictions on young people in work, and paved the way for the removal of the weight of Industrial Training Board bureaucracy from major sections of British industry.

The main industrial relations and trade union law provisions of the Employment Act 1990 came into force on 1 January 1991. They give anyone refused a job on the grounds of membership or non-membership of a trade union a right of complaint to an industrial tribunal, make a trade union responsible in law for a call to take industrial action by any of their officials, and make it unlawful to organise secondary industrial action or action in support of an employee dismissed while taking unofficial industrial action. In addition, any employee taking unofficial action will know that they risk losing the right to claim unfair dismissal if they are dismissed. New requirements on union election and strike ballots enhance union members' democratic rights, and the powers of the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members are extended to enable her to assist proceedings arising from a breach, or possible breach, of a union's rule on certain matters.

A new statutory code of practice "Trade Union Ballots on Industrial Action" came into operation on 11 April 1990. The code promotes desirable practices in relation to the conduct by trade unions of such ballots.

As a result of the abolition of the highly restrictive dock labour scheme by the Dock Work Act 1989, the efficiency and labour productivity of the former scheme ports has been transformed and new business opportunities in and around the ports are flourishing.

The employment service (ES) was created in October 1987 by bringing together in one organisation both job placement and payment of benefits to unemployed people, in order to provide a more coherent and effective service to those in need of help to get jobs and thereby fill employers' vacancies. In April 1990 the ES was established as the largest "next steps" agency to date.

In 1989-90 the ES placed in jobs 1·85 million people, 80 per cent. of whom were unemployed. The ES is continuing to improve its services and programmes with the introduction of back to work plans for all unemployed people, the establishment of a unified advisory service, and extra help for those unemployed for over six months.

The ES has made a successful start to the process of combining the functions of job centres and unemployment benefit offices under one roof, so that clients can benefit more easily from the full range of ES services. The Government are investing £70 million in the new network of 1,100-1,200 offices, which will be completed by 1994.

In 1990 my Department issued a consultative document "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities", setting out proposals to increase the effectiveness of the services which assist people with disabilities to prepare for, gain and retain employment. Responses to this document are now being considered.

The Department has continued to play an active role in the discussions of EC social affairs policies and the United Kingdom, as shown in a recent report by the European Commission, is the only member state to implement all 18 existing measures in the social field.

We have also continued our programme to modernise and update the law relating to health and safety at work, in particular by a major revision of the law governing the control of substances potentially hazardous to health in the work place.

Disabled Workers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recourse is available to disabled people who consider they have been unjustifiably discriminated against in the field of employment.

Mr. Jackson: Where people feel that discrimination in employment arises from their having a disability they can discuss the matter with the Disablement Advisory Service or a disablement resettlement officer who, where appropriate, can contact the employer and seek to overcome any prejudice or misunderstanding, including providing guidance on the wide range of help available for integrating people with disabilities into the work force. If they meet the qualifying conditions they may be able to complain of unfair dismissal to an industrial tribunal. Along with other employees, in the appropriate circumstances they can also complain to an industrial tribunal about discrimination on grounds of sex, race and membership or non-membership of a trade union, for which there is no qualifying period of service.

Registration

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement outlining those occupations in the United Kingdom at risk from member states of the European Community due to the lack of mandatory registration.

Mr. Forth: Member states in the Community are bound by the treaty articles and associated legislation concerned to achieve the free movement of persons, services and capital. These requirements affect all occupations. If the hon. Gentleman has a particular risk in mind, perhaps he would write to me.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the criteria by which TECs will be paid their output-related funding for 1991-92 for *(a)* youth training, *(b)* employment training or *(c)* the enterprise allowance scheme; on what evidence their performance will be assessed; who is responsible for collecting and evaluating this evidence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: For youth training (YT), TECs will be paid output-related funding in 1991-92 for national vocational qualifications (NVQs), or equivalent qualifications, at level II and above gained by those trainees who have remained in training for a minimum period of one month. Additionally, payment will be made for NVQs, or equivalent qualifications, gained at level I by some special training needs trainees.

For employment training (ET), TECs will be paid output-related funding for NVQs, or equivalent qualifications, gained by those trainees (other than trainees in skill shortage occupations or who are returning to the labour market) who have remained in training for a minimum

period of one month. Payment will also be made for such trainees who are in a job, self employment, or full-time education or training three months after leaving ET.

Payment will be made for trainees in skill shortage occupations or who are returning to the labour market who gain NVQs, or equivalent qualifications, at level II and above and are in a job, self employment, or full-time education three months after leaving ET.

For the enterprise allowance scheme, TECs will be paid output-related funding for scheme entrants and for 12 week and 26 week business survivors.

Evidence that outputs have been achieved will be collected and held by TECs and training providers and will be available for audit by the Employment Department.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give a summary of the information that has been collected by his Department from area offices and TECs about the employment training recontracting that has taken place showing *(a)* which TECs or area offices have reduced or terminated ET contracts, or plan to, giving the number of contracts involved and *(b)* which TECs or area offices have had problems finding alternative places for trainees who have been displaced from training programmes as a result of recontracting, giving the number of trainees involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My Department is currently negotiating contracts with training and enterprise councils (TECs) for the delivery of employment training (ET) in 1991-92. Decisions on contracts with individual training providers are a matter for TECs.

Information is not held centrally on numbers of ET contracts which are reduced or terminated nor on the numbers of ET trainees transferred to alternative training providers.

My right hon. and learned Friend announced to the House on 26 February provision of an additional £120 million for ET in 1991-92. This additional resource will enable ET to continue to play its important role in helping long term unemployed people back to work.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the allocated budget of each of the operational TECs for 1991-92, showing the amounts contracted for *(a)* youth training, *(b)* employment training and *(c)* the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Jackson: Contracts with TECs are still subject to negotiation.

Northern Region

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were self-employed in the Northern region in February 1981, June 1987 and February 1991.

Mr. Forth: Information on the number of self-employed in the northern region is available only on a quarterly basis up to September 1990. The information is as follows:

Self-employed in Northern Region

	Number
March 1981	83,000
June 1987	108,000
September 1990	114,000

Purchasing and Distribution

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the full annual cost, including overheads, of his Department's purchasing activity.

Mr. Forth: On the latest information available the annual cost of the Department's purchasing activities including overheads is £2·14 million.

This information is taken from the report submitted to the Central Unit on Purchasing for the financial year 1989-90.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in his Department are wholly or substantially involved in purchasing stores and distribution activities.

Mr. Forth: On the latest information available the Department has 111 people wholly involved full time in purchasing stores and distribution services.

Accurate figures for staff who are substantially involved in these activities are not available.

This information is taken from the report submitted to the central unit on purchasing for the financial year 1989-90.

Restart Courses

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) whether an unemployed person who has been required to attend a restart course and fails to do so, or fails to complete the course, is entitled to a copy of the mandatory attendance at restart courses form RC3, which is completed by the claimant adviser; whether they can refuse to sign the RC3 if they disagree with what the claimant adviser has written down as their reason for non-attendance; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether, after two years unemployment, an unemployed person who is on a waiting list for either *(a)* an employment training place, or *(b)* any other education or training course, or *(c)* waiting to start on the enterprise allowance scheme or *(d)* waiting for a place on a jobclub would be recognised as having good cause for not participating in a compulsory restart course; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the employment service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred these questions for reply.

Value for Money

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures of performance are employed by his Department to ensure value for money.

Mr. Jackson: My Department has a wide range of performance indicators designed to measure value for money. The recently published departmental report lists the performance indicators used in the Employment Department group and includes specific sections on value for money initiatives and the cost effective use of resources. A copy has been placed in the House of Commons Library. Each part of the group identifies annual efficiency gains of at least one and a half per cent. of running costs. In 1989-90 the total gain across the group was £30 million, more than 3 per cent. of running costs.

Power Station Emissions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the emissions of particles contaminated with legionella feeli and E. coli organisms from power station cooling towers.

Mr. Forth: No definitive data on the microbiological emissions in the drift from power station cooling towers have been produced in the United Kingdom. However, I am not aware of any epidemiological evidence for cases of human disease associated with the emission of these or any other organisms from such towers.

Employment Service

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will give details of his policy with respect to access by disabled people to employment service facilities;

(2) if he will make arrangements to allow for access by people with disabilities to the employment service office at Malton, North Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what account he takes of travel distance and available transport systems in making a decision to approve closures of jobcentres in rural areas;

(4) what special measures he takes to ensure access to, and information about, jobcentre services in dispersed rural areas;

(5) if he will introduce five-day working at the employment service's office at Malton, North Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the employment service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred these questions for reply.

Training

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the representations he has received from Mr. T. L. Cox, on behalf of the Leicestershire employment training managers' forum, dated 26 February; what reply he has sent; and what specific training arrangements he envisages for ethnic minority groups or disadvantaged persons.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. and learned Friend has received the letter from Mr. T. L. Cox on behalf of the Leicestershire employment training managers forum dated 26 February 1991. I will reply to Mr. Cox shortly.

The Leicestershire training and enterprise council (TEC) will have responsibility for specific training arrangements including training for those with special needs when it becomes operational from 1 April 1991. The TEC's plans will have to include an assessment of those needs and a description of how the TEC intends to meet them.

Disablement Resettlement Officers

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what response he intends to make to the Employment Committee's recommendation in its first report of Session 1990-91 that the number of disablement resettlement officers and the resources made available for their work should be the subject of a Government review.

Mr. Jackson: In its report, the Employment Committee said that it would draw attention to various particular concerns which it expected the Government to address when considering the response to the consultative document "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities". My right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State, has written to the Chairman of the Committee to express his pleasure at the participation of the Committee in the consultative process, to say that the Committee's comments will be given full consideration along with all others received and to commit himself to keeping the Committee informed on progress on all the issues they raised. We are still considering the responses to the consultative document.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the budget for the Devon and Cornwall TEC in youth training will be notified; what is the reason for the delay; by how much it will be above or below the total for the previous year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* The contract with Devon and Cornwall TEC is at present subject to negotiation. I will write to the hon. Gentleman when the contract is finalised.

South Glamorgan TEC

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on what date his director of field operations first contacted the chairman of South Glamorgan TEC concerning the procedure for carrying out the construction of the new TEC headquarters.

Mr. Jackson *[pursuant to his reply, 26 February 1991]:* I regret that the information given in my reply of 26 February at column *480* was incorrect.

The first contact took place on 7 December 1990 and was in the form of a telephone conversation.

HEALTH

Food Safety

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list *(a)* companies, *(b)* trade associations, *(c)* individuals and *(d)* other organisations (i) who have submitted written evidence and (ii) whom his Department has met in relation to his Department's draft food hygience training consultation document issued in relation to the Food Safety Act 1990.

Mr. Dorrell: A list of organisations that responded to the consultation document has been placed in the Library. Seven individual members of the public also responded.

Representatives of the Department have discussed proposals on hygiene training for food handlers with outside bodies on numerous occasions.

St. Paul's Hospital, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether he will meet a delegation from the community health councils for central and southern Liverpool, the rector of Liverpool parish church, and a cross-party group of hon. Members and local councillors to discuss the future of St. Paul's hospital, Liverpool;

(2) what representations he has received from the rector of Liverpool parish church concerning St. Paul's eye hospital; and if he will publish his response.

Mr. Dorrell: We have received from Canon Frayling a copy of the submission he made to Liverpool health authority. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has written to him explaining that under the procedure for consultation it would not be appropriate to comment while the matter is still under consideration by the Liverpool health authority and the Mersey regional health authority. For the same reason it would not be appropriate for my right hon. Friend to meet a delegation at this stage.

Maternity Services

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he issues any guidance about *(a)* the number of midwives and *(b)* the number of other staff required for the adequate staffing of an ante-natal clinic.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. This is a matter for local management. Staffing levels are likely to vary depending upon the type of service that is provided locally and the catchment areas which clinics serve.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been done on the use of epidural anaesthesia in childbirth, other than caesarean deliveries, relating to *(a)* maternal satisfaction, *(b)* percentage requiring forceps deliveries, *(c)* effect on babies' sucking ability and *(d)* any other matters.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has provided core funding to the national perinatal epidemiology unit in Oxford since 1978. Since its inception, the unit has been conducting a systematic assessment of evidence about the effectiveness and safety of perinatal care. This has involved conducting a systematic review of controlled trials in overviews (meta-analyses) which culminated in the publication in 1989 of "Effective Care in Pregnancy and Childbirth" (Oxford University Press) part of which reviews the evidence relating to epidural anaesthesia, a copy is available in the Library.

In addition, the Department has provided part-funding to a confidential enquiry into pain relief in labour undertaken by the National Birthday Trust in June 1990 and has also funded research on the postpartum consequences of epidural anaesthesia as part of a programme of work on postnatal maternal health at the health care research centre, University of Birmingham.

We do not keep a central register of research funded by other agencies.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which research projects relating to ante-natal care have been funded by the Government in the last 10 years; and what information he has on other ante-natal research projects which have been undertaken in that period.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has funded numerous projects on antenatal care in the last decade. It has provided core funding to the national perinatal epidemiology unit in Oxford since 1978. The unit undertakes a wide programme of research including surveys and other studies using observational data, randomised controlled trials and syntheses of the results of research evaluating the effects of care. The unit has produced nearly 500 publications, of which probably more than half relate to care during pregnancy. The Department has also funded a midwifery research initiative based at the unit since February 1988.

The Department does not keep a central register of research on specific topics funded by other Government Departments or their agents.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any health authority now maintains a flying squad for use in connection with home confinements.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All health authorities must ensure that they have satisfactory arrangements for an immediate response to any obstetric emergency occurring outside hospital.

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of workplaces for civil servants in his Department; what proportion of the total number have an on-site nursery facility; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide a holiday play scheme; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide after-school child care facilities; what charges are made for use of any facility; what the net cost has been for the provision of these facilities; and what estimate he can make of any future expenditure.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has 46 work places. The majority of staff are based in London at the Elephant and Castle and in Westminster. A holiday play scheme which has been run at the Elephant and Castle since 1989 is now part of a wider Westminster holiday play scheme. No after-school care facilities and, at present, no on-site nursery facilities are provided. The Department has arranged seven places at a private day nursery in the Elephant and Castle area. Plans for further child care provision include a 25-place nursery as part of redevelopment at the Elephant and Castle, and a 30-place nursery at Quarry house, Leeds.

The Department subsidises the costs of both holiday play scheme and nursery places. Current costs to parents are: play scheme: £10 annual registration fee and a daily charge of £5; nursery places: £50 per week. The subsidy for the play scheme in 1989 was approximately £4,200 in 1990, £4,600 and in 1991 it is estimated at £5,200. The departmental contribution to nursery places for 1991 is estimated at £24,000. The Department has a provisional child care budget for 1991-92 of £82,000.

Children's Eye Services, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children's ophthalmic beds are currently provided in Liverpool, and at what hospitals; and what proposals have been made to alter these arrangements.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Michael Emberton, the chairman of the Liverpool health authority, for details.

Caring Occupations

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the member states of the European Community which operate a system of registration for employees involved in caring occupations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information on registration systems for the health care professions is currently being collated by the European Commission from data provided by member states. We do not anticipate full details being available before 1992.

Traffic Casualties

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about section 155 of the Road Traffic Act 1972; and if he will consider bringing forward proposals to annul that section of the Act.

Mr. Dorrell: The provisions of section 155 of the Road Traffic Act 1972 were consolidated into section 158 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. Representations about this section of the Act are received from time to time from, among others, hon. Members, motoring organisations and the public. The Government are on record that they intend to abolish the right of hospitals (but not general practitioners) to collect the emergency treatment fee, when a suitable legislative vehicle becomes available.

Health Service Staff

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he has made any analysis of the relative change in remuneration of health service ancillary staff as compared with medical, nursing and other groups of staff;

(2) if he has any plans to bring the pay of health service ancillary staff into line with other public sector groups.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The pay and conditions of service of National Health Service ancillary staff are matters for negotiation in the ancillary staffs Whitley council. Comparisons with the pay of other staff groups in the national health service and elsewhere are a factor in the negotiations along with others including affordability. Management's objective is to enable adequate staff of the requisite calibre to be recruited, motivated and retained locally.

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many national health service doctors and nurses were employed in the Northern region in 1980 and 1990.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The available information is given in the tables.

Hospital and community health service medical staff in the Northern region at 30 September each year

Year	*Whole time equivalent (WTE)*
1980	2,431·1
1981	2,484·5
1989	2,801·3

The information for 1990 is not yet available. Figures include permanent paid, honorary and locum staff.

NHS staff in post at 30 September each year

Year	*Nursing and midwifery[1] WTE[2]*
1980	[3]25,170
1981	26,210
1989	27,800

Information for 1990 is not yet available. The figure for 1981 is shown because of the reduction in nurses working hours—see foot note [3].

Source: Department of Health (SM13) Annual Consensus of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.

[1] Includes agency staff.

[2] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten WTE.

[3] Figures not adjusted to take account of the reduction in nurses working hours during 1980-81 (from 40 to 37·5 hours per week).

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will institute a study of the cost to the health service of high rates of turnover amongst ancillary staff and of the level of stress thereby imposed on nurses through an increased work load.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Turnover rates among ancillary staff vary substantially in different parts of the country. It is for local management to determine staffing requirements and to deal with the consequences of any high rate of turnover.

Patients (Safety)

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what instructions are given to regional health authorities concerning the danger of foreign objects being left in patients; and what safety checks are obligatory;

(2) what is the procedure to recall patients for abdominal x-ray to ascertain the position of clips not extracted during operations;

(3) what is the procedure to warn patients after operations that clips are still in the patient.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This is a matter for the professions concerned. Guidelines are provided in "Theatre Safeguards" published by the Medical Defence Union, the Medical Protection Society, the Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland, the Royal College of Nursing and the National Association of Theatre Nurses, a copy of which will be placed in the Library.

Ashworth Hospital

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any video cameras have been installed at Ashworth hospital for the purpose of monitoring patients.

Mr. Dorrell: Video cameras are used solely for monitoring the movement of patients in the hospital grounds and for security surveillance of visitors entering and leaving the hospital. There are no cameras installed in the ward areas.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to institute an independent public inquiry into events at Ashworth hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The chief executive of the Special Hospitals Service Authority stated on 5 March that there would be a full and searching inquiry into the incidents described in the programme "A Special Hospital". We are in touch with the authority about the form the inquiry should take. An announcement will be made as soon as this has been decided.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he proposes to take so as to ensure that the seclusion rooms at Ashworth hospital are properly monitored by service staff at all times.

Mr. Dorrell: The Special Hospitals Service Authority informs me that it has reviewed and revised its policies

relating to seclusion. The new policies take account of the guidance in the code of practice under section 118 of the Mental Health Act 1983 which the Department issued in 1990, and have been discussed with the Mental Health Act Commission. They include stricter criteria for observing patients in seclusion. The new policies are now in operation together with formal arrangements for monitoring their effectiveness. The authority has agreed with the Commission to keep this matter under review.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will obtain a copy of the film, "A Special Hospital" shown on Channel 4 on 4 March, for his departmental library.

Mr. Dorrell: We already have a recording of this broadcast.

Cancer Screening

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the countries which have a structured breast screening programme similar to that introduced by Her Majesty's Government.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The United Kingdom was the first country in the European Community to introduce a nationwide breast screening programme.

The Netherlands, Finland and Sweden have policies and national screening programmes similar to those introduced in the United Kingdom.

Within Europe several countries have now decided to introduce screening, as have Australia, New Zealand and several provinces in Canada.

Capital Projects

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will list the major capital projects commenced in the northern region in each year since 1987, together with the cost of each.

Mr. Dorrell: According to central information, the capital schemes costing over £1 million commenced in northern region since 1 January 1987 are as follows:

Year commenced and scheme		*Tender cost £ million*
1987	South Shields General Scheme 3/1	12·2
1987	St. Georges Hospital Boilerhouse	1·2
1987	Westmoreland DGH Scheme 1/1	15·6
1988	Darlington Memorial Maternity Department	1·1
1988	Hartlepool DGH Scheme 3/2	4·4
1988	Newcastle General (Phsychological Medicine)	1·8
1988	Royal Victoria Infirmary Scheme 1/5	23·3
1988	South Cleveland General Scheme 2/1A	1·3
1988	South Cleveland—Hemlington Brokerage	2·6
1989	Bensham ESMI Day Unit	1·6
1989	Hartlepool DGH Maternity Department.	1·8
1989	Tynemouth Vic. Jubilee Inf. EMI Wards	1·4
1989	Wansbeck General Hospital Scheme 1/1	21·1
1989	Westmoreland DGH Scheme 1/2 Residencies	1·0
1990	Shotley Bridge Psychiatric/Psychogeriatric	1·1
1990	West Cumberland—Refurbishment Phase 2	2·2

Public Health Laboratory

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his plans to charge environmental health departments for statutory tests at the public health laboratory.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 1 March 1991 at column *633*.

Sterilisation

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many female sterilisation operations are carried out in the national health service per year; and how many claims for compensation are made.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1988-89, the latest year for which figures are available, an estimated 91,100 female sterilisation operations were carried out in the NHS in England. Information about the number of compensation claims is not collected centrally.

Project 2000

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action is being taken to up-rate the bursaries paid to student nurses under the Project 2000 scheme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are continuing to keep bursary levels under review in the light of recruitment and retention trends and the current earning power of existing student nurses.

Emergency Alarms

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for health what joint funding is available to enable health authorities and others to purchase emergency alarm systems for elderly and disabled people.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Decisions on joint funding are for health authorities to take at local level.

Transplant Service

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made to establish the United Kingdom tranplant service as a special health authority.

Mr. Dorrell: Regulations to establish the new authority, with effect from 1 April 1991, were laid before Parliament on 8 March 1991.

I am pleased to confirm that Dr. John Evans, previously a deputy chief medical officer and administrative deputy secretary in the former Department of Health and Social Security, has accepted an invitation to be chairman of the new authority, which will be known as the United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority (UKTSSA).

The members of the authority will be:

Professor Peter Morris, Nuffield Professor of Surgery at the Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford, with an international reputation in the transplant world;

Professor Richard Batchelor, Professor of Immunology at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School, Hammersmith Hospital, who has been a major figure in the development of transplantation immunity;

Mr. Trevor Rippington, an ex-regional treasurer of South-West Regional Health Authority, and

Mr. John Thornton, business manager for Praxis plc of Bath.

The new authority will, for the time being, be based at the Southmead hospital in Bristol which is currently the location of the United Kingdom transplant service.

I hope that these new arrangements will facilitate improvement of the United Kingdom's already excellent record on organ transplantation. We have around 8,000 patients with a functioning kidney graft.

In 1989, 1,732 cadaveric kidney transplants were performed in the United Kingdom; 295 heart transplants, and a similar number of liver transplants. A further 94 heart/lung transplants were carried out.

Transplantation of organs has been one of the great medical advances of the last 25 years. Operations not long ago considered to be in the realm of fantasy are today a matter of routine.

The Government are totally committed to the organ transplant programme, and increasing the supply of donor organs for transplantation is one of our priorities.

Achondroplasia

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to his reply of 5 March, *Official Report*, column *119*, if he will list the number of hospitals providing facilities for the treatment of achondroplasia.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not collected centrally. Local health authorities are responsible for determining what services to make available for this condition, in the light of their assessment of local needs and priorities, as against resources.

Dental Practice Board

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what official arrangements are made to protect the confidentiality of information concerning dental patients sent by dentists to the Dental Practice Board; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) what communications he has received from the General Dental Practitioners Association regarding the activities of the Dental Practice Board; and whether he will make a statement;

(3) what statutory authority has been used by the Dental Practice Board in connection with home visits by officials of the Dental Practice Board.

Mr. Dorrell: Apart from the board's being subject to the Data Protection Act 1984, any member of the Dental Practice Board's staff who breaches confidentiality may be subject to disciplinary action. The secretary of the General Dental Practitioners Association wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 25 February 1991 about home visits to patients. Such inquiries are made by the board in the course of referring a matter to a Family Health Services Authority for investigation. Home visits to patients are only undertaken when the board has reason to believe that there has been non-compliance with the regulations governing the provision of general dental services.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many home visits on the initiative of the Dental Practice Board have been made to dental patients during the last six months; for what purposes; and with how many dental practitioners involved;

(2) how many cases of fraud or other malpractice have been discovered by the Dental Practice Board following home visits by their officials;

(3) what criteria are used by the Dental Practice Board in deciding whether to initiate home visits to dental patients;

(4) what has been the total cost of the visits by Dental Practice Board Officials to dental patients during the last 12 months.

Mr. Dorrell: In the last six months 85 home visits by members of the boards investigation staff have been carried out, involving eight dental practitioners, in cases where the board had reason to believe that there had been non-compliance with the regulations governing the provision of general dental services. In the past 12 months there have been 312 patient interviews involving 17 practitioners. The police have been consulted in connection with four of these cases and their inquiries are continuing. Seven dentists, including two of the four involved in police inquiries, have been referred to the Dental Service Committee of the relevant family health services authority. In the case of nine dentists the Dental Practice Board's inquiries are continuing and one case has been dropped. The cost of home visits over the past year is estimated at £3,500.

Social Services

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the expenditure per head of population for each social service authority in 1990-91 and, adjusted for the change in input unit costs, in 1979-80.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is given in the table.

Expenditure on Personal Social Services per head of population at constant 1990-91 prices using the PSS Pay and Prices Index

	1979-80 £/head	*1990-91 £/head*
Shire Counties		
Avon	64	77
Bedfordshire	58	73
Berkshire	49	71
Buckinghamshire	41	70
Cambridgeshire	47	67
Cheshire	52	71
Cleveland	63	85
Cornwall	40	62
Cumbria	49	65
Derbyshire	51	88
Devon	45	61
Dorset	51	54
Durham	56	61
East Sussex	68	74
Essex	42	70
Gloucestershire	49	59
Hampshire	46	52
Hereford and Worcester	47	57
Hertfordshire	46	66
Humberside	53	81
Isle of Wight	45	67
Kent	47	65
Lancashire	60	79
Leicestershire	51	71
Lincolnshire	52	56
Norfolk	49	57
Northamptonshire	48	72
Northumberland	53	74
North Yorkshire	43	55
Nottinghamshire	60	87
Oxfordshire	55	65
Shropshire	38	60
Somerset	49	71
Staffordshire	43	55
Suffolk	41	55
Surrey	40	58
Warwickshire	44	64
West Sussex	47	55
Wiltshire	45	63
Isles of Scilly	42	61

	1979-80 £/head	1990-91 £/head
Metropolitan Districts		
Bolton	64	83
Bury	62	78
Manchester	139	142
Oldham	75	90
Rochdale	81	114
Salford	81	109
Stockport	57	77
Tameside	72	100
Trafford	54	75
Wigan	57	68
Knowsley	71	90
Liverpool	92	123
St. Helens	97	92
Sefton	35	82
Wirral	68	89
Barnsley	60	69
Doncaster	68	68
Rotherham	58	83
Sheffield	85	107
Gateshead	78	96
Newcastle	119	128
North Tyneside	75	116
South Tyneside	78	92
Sunderland	82	82
Birmingham	87	113
Coventry	80	111
Dudley	41	66
Sandwell	58	111
Solihull	37	74
Walsall	58	75
Wolverhampton	62	111
Bradford	81	102
Calderdale	61	91
Kirklees	60	84
Leeds	60	101
Wakefield	66	77
Inner London boroughs		
Camden	238	231
Greenwich	130	197
Hackney	216	242
Hammersmith	191	241
Islington	216	268
Kensington	165	222
Lambeth	212	—
Lewisham	171	197
Southwark	185	224
Tower Hamlets	208	172
Wandsworth	186	203
Westminster	180	241
City of London	209	700
Outer London boroughs		
Barking	77	112
Barnet	78	88
Bexley	59	72
Brent	120	166
Bromley	58	73
Croydon	73	103
Ealing	90	128
Enfield	63	101
Haringey	150	—
Harrow	70	96
Havering	61	85
Hillingdon	77	110
Hounslow	86	138
Kingston-upon-Thames	74	102
Merton	96	116
Newham	107	181
Redbridge	67	91
Richmond-upon-Thames	62	103
Sutton	62	99
Waltham Forest	107	157

Notes:
1. 1990-91 figures are based on authorities budget estimates.
2. Budget returns have not been received from Lambeth and Haringey.

Drugs

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the drugs bill in family health services in the last financial year;

(2) what was the drugs bill for the national health service per head of population *(a)* in 1989-90 and *(b)* in the current financial year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Expenditure by the family health services for drugs in England in 1989-90 was £1,942 million. The 1989-90 cost per head of population of all NHS drugs (including drugs in the hospital and community health services) was £49·40. A comparable figure is not yet available for the current financial year.

Abortion

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in which hospitals and medical centres in the United Kingdom clinical trials of the abortificient drug RU486 have been carried out; over what periods those tests were conducted; how many women were involved; and how the tests were funded.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Under the terms of section 118 of the Medicines Act and for reasons of commercial confidentiality, the Licensing Authority is forbidden from disclosing information on clinical trials.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 13 March 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Holohoax

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration has been given by the Director of Public Prosecutions to initiating proceedings in respect of the publication entitled Holohoax distributed by the Gentile Awareness League.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions has received two complaints concerning the publication entitled Holohoax. He has referred these complaints to the Metropolitan police, but at this stage the police are not in a position to submit a file to him for his consideration.

TRANSPORT

Road Building

262. **Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will list major road building projects supported by his Department in the Northern region in each year since 1987, together with the cost of each.

Mr. Chope: The major trunk schemes completed or under construction for each year since 1987 are as follows:

		Cost £ million
1987		
A69	Eighton Lodge Improvement	5·90
A1	Clifton-Stannington Bridge	6·50
		12·40
1988		
A69	Horsley-Corbridge Improvement	3·90
A19	Peterlee Grade Separated Junction Stage I	0·56
		4·46
1989		
A19	Downhill Junction	1·30
A19	Tees Viaduct Refurbishment	11·00
		12·30
1990		
A1	Newcastle Western Bypass and Blaydon Bridge	88·00
A19	Peterlee Grade Separated Junction Stage II	3·90
A696	Woolsington Bypass	15·00
A66	Stockton Race Course Grade Separated Junction	7·40
		114·30
1991		
A66	Bowes to County Boundary (Under Construction)	1·09 (Current Spend)
		1·09

Local authority projects supported by Department of Transport supplementary grant for each year from 1987 onwards are as follows:

		Accepted Expenditure £ million	*Transport Supplementary Grant (50 per cent.) £ million*
1987-88			
A1068	Ellington Bypass	1·647	0·823
A690	Brancepeth to Scripton	0·998	0·499
A1058	Cradlewell Bypass	7·482	3·741
A695	Ryton Crawcook Bypass	8·192	4·096
A1231	Sunderland Inner Ring Road	7·251	3·625
A179	East of A19	0·576	0·288
A66	South Bank Link Road	4·765	2·383
	Totals	30·911	15·455
1988-89			
A692	Redheugh Bridge Southern Approach	2·982	1·491
A117	Durham Road Bypass	7·218	3·609
A688	Canney Hill Bypass	1·225	0·612
A689	Coundon Bypass	2·044	1·022
	Totals	13·469	6·735
1989-90			
A181	Wheatley Hill Bypass	3·056	1·528
A171	Guisborough Road Improvement	3·302	1·651
A194	Newcastle Road Improvement	3·580	1·790
A6082	West Central Route	18·939	9·469
	Totals	28·877	14·439
1990-91			
A1018	Sunderland Eastern Relief Road	3·750	1·875
A1026	Thornaby Bypass	25·430	12·715

		Accepted Expenditure £ million	Transport Supplementary Grant (50 per cent.) £ million
	Metal Bridge to Bowburn	2·340	1·170
A692	Consett Bypass Stage 2	4·243	2·122
A695	Prudhoe Bypass	9·015	4·507
A68	Swinburn Quarry to Fourlaws Stage I	1·571	0·785
	Totals	46·349	23·174
1991-92			
	Teesside Link and Airport Access	6·307	3·153
A60	Darlington Cross Town Route	5·735	2·868
A1046	Portrack Lane Dualling	5·904	2·952
	Totals	17·946	8·973

Litter

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon Member for Rugby and Kenilworth of 7 March, if he will give details of the litter collection that has so far taken place on motorways and the number of miles of motorway that have been cleared.

Mr. Chope: Under present arrangements, litter is cleared from England's 1,600 miles of motorway at least once per year and more often on stretches which are particularly prone to littering. In difficult and dangerous locations such as the central reservation, litter clearance is carried out in association with other maintenance activities, where possible, in order to minimise traffic disruption and delays.

In 1989-90 the Department of Transport mounted a £1 million campaign to put an extra effort into clearing motoways and trunk roads to complement the work of the Tidy Britain Group. In the current financial year resources for litter clearing on motorways have been doubled to some £3 million.

Goods Vehicles

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many articulated vehicles plated at a train weight exceeding 31 tonnes and licensed as private light goods are specified as authorised vehicles in standard international licences issued to United Kingdom operators under the Goods Vehicles (Operators' Licences, Qualifications and Fees) Regulation 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Licensing of a heavy goods vehicle at the light goods vehicle rate is permitted when the vehicle is not being used to carry goods for hire or reward or in connection with a trade or business. Operator licensing does not apply to such vehicles.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has of United Kingdom articulated vehicles registered as private/light goods operating for hire or reward at their plated weights in EC member states; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I am aware of the concerns of the Road Haulage Association in this respect.

The Department does not collect data on vehicle excise duty paid by United Kingdom vehicles used in other EC member states. Bilateral agreements with other EC states, and the treaty of Rome, provide for exemption from VED for temporarily imported vehicles registered in other EC states.

It would be an offence for a vehicle registered in the United Kingdom to operate in this country for hire or reward while licensed at less than the appropriate rate of VED. Spot checks on vehicles returning from abroad are carried out periodically.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in enforcing EC controls on the operation of United Kingdom registered goods vehicles, he will *(a)* require certificates of private/light goods status for heavy goods vehicles from their operators, *(b)* make a false declaration of such status an offence and *(c)* require all articulated vehicles to be registered in accordance with their plated train weight; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Vehicles are licensed in the United Kingdom on the basis of a declaration by the applicant stating the use to which the vehicle will be put. It is an offence knowingly to make a false or materially misleading statement in an application for a vehicle licence. And it is the responsibility of the keeper to relicense the vehicle in the appropriate tax class should the use of the vehicle be changed during the period of a licence

When registering a goods vehicle the applicant must state the vehicle's gross weight. If, after registration, this changes the applicant is required to notify the licensing authority.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many articulated vehicles plated at a train weight exceeding 31 tonnes are registered in the United Kingdom under the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Regulation 1971 as private/light goods vehicles and thus pay vehicle excise duty at an annual rate of £100 only; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: DVLA records show 827 such vehicles licensed in the private and light goods tax class. Application for a vehicle licence is based on a declaration by the keeper as to the intended use of the vehicle. It is an offence knowingly to make a false or materially misleading declaration in an application for a vehicle licence.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will consult foreign Governments to arrange for information on illegal operations by United Kingdom based goods vehicles operating abroad to be passed on to the licensing authorities in the United Kingdom for any action by them; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will seek the co-operation of other EC member states to inform him and where practicable to prosecute, under their national law, users of United Kingdom registered vehicles operating in contravention of EC rules; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: EC regulations and the United Kingdom's bilateral agreements with other countries already provide for Governments to notify each other of infringements of laws by the other party's road hauliers.

This information is passed to the traffic commissioners, who are responsible for drivers' and operators' licences and who may consider taking disciplinary action in addition to any prosecutions or other action undertaken by the foreign authorities.

Anti-fouling Paint

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to include the details of the anti-fouling paint in use as part of the information which harbour masters are entitled to call for before permitting a ship to dock.

Mr. McLoughlin: The International Maritime Organisation has recommended that release rates of harmful compounds in anti-fouling paints should be controlled, that standard means of measuring this should be developed and, more generally, that the effectiveness of control measures should be monitored. However, there is no evidence that the anti-fouling paints on ocean-going vessels significantly affect aquatic life and, except in dry-docking operations, no controls are planned at present.

ENERGY

Power Stations

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consideration he has given to the need to make available to new entrants to the industry, sites with an established use for electricity generation which are redundant or no longer in use and which are currently owned by electricity generating companies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Schedule 3 to the Electricity Act 1989 provides for the compulsory acquisition of land by electricity licence holders for licence-related purposes.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will issue a direction to require generating companies holding land on which are redundant, closed or demolished power stations to release that land where requested to prospective new entrants to the generating industry at a price to be agreed by an independent agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have no such power. The disposal of land held by generating companies is a matter for their commercial judgment, subject to the compulsory purchase provisions in schedule 3 to the Electricity Act 1989.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is the number and total area in hectares of sites in the ownership of *(a)* National Power and *(b)* PowerGen on which electricity generation activity has ceased and which are being retained by those companies;

(2) how much land which has at any time been used for electricity generation but which is not being used for power generation purposes is held by *(a)* National Power and *(b)* PowerGen in Warwickshire.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: These are commercial matters for each company.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many closed power station sites there are in Warwickshire; and what is the present ownership and status of each of these sites.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As far as my Department is aware, there is only one former power station site in Warwickshire. Details of the ownership and status of that site are commercial matters for the company concerned.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has recieved from Nuclear Electric relating to the decommissioning of nuclear power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My officials have a regular dialogue with Nuclear Electric covering a wide range of matters relating to their operations. I understand that the company is reviewing its decommissioning strategy and is keeping my officials informed.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many employees subscribed for shares in the privatisation of the electricity distribution companies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: About 84,000 employees and 21,000 pensioners of the 12 regional electricity companies, the National Grid Company and the Electricity Association applied for and received shares. Between them they were allocated almost 160 million shares, representing about 7·4 per cent. of the total equity of the 12 regional electricity companies.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Sunbeam Nursery, Croydon

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the level of charges payable by part-time staff using the Sunbeam day nursery in Croydon; and what is the level of subsidy provided by Government Departments for part-time employees.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Part-time staff using the Sunbeam nursery in Croydon pay £12·50 per day. The level of subsidy provided by Departments for part-time and full-time employees is £5·78 per day.

Child Care, Croydon

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will provide the latest estimates of the total number of employees who may be eligible to take up the child care services provided by the Sunbeam day nursery in Croydon broken down by *(a)* gender and *(b)* part-time or full-time employees.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Information is not available in the form requested. Every civil servant of either sex working

full or part-time for one of the Government Departments[1] which have established the Sunbeam nursery in Croydon is eligible to use the child care facilities the nursery provides.

[1]Home Office, Lord Chancellor's Department, Property Services Agency, Department of Social Security, Land Registry, Department of Employment and Customs and Excise.

Deportation

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make a decision regarding the deportation order against Mr. Hazem Ali Hassan, a constituent of the hon. Member for Sunderland, South.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend has decided not to proceed with deportation action against Mr. Hassan and he was released from detention on 8 March.

Racist Literature

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what international co-operation there is on the suppression of racist and anti-semitic literature.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am not aware of any specific consideration given in any international group to such literature.

Speeding Offences

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column *647*, in what form information concerning prosecutions for speeding offences is kept.

Mr. John Patten: Statistics for offences relating to motor vehicles are published annually in a Home Office statistical bulletin, with more detailed figures given in the companion volume of supplementary tables. The most recent bulletin, issue number 34/90, includes statistics for 1989. A copy of these publications is in the Library.

The statistics are broken down into 25 offence groups; speed limit offences are covered by offence group 16.

Fire Service

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out by rank the annual pay rates of all grades of fire officer and retained fire officer, and what are the arrangements for the payment of pensions.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office has no formal involvement in fire service pay negotiations; the following information has been obtained from the National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Fire Brigades.

The annual pay rates of chief fire officers are determined at the discretion of the employing authority, but are normally determined in relation to the population within the brigade area. The following table gives details of population ranges and corresponding salary ranges:

Annual pay rates for Chief Fire Officers by population range.

Population range	*Salary range*		*Higher maximum for metropolitan brigades*[1]
	Minimum £	*Maximum* £	£
Up to 240,000	34,689	46,854	
240,001 to 360,000	35,592	48,741	
360,001 to 460,000	36,885	50,631	
460,001 to 600,000	38,259	51,909	
600,001 to 760,000	39,651	53,754	
760,001 to 940,000	41,040	56,067	
940,001 to 1,200,000	41,676	57,570	60,186
1,200,001 to 1,700,000	43,713	58,890	61,566
1,700,001 to 2,300,000	45,123	60,654	63,411
2,300,001 and over	46,668	62,421	65,259
London	53,670	71,784	75,048

[1] At the discretion of the employing authority.

The annual pay rates for assistant chief officers except those appointed as deputy chief fire officers, are determined in the same way as those for chief fire officers. The salary ranges are set at 75 per cent. of those for chief fire officers for the equivalent population ranges, subject to an underpinning minimum of £34,428. Salary ranges for those appointed as deputy chief fire officers are set at 80 per cent. of those for chief fire officers for the equivalent population ranges, subject to an underpinning minimum of £35,205.

The annual rates of whole-time ranks from firefighter up to senior divisional officer are set out in the following table:

Annual pay rates of wholetime ranks: Firefighter up to and including Senior Divisional Officer

Rank	*Minimum* £	*Maximum* £
Senior Divisional Officer	26,085	[1]28,143
Divisional Officer I	24,234	[1]25,977
Divisional Officer II	21,942	[1]24,321
Divisional Officer III	20,664	[1]22,152
Assistant Divisional Officer	19,290	[1]21,090
Station Officer	18,300	[1]19,740
Sub-officer	15,777	17,016
Leading firefighter	15,390	16,020
Firefighter	11,313	[2]15,009

Notes:

[1]Ranks at Station Officer and above may attract a flexible duty supplement of 20 per cent.

[2]Subject to being fully qualified.

The annual retainers for retained firefighters are set out in the following table:

Annual retainers for retained firefighters

Rank	*One to three years' service* £	*More than three years' service* £
Station Officer and above	1,716	1,944
Sub-officer	[1]1,413	[1]1,521
Leading firefighter	1,371	1,413
Firefighter	1,257	1,371

[1]Enhanced payments are made to Sub-officers in charge of fire stations. In addition, retained firefighters are paid fees for attendance at incidents, attendance at drill nights and extra duties. Retained firefighters are also eligible for payments under the long service bounty scheme.

The arrangements for the payments of pensions are as follows. Whole-time firefighters are pensioned under an unfunded statutory scheme, the provisions of which are

administered locally by fire authorities. Members contribute 10·75 per cent. of their basic pay towards the cost of their benefits. The balance is met by the employing authorities, supported through the revenue support grant system. Retained firefighters qualify for payments in respect of injury benefits in certain circumstances, but are otherwise not involved in the occupational scheme.

Metropolitan Police

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time that an applicant to join the Metropolitan police special constabulary has to wait from the time of application to their acceptance.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It takes on average three months to process such applications.

Iraqis

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Iraqis and other nationals were taken into custody in Scotland in connection with events in the Gulf; and for how long each was detained.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Nineteen Iraqis were served with notices of intention to deport and taken into custody on 17 January in Scotland following the outbreak of hostilities in the Gulf. Three were released on 23 January when they made voluntary departure from the United Kingdom. One was released on 7 February, one on 13 February, two on 19 February and 12 on 8 March. No other nationals were detained in Scotland in connection with events in the Gulf.

Probation Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the future of the probation service in Wales;

(2) what plans he has to put parts of the probation service out to tender in Wales.

Mr. John Patten: Decisions on the future organisation of the probation service in England and Wales are being considered in the light of responses to the Green Paper, "Supervision and Punishment in the Community" (Cm. 966) and an announcement will be made as soon as possible. We are consulting the probation service and the independent sector throughout England and Wales about how best they can work together in dealing with offenders in the community, and will make an announcement on these issues in due course.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) 28 February, *Official Report*, column *571*, what is his estimate of the cost of poll tax proceedings in each clerkship in the period 1 April to 31 December 1990; if he will undertake to place such information for each quarter in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, since the cost of proceedings varies from court to court according to local circumstances. It is, however, estimated that community charge enforcement proceedings in the period to 31 December 1990 cost overall in the region of £7 million.

Bomb Hoaxes

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has now reviewed the maximum penalties for bomb hoaxes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: A bomb hoax is an irresponsible waste of other people's time and effort, which can cause massive disruption and endanger lives by making it more difficult to identify and to respond to genuine warnings. Eighty-four hoax calls were received in the 24 hours following the Paddington and Victoria bombs on Monday 18 February and 789 by 3 March.

We have now concluded the review of maximum penalties for this offence announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State during Report stage of the Criminal Justice Bill, *Official Report*, 25 February 1991, column 689.

We shall table an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill proposing to increase a magistrate's power to imprison a person found guilty of a bomb hoax from three months to a maximum of six months. We also propose to increase the maximum penalty from five to seven years in prison if the case goes to the Crown court. This is a clear indication of the seriousness with which we view this offence.

Asylum

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of applications for asylum in the United Kingdom made in each month of 1990, showing the number of applications by country.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* Reliable monthly estimates of the number of applications for asylum in the United Kingdom in 1990 cannot yet be made, but provisional indications are that the total in 1990 was of the order of 30,000, including associated dependants. This figure does not include applications for upgrading to refugee status by those previously granted exceptional leave.

Estimates for 1990 will be published as usual in the annual Home Office statistical bulletin "Refugee Statistics, United Kingdom" later this year.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of people who applied for political asylum in 1990; what was the number from each country; what was the number who were new arrivals in the United Kingdom; and what was the number who had already entered the United Kingdom in previous years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* Reliable estimates of the number of applications for asylum in the United Kingdom in 1990 by nationality are not yet fully available. However, provisional indications are that the total number was of the order of 30,000, including associated dependants, comprising about 12,000 applications made on entry at ports and an estimated 18,000 applications made after their arrival in the United

Kingdom. These figures do not include applications for upgrading to refugee status by those previously granted exceptional leave.

Estimates for 1990 by nationality will be published as usual in the annual Home Office statistical bulletin "Refugee Statistics, United Kingdom" later this year.

Iraqi Nationals

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Iraqi nationals have entered the United Kingdom since 1 January; how many have been refused entry; and how many have been deported.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* Since 1 January six Iraqi nationals have been removed from the United Kingdom under deportation powers. A further eight Iraqi passengers were removed in January after being refused leave to enter the United Kingdom. Information on admissions since 1 January and on passengers removed since 1 February is not yet available centrally.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any Community-wide procedures have yet been adopted for the validation of new animal scientific procedures or the validation of new products.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.

The European Community has no standard validation procedures for new animal scientific procedures. It has adopted animal scientific procedures for the testing of chemical substances which have been validated under the auspices of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. The Community's National Co-ordination Committee for testing methods oversees all testing methods.

The sixth amendment to the European Community's dangerous substances directive established a notification scheme for new chemical substances which entails the collection and scrutiny of data on such substances.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Expenditure, Northern Region

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much was spent per pupil in the Northern region in *(a)* current expenditure and *(b)* capital in 1980 and 1990.

Mr. Fallon: In 1979-80 local education authorities in the Northern region spent an average of £530 per pupil on current school-based expenditure and £40 per pupil on capital expenditure. These figures were £1,380 and £55 per pupil respectively in 1988-89, the latest year for which data are available.

Free School Meals

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance and advice he gives to local education authorities on the provision of free school meals in primary and secondary maintained schools; and if he plans any changes in such guidance and advice.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend has issued no guidance on the provision of free school meals. It is for each local education authority to secure that such refreshment as it deems necessary is made available free of charge in the middle of the day to pupils whose parents are in receipt of income support.

Student Allowances

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much money has been paid to local education authorities to reimburse them for expenditure on vacation hardship allowances; and how many students have benefited in each of the last five years including the current year to date.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Local education authorities in England and Wales currently have a discretionary power under the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations 1990 to pay a means-tested allowance of up to £53·50 a week during a vacation to students on designated courses who would, in the authority's opinion, otherwise suffer undue hardship. Since 1 April 1990, authorities' expenditure on mandatory awards has been reimbursed by 100 per cent. grant from my right hon. and learned Friend. Lower rates applied in earlier years.

Authorities' expenditure on the allowance and the number of students in receipt of it from 1986-87 onwards are given in the table. Figures are not yet available for either 1989-90 or the current year and, in the latter case, are likely to be affected by the improved arrangements for student support.

Academic year	*Number of students*	*Value of allowances (£)*
1988-89	305	40,837
1987-88	322	47,706
1986-87	288	36,425

Access Funds

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what resources will be available for the access funds in 1991-92.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The sum of £25·8 million will be available for the access funds in Great Britain for the 1991-92 academic year.

My Department's share will be £23·01 million. This sum is being allocated between the three funds as shown in the table.

	£ million
Undergraduate fund	13·10
Postgraduate fund	5·74
Further Education fund	4·17

NORTHERN IRELAND

Social Security

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of beneficiaries who received *(a)* attendance allowance, *(b)* invalid care allowance, *(c)* severe disablement allowance, *(d)* mobility allowance, *(e)* income support, *(f)* one-parent benefit, *(g)* family credit, *(h)* housing benefit, *(i)* community care grant, *(j)* budget loans and *(k)* crisis loans during the year 1989-90.

Mr. Hanley: The average numbers receiving these benefits at any one time during the year 1989-90 was as follows:

	Number
Attendance Allowance	31,600
Invalid Care Allowance	7,000
Severe Disablement Allowance	12,900
Mobility Allowance	14,100
Income Support	188,800
One-Parent Benefit	22,600
Family Credit	14,700
Housing Benefit	
Rent Rebate	108,000
Rent Allowance	21,000
Rates Rebate	107,100

In addition there were 52,066 budgeting loans, 21,057 crisis loans and 28,883 community care grants from the social fund.
Note: Beneficiaries may be receiving more than one benefit at any one time

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of beneficiaries who received *(a)* unemployment benefit, *(b)* sickness benefit, *(c)* statutory sick pay, *(d)* invalidity benefit, *(e)* industrial disablement benefit, *(f)* industrial death benefit and *(g)* non-contributory retirement benefit during the year 1989-90.

Mr. Hanley: The average numbers receiving these benefits at any one time during the year 1989-90 was as follows:—

	Numbers
Unemployment Benefit	17,100
Sickness Benefit	9,600
Invalidity Benefit	49,100
Industrial Disablement Benefit	5,700
Industrial Death Benefit	1,000
Non-contributory Retirement Benefit	3,200

Statutory sick pay is paid by employers and no information is available about number of recipients.
Note: Beneficiaries may be receiving more than one benefit at any one time.

Pensioners

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Northern Ireland citizens were in receipt of old-age pension during January and February; and how many such pensioners received cold weather payments during these months.

Mr. Hanley: At 31 March 1990, the latest date for which figures are available, 215,604 people were receiving retirement pension and non-contributory retirement pension. Up to 28 February 1991, 30,897 cold weather payments were made in respect of the period 1 to 14 February to people getting income support including pensioners.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Arms Purchases

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the percentage of gross domestic product spent on arms by countries who are recipients of aid from the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Chalker: The information requested by the hon. Member is not available in a comprehensive or consistent form. The hon. Member will be aware of the work of the Swedish International Peace Research Institute and the International Institute for Strategic Studies, and may wish to refer to the latter's publication, "The Military Balance 1989-90", which is available from the Library of the House.

Iraq

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *582-83*, from which departmental budget the £8·1 million of assistance via the EC will be paid; and from which budget the £3 million of aid referred to in the answer to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), *Official Report*, 18 February, column *54*, will be paid.

Mrs. Chalker: The £8·1 million assistance provided through the European Community will be attributed to the overseas aid programme.

Of the £3 million emergency assistance, £2·5 million was contributed to the International Committee of the Red Cross from class II, vote 2, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (other external relations), and £0·5 million to the United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation from the Overseas Development Agency's 1990-91 humanitarian assistance budget.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to give humanitarian assistance to Iraq and Kuwait, and from which budget this will be paid; and what plans he has to give reconstruction aid to Kuwait and from which budget this will be paid.

Mrs. Chalker: A multi-agency United Nations mission is currently in Iraq to assess humanitarian needs. It will make recommendations to the Secretary-General on emergency actions the United Nations might take. We will consider responding to any subsequent appeal for funding launched by the Secretary-General.

We have no plans at present to provide humanitarian assistance for Kuwait, but we do expect to assist in the process of reconstruction. Financing it will be a matter for the Government of Kuwait.

Angola

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning the United Nations programme for humanitarian relief in Angola; and what representations he has made to the Government of Angola, and to United Nations' representatives regarding the resumption of the United Nations special relief programme for Angola.

Mrs. Chalker: The United Nations special relief programme was suspended by the Angolan Government on 21 December. We urged the Angolan Government to reinstate the programme without delay and welcome their announcement on 11 March that it is to restart.

ENVIRONMENT

Widowers' Pensions

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he intends to introduce regulations to allow local authorities to meet in full their obligations to pay widowers' pensions.

Mr. Key: Draft regulations, including new widowers' benefits and other proposals, were circulated on 28 December 1990 to local authorities in England and Wales and to other interested parties. The consultation period ended on 15 February and consideration is now being given to the responses. Subject to the necessary parliamentary procedures, the regulations will come into force as soon as possible.

Regeneration Programmes

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the programmes prepared by his Department to help local authorities who have schemes to regenerate decaying areas of their authority commencing in the year 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: My Department supports a wide range of programmes promoting the regeneration of inner-city areas and treatment of dereliction. These are:

	1991-92 resources[1] £ million
Urban Programme[2]	243·2
City Grants	66·0
Derelict Land Grant[2]	75·5
Urban Development Corporations	473·1
City Action Teams	8·1
Estate Action Programme[2]	268·0

[1] Central Government provision.
[2] Resourced jointly with local authorities.

Housing renewal programmes, enterprise zones, garden festivals and the Department's inner cities and urban land research programmes also contribute to regeneration.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has given to local authorities who wish to invest capital receipts in a regeneration programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Local authorities are free to invest the usable part of their capital receipts as they wish, including in projects to promote regeneration.

Uniform Business Rate

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals have been lodged in the north-west area against the uniform business rate.

Mr. Portillo: The 12 valuation offices in the north-west have received 68,316 proposals by ratepayers to alter their 1990 rating assessments.

Local Authority Accounts

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many London boroughs have failed to produce audited accounts since April 1985; and for which years.

Mr. Key: The information requested is listed in the table.

The latest year for which audited accounts could be available is 1989-90.

The reasons for late completion of audited accounts vary and may not be within the control of the borough concerned.

Authority	*Audits outstanding from stated year to date*
Hackney	1984-85
Brent	1985-86
Islington	1985-86
Haringey	1985-86
Lambeth	1985-86
Southwark	1985-86
Hammersmith	1986-87
Hounslow	1986-87
Richmond	1986-87
Waltham Forest	1986-87
Camden	1987-88
Greenwich	1987-88
Lewisham	1987-88
Westminster	1987-88
Bromley	1988-89
Bexley	1988-89
Croydon	[1]1988-89
Ealing	1988-89
Merton	1988-89
Newham	1988-89
Kensington	1988-89
Redbridge	1988-89
Sutton	1988-89
Tower Hamlets	1988-89
Barnet	1989-90
Harrow	1989-90
Kingston	1989-90

[1] Only.

Northern Region

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent by his Department in revitalising the urban and inner-city areas of the Northern region since June 1987.

Mr. Key: The total sum spent by my Department from 1987-88 to 1990-91 in the nine designated urban areas of the Northern region is almost £396 million. This significant level of assistance has been provided via a range of initiatives geared to regenerate the inner cities and includes expenditure incurred by the Tyne and Wear and Teesside urban development corporations.

Waste Disposal

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress made on the drafting of the planning policy guidance on waste disposal since his response to the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) on 30 January, *Official Report*, column 1087; and when he expects publication.

Mr. Yeo: I have nothing to add at this stage to what my hon. Friend said on 30 January; new guidance will be issued in draft for public consultation later this year.

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he currently gives local planning authorities on the siting of municipal waste incinerators; and if he has any plans to change this advice.

Mr. Yeo: The Government have not issued any planning guidance on the siting of municipal waste incinerators. However, work is in hand on the preparation of a planning policy guidance note on pollution and waste management which we plan to issue in draft for public consultation later this year. One of the issues on which we shall consult is the need for guidance on the siting of incinerators.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of Government grant per poll tax payer for 1991-92 in *(a)* Newcastle-upon-Tyne, *(b)* Gateshead, and *(c)* Wandsworth.

Mr. Key: Government grants, consisting of revenue support grant, special grants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge benefit grant and transitional relief grant, are per head of relevant population in 1990-91, £579 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, £415 in Gateshead, and £677 in Wandsworth.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of Government grant for 1990-91 per head of population in *(a)* the London borough of Wandsworth, *(b)* Bolsover district council and *(c)* North-East Derbyshire district council.

Mr. Key: Government grants, consisting of revenue support grant, special grants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge benefit grant and transitional relief grant, are per head of relevant population in 1990-91, £667 in Wandsworth, £196 in Bolsover, and £197 in North-East Derbyshire.

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much Government grant per poll tax payer will be received by *(a)* Wolverhampton and *(b)* Wandsworth for 1991-92.

Mr. Key: Government grants, consisting of revenue support grant, special grants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge benefit grant and transitional relief grant, are per head of relevant population in 1990-91 £609 in Wolverhampton and £677 in Wandsworth.

Stocken Hall, Rutland

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment upon what dates since April 1988 inspectors from the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission visited Stocken hall, Rutland, to inspect the condition of the buildings; what similar visits have been paid by officials from his Department since April 1989; and what action has subsequently been taken.

Sir George Young: An inspector from the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission last visited Stocken hall in January 1990. No visits have been made by officials from my Department since April 1989.

The hall was sold in October 1990 and the owner subsequently received planning permission to convert it into offices, subject to an agreement with Rutland district council which will ensure the complete restoration of the hall. As work has started and the future of the building is secure no action has been taken by my Department.

Community Charge

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list each of the orders relating to the administration of the community charge which were laid before the House between 1 January 1990 and 31 March 1990 for implementation during April 1990; and if he will state the date when each of these instruments became effective.

Mr. Key: The following statutory instruments were laid before the House of Commons between 1 January 1990 and 31 March 1990:

The Personal Community Charge (Relief) (England) Regulations 1990 No. 2
[Came into force 21 January 1990]
The Relevant Population (England) Regulations 1990 No. 68
[Came into force 24 January 1990]
The Charging Authorities (Notification of Population to Precepting Authorities) (England) Regulations 1990 No. 69
[Came into force 24 January 1990]
The Levying Bodies (General) Regulations 1990 No. 70
[Came into force 24 January 1990]
The Internal Drainage Boards (Finance) Regulations 1990 No. 72
[Came into force 24 January 1990]
The Standard Community Charge (Multipliers) Order 1990 No. 129
[Came into force 26 January 1990]
The Community Charges (Co-owners) Regulations 1990 No. 146
[Came into force 26 February 1990]
The Community Charges and Non-Domestic Rating (Demand Notices) (England) Regulations 1990 No. 156
[Came into force 7 February 1990]
The Standard Community Charge and Non-Domestic Rating (Definition of Domestic Property) Order 1990 No. 162
[Came into force 2 March 1990]
The Wimbledon and Putney Commons (Special Levies) Regulations 1990 No. 201
[Came into force 7 February 1990]
The Community Charges and Non-Domestic Rating (Demand Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 1990 No. 366
[Came into force 2 March 1990]
The Community Charges and Non-Domestic Rating (Demand Notices) (City of London) Regulations 1990 No. 369
[Came into force 7 March 1990]
The Personal Community Charge (Relief) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 1990 No. 402
[Came into force 26 March 1990]
The Personal Community Charge (Exemption for the Severely Mentally Impaired) Order 1990 No. 462
[Came into force 1 April 1990]
The Community Charges (Deductions from Income Support) (No. 2) Regulations 1990 No. 545
[Came into force 1 April 1990]
The Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) (Amendment) Regulations 1990 No. 711
[Came into force 1 April 1990]
The Personal Community Charge (Qualifying Courses of Education) Regulations 1990 No. 712
[Came into force 1 April 1990]

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many different instruments of legislation concerning the administration of the community charge were introduced less than four months before the beginning of the present financial year; and what assessment he has made of the impact on the responsible local authority of the late issue of regulations.

Mr. Key: Seventeen statutory instruments were introduced in the three months preceding the beginning of the present financial year. Substantial effort was put into informing local authorities of forthcoming measures including the sending of circular letters and draft regulations where appropriate. The local authority associations were kept informed of progress through regular meetings with my officials.

Leeds Development Corporation

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when work on the Leeds development corporation's proposed Centre Gate development at the junction of Meadow lane and Great Wilson street, Leeds will commence.

Mr. Key: The developers of the Centre Gate site, Hyperion Properties plc, are working on scheme details. The timetable for implementing the development is dependent on a range of factors including finalising site assembly, stopping up of existing roads and detailed planning permission. A commencement date for work to begin on site is therefore not yet available.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the policies adopted by the Leeds development corporation towards further office development in the Leeds city centre area.

Mr. Key: Leeds development corporation is working with Leeds city council and Leeds City Development Company on a range of schemes which will further the role of Leeds as a business and financial centre. There are particular opportunities for new office development between Leeds city station and the junction of the M1/M621 motorways and on other land adjacent to the Leeds waterways.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the city grants schemes supported by the Leeds development corporation.

Mr. Key: Leeds development corporation is supporting the following schemes with city grant assistance:

Consultant Development Engineering Ltd., Hunslet provision of new factory and offices.

Yorkshire Design Services Ltd., The Malt House, Chadwick Street—conversion to offices.

A Way of Life Ltd., 42 The Calls—conversion to hotel and conference facilities.

Fletcher Properties Ltd., 53 The Calls—conversion to offices.

Speciality Shops Development Ltd., The White Cloth Hall, Crown Street—conversion to retail and cafe/restaurant space.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by value *(a)* the site and property improvement grants, *(b)* community sponsorship grants and *(c)* environmental improvement grants issued by the Leeds development corporation.

Mr. Key: Leeds development corporation has approved for grant payment the following amounts under these programmes:

(a) Site and property improvement grants—£127,000.
(b) Community sponsorship grants—£23,000.
(c) Environmental improvement grants—£158,000.

Greening Street Playing Field

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects to approve the disposal of the Greening street, SE2 playing field by the London residuary body to the London borough of Greenwich.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 8 March 1991]:* After the information being sought from the London residuary body has been received.

Lambeth Council

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the current level of bank borrowing by Lambeth council which is for the purpose of financing current expenditure.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* The Department has no information on bank borrowing by Lambeth for the purpose of financing current expenditure. However, according to the latest return provided by Lambeth to the Department, the authority had no outstanding temporary borrowing from the banking sector as at 31 December 1990. Temporary borrowing is the only form of borrowing by which current expenditure may be financed.

Private Rented Houses

Mr. Ridley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of privately-owned rented houses in 1979 and 1989, respectively.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* Information about the number of dwellings rented privately, or with a job or business, as at December 1979 and December 1989 is shown in table 9.3 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1979-1989". A copy of this publication is in the Library.

Right-to-Buy Scheme

Mr. Ridley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest figure for the number of houses sold under the right-to-buy scheme.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* Between October 1980 and December 1990 over 1 million tenants purchased their homes from local authorities in England under the right-to-buy legislation.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Ridley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of households in council housing in 1979 and 1990, respectively; and what was the number of owner-occupied homes in 1979 and 1990, respectively.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* The information derived from the general household survey is as follows:

England: households (million)

	LA/NT tenants	*Owner-occupied*
1979	5·4	9·1 (9·0)
1989	4·2	12·5 (13·3)

Note: figures in brackets are number of owner-occupied dwellings.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria are taken into consideration and what procedures are followed in the designation of new sites of special scientific interest.

Mr. Heseltine *[pursuant to the answer, 20 February 1991, Official Report, column 171]:* I have today published a consultation paper on planning controls over sites of special scientific interest with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

The Government are firmly committed to the conservation of the natural heritage. Sites of special scientific interest are a key part of the nature conservation framework, and we wish to ensure that their value is taken fully into account in the operation of the town and country planning system.

The paper proposes the following additional safeguards for sites of special scientific interest in England and Wales:

- Withdrawal of permitted development rights for certain temporary recreational uses of land;
- An amplification of my policy on calling in planning application;
- Additional advice on environmental assessment;
- A new requirement for local planning authorities to consult the Nature Conservancy Council about planning applications adjacent to sites of special scientific interest.

Comments on the paper, which is available from my Department, are invited by 17 May.

Local Government Finance

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what capping criteria he will adopt; which authorities will be designated by these criteria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State announced on 31 October 1990 the provisional capping criteria which he intended to adopt. He made clear that authorities should not assume that there would be a de minimis proviso allowing authorities whose budgets were excessive by only a small amount not to be designated. On the information available to us it appears that the following 17 authorities have set budgets which would be excessive, or represent an excessive increase over the previous year, under those criteria:

Barnsley, Basildon, Berkshire, Bristol, Doncaster, Greenwich, Ipswich, Lambeth, Lanbaurgh-on-Tees, Middlesbrough, Milton Keynes, Norwich, Reading, Somerset, Stoke-on-Trent, Warwickshire and Wirral.

As I said in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) on 5 March at columns *101-02* it is clearly a matter of concern where authorities have decided to budget at levels which under the intended criteria are excessive or represent an excessive increase: it remains open to such authorities to adopt substitute lower budgets if they so wish.

Our present intention is to apply the criteria which my right hon. Friend announced. This is necessarily provisional. We are now looking at local authorities' budgets and when we have completed our consideration of these budgets and all other appropriate matters my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will take his statutory capping decisions. He intends to do so as soon as practicable.

THE ARTS

Arts Bodies (Restructuring)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will ensure that in any restructuring of the Arts Council or the regional arts boards the fullest consultation takes place with all sections of the organisation and in particular the employees and that a minimum of 14 days' consultation period is provided in all cases.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* The Arts Council and the regional funding bodies are responsible for their own arrangements for consultation on matters affecting staff interests. I understand that all the funding bodies have well-established general arrangements which comfortably exceed the minimum period suggested by my hon. Friend for consultation on the staffing implications of the restructuring of arts funding.

Arts Funding

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister for the Arts what future arrangements for the funding of the arts have been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* I announced my decisions on the future direction of the structural reforms of arts funding to the House on 19 December 1990, *Official Report*, columns *300-11*.

CIVIL SERVICE

Next Steps

Dr. Marek: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement about the interdepartmental review of residual functions set up by the Prime Minister's efficiency unit to look at what responsibilities will be left for Departments once the "next steps" proposals are fully implemented.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 7 March 1991]:* The terms of reference of the efficiency unit's interdepartmental study into the relationships between Departments and their agencies were published in the Governments's response (Cm1263) to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee's most recent report on the "next steps" initiative. The unit is due to complete its work in the course of this month.

WALES

Badgers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has concerning the number of badgers and the current number of active badger setts in Wales; how many such setts have been destroyed during the last three years; and for what reasons.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Environment and Countryside on 7 March, column *242-43*.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken during the last five years to ensure the protection of the badger population and active badger setts in Wales from damaging forestry operations.

Mr. David Hunt: Badger setts are not on the whole vulnerable to damage from forestry operations, since they are characteristically large, subterranean and in well-drained soils. The Forestry Commission nevertheless endeavours to locate all the badger setts on its land so that they can be protected from any possible damage. It has also published forest nature conservation guidelines, for use by its own forest managers and those in the private sector, which emphasise the importance of good management in protecting animal populations.

Public Health Laboratory Service

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is proposing to introduce charges in respect of food samples submitted by local authorities to the public health laboratory service for analysis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: At present laboratories of the public health laboratory service in Wales analyse a limited number of food samples for local authorities free of charge. There are plans to put this arrangement on to a contractual basis, with contracts specifying charges for any work which may be required above an agreed minimum. Such charges will reflect the costs to the laboratories of undertaking work above the agreed level.

Small and Medium-sized Businesses

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what further steps he intends to take to help small and medium-sized businesses in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Small and medium-sized businesses will be further assisted in Wales by a range of enterprise support policies and initiatives. Last month, I was pleased to launch three new schemes. These were as follows:

The Manufacturing Planning and Implementation Scheme (MPI)

Small and medium-sized companies—up to 500 employees—will be able to obtain grants of up to £50,000 to cover half the costs of hiring external expertise necessary to assist them during the planning and implementation stages of new manufacturing projects so that the firms can introduce modern manufacturing systems.

Small and medium sized enterprises technical advice service (SMETAS)

SMETAS will enable small and medium-sized enterprises to obtain easy access to a broad range of local expertise, such as regional technical centres—RTCs, higher and further education institutions and industry—in order to help them solve immediate problems concerned with the application and use of technology. The scheme will be operated and managed by RTCs initially with financial help from the DTI. The Polytechnic of Wales at Pontypridd will be running the scheme in Wales.

Support for products under research (SPUR)

SPUR is designed to help companies with less than 500 employees develop new products and processes which involve a significant technological advance.

Projects of at least £50,000 eligible costs and of between six months and three years' duration may attract grants of 30 per cent. up to a maximum of £150,000.

In addition, small and medium-sized businesses will continue to be assisted through general economic policies at a national level, existing national enterprise support policies and through initiatives which are unique to Wales. These include:

Enterprise Wales

"Enterprise Wales" was set up in January 1988 to promote the range of Government assistance to businesses in Wales. This assistance is aimed at continuing growth, development and diversity within the Welsh economy and is particularly aimed at small and medium-sized companies and new businesses. Since its launch, thousands of Welsh businesses have used the various services available in the package, which includes assistance or advice on exporting, the single European market, grant schemes, training, research and development and the consultancy initiatives. It is the programme in Wales for delivery of the enterprise initiative.

Export initiative

My Department continues to help existing and potential exporters to enter new markets overseas. Since March 1990 454 companies have been counselled at their request. A further 372 companies have attended seminars provided under the export initative. A programme of trade missions continues, representatives of 24 companies based in Wales were taken to France in October and 29 will go to Italy this month. Further trade missions are planned for next year.

Regional Selective Assistance and Regional Enterprise Grants

RSA is available to help businesses with their investment projects in any sector of commerce or industry in development or intermediate areas. Since 1988, 416 small businesses have accepted offers of RSA totalling nearly £35 million.

REG are available to new and expanding businesses in development areas. Since 1988 667 small businesses have accepted offers of REG totalling over £5·8 million.

Both schemes are being vigorously promoted and funding is available to help eligible projects in future years.

Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs)

TECs will take over responsibility for the small firms service from 1 April 1991. The TECs will integrate the business advice and counselling services with their other enterprise roles to provide a cohesive local service. Six TECs are now operational and the Powys TEC will start operations on 2 April.

WDA/DBRW

Both the development agencies will continue to offer an extensive range of help and advice to small and medium-sized businesses. Last November I announced the provision of additional public resources to the DBRW of £1 million for each of the next three years. This will enable them to commence their special rural action programme which will expand on the good work of the current Western Initiative and is aimed at spreading the business prosperity and confidence that has developed on the eastern side of the board's territory to the deeper, more remote rural areas throughout the region.

Both the DBRW and the WDA make available a grant for local enterprise agencies in Wales. There are now 24 enterprise agencies the operational areas of which cover virtually the whole of the Principality. Small businesses in both urban and rural areas will continue to be able to receive free confidential advice from the agencies, as well as advice on finances, training courses and workspace.

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of workplaces for civil servants in his Department; what proportion of the total number have an on-site nursery facility; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide a holiday play scheme; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide after-school child care facilities; what charges are made for use of any facility; what the net cost has been for the provision of these facilities; and what estimate he can make of any future expenditure.

Mr. David Hunt: Civil servants in my Department work in 30 separate locations, with the majority of workplaces in Cardiff.

None of the workplaces has an on-site nursery. My Department, with other Government Departments, is working to provide nursery facilities for Cardiff-based staff later this year. Charges have not yet been fixed.

Staff in Cardiff have access to a holiday playscheme run by my Department in conjunction with others during the easter and summer school holidays. Staff in the Welsh Office, London can use the Westminster holiday playscheme organised by the Cabinet Office.

Daily charges for the Cardiff playscheme are £4·50 for the first child, £4·00 for the second and £3·75 for others. The net cost met by Departments in 1991 is £1,500: in addition, administrative support is provided by the Welsh Office.

My Department does not arrange after-school care for the children of staff.

Expenditure on child care next financial year is expected to be around £30,000.

Unemployment

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to reduce unemployment in Cardiganshire and Dyfed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department and other Government agencies operate a wide range of measures aimed at combating unemployment. Dyfed has benefited from a number of these and, since 1988, has secured some 2,500 new jobs.

The Welsh Office and associated bodies will continue to respond swiftly to any opportunities that arise which have the potential to reduce unemployment.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which hospitals in Wales have now expressed an interest in trust status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Following the submission of its expression of interest, Pembrokeshire health authority has been invited to prepare an application to become an NHS trust. Over the coming months I expect that other health service units in Wales will similarly express their interest in self-governing status.

Children in Care

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children in each of the Welsh counties were taken into care in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information is shown in the following tables:

Number of children admitted to care during 12 months ended 31 March

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Clwyd	244	268	190	243	198	146	150	178	189	204	190	218
Dyfed	189	168	170	140	125	110	115	150	140	146	174	191
Gwent	358	352	377	377	379	315	276	314	346	382	358	396
Gwynedd	124	135	136	145	147	99	99	117	115	133	147	120
Mid Glamorgan	447	392	341	436	404	328	305	322	329	396	351	435
Powys	20	49	33	39	62	55	48	38	44	40	41	40
South Glamorgan	368	398	354	360	342	320	367	366	340	317	342	313
West Glamorgan	244	239	234	221	188	189	166	221	244	288	215	239
WALES	1,994	2,001	1,835	1,961	1,845	1,562	1,526	1,706	1,747	1,906	1,818	1,952

Number of children in care at 31 March

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Clwyd	581	594	523	510	464	414	381	400	397	400	372	384
Dyfed	356	339	334	327	298	292	293	261	252	258	273	275
Gwent	739	717	701	715	694	649	612	583	579	581	615	644
Gwynedd	313	302	272	278	295	301	280	269	258	248	245	230
Mid Glamorgan	1,082	1,075	1,030	1,047	1,014	950	873	816	788	745	725	757
Powys	76	86	94	106	112	88	80	75	74	75	87	75
South Glamorgan	1,044	1,036	975	937	879	787	736	699	679	686	566	548
West Glamorgan	691	712	699	655	631	563	497	490	454	445	380	365
WALES	4,882	4,861	4,628	4,575	4,387	4,044	3,752	3,593	3,481	3,438	3,263	3,278

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list on a county basis in Wales the location of incinerators used for the disposal of BSE cows; if he will list those counties where there are no such facilities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list on a county basis in Wales the number of BSE confirmed cows which were *(a)* incinerated and *(b)* buried in 1990 and the most recent figures for 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The movement of carcases of suspect BSE cattle for incineration or burial is carried out on an England and Wales basis; it is not restricted by county boundaries. There are at present two incinerators in Wales used to handle such carcases, in Clwyd and Dyfed. During 1990, 1,268 carcases were incinerated in Wales and five were buried. Figures for the first quarter of 1991 are not yet available.

Departmental Failure

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the failures of his Department since 1987.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 8 March 1991]:* I am satisfied that my Department has made good progress in pursuit of all its major objectives and I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) today.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the average domestic rate bill in each local authority in Wales which would be necessary to yield the same revenue as his estimated net yield of the community charge in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* The estimated average domestic rate bill for each Welsh district authority required to give the same yield as the community charge in 1990-91 is given in the following table.

Information about community charges set and the consequent yield for 1991-92 is not yet available to the Department.

Estimated Average Domestic Rate Bill Required to Yield Community Charge Income 1990-91

	1989-90 Average Rate Bill per Domestic Ratepayer	*1990-91 Average Personal Community Charge*	*Domestic Rate Increase to Raise the Same Revenues as in 1990-91*	*Consequent Average Rate Bill Per Ratepayer*
	£	£	*Per cent.*	£
Alyn and Deeside	429	262	21	518
Colwyn	404	261	17	471
Delyn	416	268	30	539
Glyndwr	343	281	47	503
Rhuddlan	399	280	35	539
Wrexham Maelor	378	270	35	512
Carmarthen	265	196	43	379
Ceredigion	280	196	29	360
Dinefwr	233	197	58	367
Llanelli	283	224	44	408
Preseli Pembrokeshire	255	195	41	359
South Pembrokeshire	309	188	20	370
Blaenau Gwent	234	233	77	415
Islwyn	265	218	53	404
Monmouth	386	220	12	432
Newport	381	239	17	444
Torfaen	323	226	26	406
Aberconwy	363	220	8	392
Arfon	254	215	42	359
Dwyfor	282	226	44	405
Meirionnydd	278	223	48	411
Ynys Mon	323	245	35	436
Cynon Valley	213	219	84	392
Merthyr Tydfil	248	213	52	378
Ogwr	332	224	31	434
Rhondda	174	216	126	393
Rhymney Valley	294	229	45	427
Taff Ely	321	217	25	403
Brecknock	320	190	17	374
Montgomeryshire	261	170	24	324
Radnor	253	175	29	327
Cardiff	387	253	20	466
Vale of Glamorgan	365	211	6	388
Port Talbot	284	247	59	453
Lliw Valley	296	241	49	442
Neath	298	248	54	460
Swansea	421	265	12	473
Total Wales	327	232	31	430

Government Achievements

Sir Anthony Meyer: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the principal achievements of the Government in Wales since June 1987.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 6 March 1991]:*

Economic Developments

Employment in Wales reached a record level of 1,236,000 in June 1990 having increased by 15·2 per cent., from 1,073,000 in June 1987.

Reduced seasonally adjusted unemployment in Wales was reduced by 35·5 per cent., from 148,000 in June 1987 to 96,000 in January 1991.

Since 1 June 1987, a total of 411 inward investment projects have been secured for Wales reaching a record level last year. The projects promised over 46,000 new and safeguarded jobs and £2·5 billion of investment. Among the largest projects are those announced by Ford, Bosch, TSB, Toyota, National Provident Institution and British Airways.

Projects that have been helped include Bosch's £100 million project at Miskin which is expected to create more than 1,200 jobs and the British Airways aircraft maintenance project at Cardiff (Wales) airport, which is also expected to create over 1,200 jobs and provide a centre of excellence with a trained and highly skilled work force. Substantial assistance has also been provided from the regional development grant scheme which closed to new application on 31 March 1988.

Since the Cardiff Bay development corporation was established in 1987 to regenerate the former commercial centre of the city the Government have made available, or have announced, over £190 million in grant in aid to enable it to carry out its task. To date, the corporation has acquired over 600 acres of land; agreed a major redevelopment programme with the biggest private sector landowner in its area; made available a prestigious 120 acre site for business, industrial and leisure-related development, successfully relocated 60 companies within its area and undertaken a large number of infrastructure, environmental and community schemes, including agreement to a substantial contribution to the costs of the Butetown link road.

Government Programmes

Seven training and enterprise councils covering the whole of Wales have now been established.

In March 1990 a co-operation agreement was signed with Baden-Wurttemberg, one of Germany's most dynamic regions. This is providing many opportunities for Wales to benefit from industrial collaboration, inward investment and joint research.

Financial incentive schemes for industrial development and expansion have played an important role in stimulating investment, creating jobs and improving the economy of Wales. In the period since June 1987, 651 offers of regional selective assistance worth over £242 million have been accepted. Associated investment is over £2·12 billion, and nearly 35,000 new and over 11,800 safeguarded jobs are forecast to stem from this investment.

At £160 million, the Welsh Development Agency's budget for 1991-92 will be the highest ever in both cash and real terms and is well over double the 1986-87 level in cash terms.

Since 1987 the Department has committed nearly £99 million, at today's prices, to the land reclamation programme in Wales, one of the largest and most sustained programmes in Europe which will see the eradication of almost all visually intrusive dereliction by the mid-1990s. The 1990-91 budget at £24·5 million will enable work to progress on over 1,800 acres of derelict land.

Expenditure on the WDA's property development activities has also more than doubled. This has resulted in the provision of over 1 million sq ft of new factory floorspace in each of the last three years, capable of accommodating up to 9,000 jobs each year. Over the same period, the private sector has also provided 715,000 sq ft of development on agency sites.

Since April 1987, urban development grant and its successor, urban investment grant, totalling £21·5 million has been approved in respect of 52 schemes. This is associated with some £87·7 million of private investment and is expected to create a total of some 3,500 permanent and 1,600 temporary jobs. In addition, around 700 residential units will be provided. In the same period £107·8 million has been allocated under the urban programme. Resources for 1991-92 total £37·9 million; this represents a 64 per cent. increase over the 1987-88 provision.

In June 1988, my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) launched a three-year programme of action designed to improve economic, environmental and social conditions in the south Wales valleys and in July 1989, a two-year extension of the programme was announced. On 10 December 1990, I announced an extra focus, shifting the emphasis to people and community-based activities while continuing the main elements of the programme. Expenditure on key activities involving the promotion of investment, the creation of jobs and environmental improvement in the valleys is expected to take some £800 million over five years.

Grants totalling £2·2 million have been offered to 60 winning companies under the small firms merit award for research and technology scheme.

European regional development fund (ERDF) assistance to Wales has amounted to some £108 million since 1987.

A £33 million national programme of community interest (NPCI) for Mid Glamorgan has already been successfully completed and a £108 million NPCI for Dyfed, Gwynedd and Powys was approved in 1988. Two further programmes for industrial south Wales and Clwyd were approved in 1989 and 1990 respectively and are now being implemented. The industrial south Wales programme is worth £70 million, including a transfer of some £11 million from the original amount approved for the Dyfed, Gwynedd, Powys programme, and the Clwyd programme is worth £23 million.

A RECHAR programme of over £18 million for the south Wales areas affected by the decline in the coal mining industry is currently awaiting approval from the European Commission.

A two-year enterprise and education initiative, launched in May 1988, established a network of eight advisers operating within LEA boundaries, the advisers' prime objective being to encourage their local business communities to create new or develop existing links with local educational establishments to ensure that every year 10 per cent. of teachers have the opportunity to gain some experience of the world of business; and that every young person has at least two or more weeks of work experience suited to his or her ability and needs before leaving school. The adviser contracts expire on 31 March next. They have already exceeded the targets set and have generated 20,701 pupil work experience and 2,078 teacher placements—148 per cent. and 156 per cent. of their respective targets.

Over £2 million has been made available as grant aid to support village halls and community centre projects.

Amgueddfa'r Gogledd, Llanberis was formally opened by the Minister of State on 14 May 1990. The national museum of Wales spent £704,000 on capital works. The museum is grant-aided by the Welsh Office.

On 1 January 1988 the designated Cambrian mountains environmentally sensitive area was extended by some 80,000 hectares and some 39,700 hectares of the Lleyn peninsula was designated as an ESA.

The scheme aims to promote the co-existence of conservation and efficient farming in areas of national environmental significance perceived to be at risk from increasingly intensive methods of production.

Grants totalling some £2·75 million have been awarded to firms in Wales for the marketing and processing of agricultural produce.

The reform of the sheepmeat regime agreed at the July 1989 Agriculture Council represented a good deal for Welsh sheep producers. The new regime provides them with a clear basis for the future and improves their competitive position with their continental counterparts and prospects for exporting.

In 1989 the Department took full advantage of devaluation of the green pound and paid the suckler cow premium at the highest permissible rate, including the maximum top-up from national funds. As a result, the rate was increased from £33·40 to £47·43 per cow, or 42 per cent. This was worth £7·7 million to producers in Wales in the 1989-90 scheme year. Furthermore, the rate for producers in the less favoured areas has been increased for 1990-91 to £51·69 in recognition of the special difficulties faced by producers raising calves or stores for further finishing in the recent marketing period.

The 1991 rates of payment were increased on average by 14 per cent., representing an additional £4·8 million to Welsh LFA producers and raising the full-year total hill livestock compensatory allowances expenditure in Wales to around £37 million.

EC approval to extend LFA in Wales by 9,300 hectares was obtained in December 1990.

Enfranchisement of the people of Caldey island has been provided by the Caldey Island Act 1990.

On 20 February I announced at Welsh Grand Committee the provision of £20 million of additional resources for spending in rural Wales. This is in addition to the almost £1 million a day already being spent in rural areas.

Social Policies

The Welsh language now has, for the first time, a firm statutory place in the school curriculum for pupils from 5 to 16 in Wales within the national curriculum.

The national curriculum is being introduced progressively into the schools of Wales: mathematics, science, English, Welsh and technology have already begun; history and geography will be introduced from September 1991 and art, music, physical education and modern foreign languages will follow in 1992.

I have undertaken that the national curriculum should be responsive to the distinctive history and culture of Wales: all NC documentation is being provided in Welsh and English; and separate orders will be made for history and geography in Wales to ensure that children have a proper balance of knowledge about Wales, and about the wider world.

Assessment will form an integral part of the national curriculum. The first national assessment of seven-year-olds at the end of key stage 1 in English, mathematics and science will be introduced at the end of the summer term 1991. Welsh and technology will follow in 1992 and thereafter other subjects and key stages as they are progressively introduced into the national curriculum.

Schemes for the local management of schools were formally approved for each of the LEAs in Wales and came into effect on 1 April 1990.

Figures published in the HMI inspectorate (Wales) review of education provision 1989-90 indicated that the number of school leavers with five or more passes at GCSE grades A to C or equivalent had increased from 26 per cent. to 30 per cent. between 1983-84 and 1989-90, while those with no qualifications had fallen from 18 per cent. to 14 per cent.

The number of students on courses of higher education in the Welsh public sector institutions has risen by 15 per cent. from 14,700 in June 1987 to 16,900 today. During the same period the number of students on courses of initial teacher training in Wales rose by 27 per cent. from 2,621 in 1987 to 3,338.

Some £8·5 million has been made available as grant aid under the voluntary aided schools building programme to support building works at voluntary-aided schools; and £13·1 million has been made available, in specific grants and grants, to local education authorities, educational and other bodies in Wales in direct support for the Welsh language. A further £6·8 million is planned for 1991-92, an increase of over 24 per cent. on the current year.

Over 68,700 home improvement grants schemes for private sector dwellings have been completed since June 1987—with a value of some £220 million. In the same period about £360 million has been spent on the renovation of local authority housing stock. More than 8,300 dwellings have been improved in Wales, under enveloping schemes involving expenditure above £62 million since 1987. Over the first two years of the valleys action programme, 5,400 homes were renovated in area-based renewal schemes—exceeding planned targets by 20 per cent. A new renovation grant regime was introduced in 1990. For the financial year 1990-91, £75 million is available to deal with the associated mandatory home renovation grants, and additional resources will be made available to district councils in Wales should that be necessary. The special funding arrangements will continue in 1991-92.

The priority estates programme has demonstrated the benefits of decentralised housing management that is responsive to the wishes of its customers. It has also put targeted capital resources to very effective use.

The Housing Options Wales (HOW) programme was launched in January 1990 to support improvements in local authority housing management, and to provide new opportunities for tenants' groups. It includes a small grants scheme to fund people and projects developing better service delivery; 17 grants have so far been awarded, including intensive training in customer care for two authorities, and all-Wales schemes designed to support improvements in local authority management performance.

The section 16 grant regime supports education and training in housing management and the development of effective tenant participation.

A new requirement on local authorities for their tenants has been introduced—so supplementing the enhanced rights available to council tenants under the Housing Act 1988.

For housing associations, innovative schemes of mixed funding and flexible tenure have been pursued in Wales. Over the period to 1993-94 and from Tai Cymru's inception in 1989, we plan that the total housing association stock in Wales should increase by over a third. For 1991-92 Tai Cymru's gross provision will amount to a record £117 million, which will be supplemented by additional private sector resources making the total programme worth some £160 million.

Three major hospital developments have been completed since June 1987. These are the Prince Philip hospital, Llanelli, Royal Gwent scheme 6 and a new obstetric unit at Llandough hospital.

Three all-Wales treatment centres have been established: the orthopaedic treatment centre at Prince of Wales hospital, South Glamorgan, the general surgical treatment centre (varicose veins and hernias) at Bridgend general hospital, Mid Glamorgan; and the ophthalmic treatment centre at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Gwynedd. Within the United Kingdom, treatment centres are unique to Wales and intended to offer an effective alternative method of delivering speedier health care to those suffering from key disabling conditions. The record of each centre indicates that this is the case.

Since 1979, in-patient throughput has risen to record levels, with the number of in-patients treated up by 34 per cent; new out-patients treated increased by 28 per cent.

Improvements in regional health services include the upgrading of cardiac facilities for adults and the provision of a new paediatric cardiac unit at the University hospital of Wales; a bone marrow tissue typing laboratory in Cardiff; the provision of three new subsidiary renal dialysis units at Cardiff, Merthyr and Wrexham; the procurement of three linear accelerators for Velindre hospital, Cardiff and Singleton hospital, Swansea; provision of eight computerised tomography scanners at strategic locations throughout Wales; the development of a breast screening service for women in the 60 to 64 age group throughout Wales with site work under way for the relocation of the burns, plastic and maxillo-facial surgery service to a purpose-built unit at Morriston hospital, Swansea from St. Lawrence hospital, Chepstow.

Since 1986-87, resources made available to the national health service in Wales have risen by over 25 per cent. in real terms. The service is now treating more people than ever before.

The successful introduction of general management into the NHS in Wales has been completed, and effective mechanisms for manpower resource planning, training and management have been established.

In 1988 a corporate management programme for the NHS in Wales was published. In December 1990, the programme was updated to reflect the impact of the NHS reforms, and restyled as "NHS Wales: Agenda for Action".

Also in 1988, the Welsh health planning forum was set up. In 1990 the Secretary of State endorsed its statement of "Strategic Intent and Direction for the NHS in Wales".

Substantial progress has continued under the all-Wales strategy for the development of services for people with a mental handicap. There have been significant increases in funding every year, with a record of over £26 million being provided in 1990-91. The number of families receiving regular support at home has expanded considerably and by 1989-90 over 3,000 were doing so.

In June 1989 the mental illness strategy was launched to promote more responsive and locally based services for treating and supporting those suffering from mental illness. Over £2 million is being made available to support new patterns of service in 1990-91.

Significant progress has also been made under the initiative on the care of the elderly in Wales. Over 60 demonstration projects are being supported, a number of which involve partnership between statutory and voluntary sectors. Welsh Office funding of over £2 million is being made available in 1990-91.

Pembrokeshire health authority has been invited to submit a formal application to become the first NHS trust in Wales. NHS trusts are a natural element in the Government's plans for reforming the NHS and improving services to patients.

Nineteen trunk road schemes have been completed since June 1987 totalling some 42 miles. Work is in progress on a further seven schemes comprising about 18 miles. The transport grant settlement will enable work to start on the Pontypool western bypass and the lower valley relief road in 1991-92.

Steps have been taken to simplify and improve the planning system and to speed up its operation, while ensuring that it continues to protect and enhance the environment. There have been reductions in the time taken for handling inspectors' appeals of 14 weeks for inquiries, and five weeks for written representations.

A circular has been issued making it clear that the Welsh language may be a material consideration in planning matters.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Fund

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to allocate further funds to local office social fund budgets.

Mr. Scott: I am pleased to be able to announce that a further allocation of £1,012,000 was made to 60 local offices at the end of February 1991. This additional money has been distributed to alleviate pressure on the social fund budgets in these offices. Details of the offices concerned and the additional amounts allocated have been placed in the Library.

Cold Weather Payments

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in which newspapers and on what dates the Department's local offices in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Inverclyde advertised the availability of both qualifying conditions and application forms for special cold weather payments.

Mr. Scott: It is important to note that not every local office in the Strathclyde and Inverclyde area will have placed advertisements in the local press since the areas covered by the relevant local newspapers often overlap local office boundaries. Advertisements were also placed in the Scottish national press on six separate occasions between 23 January 1991 and 30 February 1991.

Local Office and Newspapers	Dates advertisements placed
Ayr	
Cumnock Chronicle	14 February 1991
Ayrshire Leader	14 February 1991
Bellshill	
Lanarkshire People	15 February 1991
Campbeltown	
Oban Times	21 February 1991
Campbeltown Courier	22 February 1991
The Ileach	2 March 1991
Clydebank	
Clydebank Post	13 February 1991
Cumbernauld	
Cumbernauld News	29 January 1991
	12 February 1991
Dumbarton	
Lennox Herald	23 January 1991
	13 February 1991
County Reporter	22 January 1991
	12 February 1991
Helensburgh Advertiser	24 January 1991
	14 February 1991
Greenock	
Greenock Telegraph	30 January 1991
Clyde Post	6 February 1991
Buteman Observer	2 February 1991
Dundoon Observer	2 February 1991
Argyllshire Standard	2 February 1991
Hamilton	
Lanarkshire People	15 February 1991
Irvine	
Arran Banner	14 February 1991
Ardrossan Herald	14 February 1991
Saltcoats Herald	14 February 1991
Ayrshire Leader	14 February 1991
Oban	
Oban Times	7 February 1991
	21 February 1991
Paisley	
Paisley Daily Express	23 January 1991
	2 February 1991
	12 February 1991

National Insurance

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether Serviscope Ltd., Barnsley, have paid all relevant insurance contributions on behalf of employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I will write to the hon. Member about this matter as soon as possible.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will specify the savings to the Exchequer from the extension of the maximum period of disqualification for full unemployment benefit from six to 13 weeks, as decided in 1986, and from 13 to 26 weeks, as introduced in 1988; and if he will specify the savings in each year since the changes were made and the projected saving in 1991.

Mr. Scott: The estimated benefit savings in the first full year after implementation were £21 million for the 1986 change and £37 million for the 1988 change. Due to the effect of behavioural changes arising from other amendments to unemployment benefit legislation and other economic factors it is not possible to specify savings in later years.

Income Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will indicate the savings to the Exchequer from the reduced income support entitlements of 16 to 18-year-olds and of 18 to 25-year-olds; and if he will specify these figures separately and for each year since the changes were introduced and the projected savings 1991.

Mr. Scott: There are no such savings. The estimated expenditure for the first year of income support was based on the previous year's supplementary benefit expenditure. Since 1988 the personal allowances for 16 to 17-year-olds and for 18 to 24-year-olds have been uprated annually and will be increased again from April 1991.

Child Benefit

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the cost during the financial year 1991-92 of restoring child benefit for all children to its April 1987 value, assuming *(a)* no corresponding increase in means-tested family benefits and *(b)* a corresponding increase in allowances for children under income support, family credit housing benefit and community charge benefit.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 21 January 1991]:* The estimated cost of restoring child benefit to its April 1987 value assuming no corresponding increase in income-related benefits would be around £775 million. The estimated cost of restoring child benefit to its April 1987 value assuming a corresponding increase in income-related benefit allowances for children would be in excess of £1 billion at 1991-92 prices.

Pensioners' Costs

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has of the average costs incurred weekly by pensioners in the United Kingdom as a whole, and in each of the Scottish and English regions, Wales and Northern Ireland, for *(a)* heating, *(b)* lighting and *(c)* travel; what are the estimated costs for pensioners in these areas over the winter months; and if he will give the figures for each of the last five years.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 19 February 1991]:* Information in respect of *(a)* and *(b)* is given in the table. Data on travel expenditure and fuel costs for 1986 could be calculated in the manner requested only at disproportionate cost. However, national data on the annual expenditure on travel by retired people is in the family expenditure survey, copies of which are available in the Library.

Pensioners' Average Weekly Annual Expenditure 1984, 1985, 1987, 1988

Fuel, light and power, £ per week

Region	Year			
	1984	1985	1987	1988
North	6·70	8·20	8·10	8·70
Yorkshire and Humberside	7·10	8·10	8·10	8·80
East Midlands	7·00	7·30	8·40	7·90
East Anglia	10·80	7·40	7·80	8·50
Greater London	6·80	7·90	8·60	8·90
South East exc London	8·20	9·10	8·80	8·60
South West	9·60	7·90	7·70	7·10
Wales	9·50	8·30	8·70	8·80
West Midlands	8·10	8·60	8·20	8·60
North West	6·70	9·10	8·20	9·70
Scotland	7·00	8·30	8·60	8·70
Northern Ireland	12·50	—	10·90	12·50
All United Kingdom	7·90	8·20	8·40	8·60

Pensioners' Average Weekly Winter Expenditure 1984, 1985, 1987, 1988

Fuel, light and power, £ per week

Region	Year			
	1984	1985	1987	1988
North	6·80	8·50	9·80	8·70
Yorkshire and Humberside	8·60	8·10	8·30	9·80
East Midlands	7·90	7·80	10·20	8·30
East Anglia	10·00	8·90	9·30	9·40
Greater London	7·70	7·90	10·40	9·80
South East exc London	8·70	11·60	9·50	10·70
South West	9·80	9·00	8·90	8·10
Wales	9·60	9·00	9·90	9·90
West Midlands	8·20	9·30	9·50	10·40
North West	8·20	9·80	9·10	9·30
Scotland	8·10	8·80	10·30	9·80
Northern Ireland	—	—	—	—
All United Kingdom	8·60	8·90	9·60	9·50

Notes:

1. The tables are based on data from the Family Expenditure Survey over the last five available years. The values shown are therefore estimates for the population as a whole.
2. Pensioner households are those occupied by one pensioner tax unit, the head of the tax unit is over pensionable age.
3. The regions shown are the standard breakdown, any further disaggregation could not be supported by sample sizes.
4. Information on heating and lighting can not be produced separately.
5. Winter has been defined as the period when the higher fuel bills might have to be paid; the five months from January to May.
6. On some occasions less than 25 households have provided survey information for Northern Ireland, in these cases the values have been omitted.
7. Figures will be affected by the receipt of rebates relating to earlier periods.
8. Figures are in current prices in each year with no adjustment for inflation.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Cosmetology

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the work done to date by the European Community Scientific Committee on Cosmetology.

Mr. Leigh: I am satisfied that the work done to date by the Scientific Committee on Cosmetology has ensured that there is no doubt that ingredients used in cosmetics are safe for use by the public.

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the number of workplaces for civil servants in his Department; what proportion of the total number have an on-site nursery facility; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide a holiday play scheme; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide after-school child care facilities; what charges are made for use of any facility; what the net cost has been for the provision of these facilities; and what estimate he can make of any future expenditure.

Mr. Leigh: The Department's staff work at 155 locations which are based mainly within 12 towns and cities in the United Kingdom. None yet has on-site nursery or after-school child care facilities.

This year the Department's staff will have access to jointly organised holiday playschemes in four areas. The details are:

1991

	Expected charge per child per day £	*Expected net cost* £
Birmingham	[1] 14·00 [2] 23·00	500
Bristol	5·00	100
Cardiff	4·00	Nil
London (Westminster)	5·00	2,000

[1] For first child.
[2] For other children.

Future expenditure will depend upon reviews which are being conducted in a number of locations. New child care facilities will be supported where they can be continued within running cost provisions, and where they offer good value for money. We expect, for example, to provide a DTI-only holiday playscheme in London.

The Department fully recognises the importance of its working mothers, and the need to offer appropriate working conditions. Within a programme of action to increase equality of opportunity for women at all levels we have, for example, introduced flexible working patterns, and a career break scheme which incorporates a right of return to work for up to five years.

Balance of Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the deficit or surplus in manufactured trade between the United States of America and *(a)* Britain, *(b)* France and *(c)* West Germany in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information is in the table. Figures for 1990 are not available for Germany's and France's trade with the United States of America.

Crude trade balance[1] in manufactures[2] with the United States of America

US$ billion

Year	United Kingdom	Federal Republic of Germany	France
1979	−0·9	3·6	−2·1
1980	−2·4	2·6	−3·6
1981	−2·6	2·6	−2·5

Year	United Kingdom	Federal Republic of Germany	France
1982	−2·3	3·6	−2·3
1983	−1·7	4·9	−1·5
1984	−1·7	8·0	0·1
1985	−0·5	10·1	0·5
1986	1·6	15·0	−0·5
1987	1·5	16·4	−0·2
1988	−0·4	12·6	−1·2
1989	−1·3	8·1	−2·6
1990	−3·7	[3]—	[3]—

Source: OECD Series C.
[1]The crude trade balance is exports (fob) less imports (cif).
[2]Manufactures = SITC divisions 5 to 8.
[3]Not available.

Northern Region

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much has been spent by his Department in supporting regional promotion in the Northern region in each year since 1983.

Mr. Leigh: Grant payments to regional development organisations in the Northern region are shown in the table. Additionally, the DTI has a national promotion and publicity budget from which the region benefits and regional promotion is encouraged through support to various outside bodies and agencies. It is not possible to provide figures for this expenditure on a regional basis.

	£ thousand
1982-83	250
1983-84	850
1984-85	975
1985-86	760
1986-87	1,068
1987-88	1,108
1988-89	1,135
1989-90	981

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much regional aid has been spent on the Northern region since June 1983; and how many jobs have been created or safeguarded.

Mr. Leigh: Since the beginning of the financial year 1983-84 to end March 1990, £844·1 million was spent by my Department on regional aid in the Northern region. The schemes that contributed to that expenditure were: original and revised regional development grants; regional selective assistance; capital spend by the English Industrial Estates Corporation and, from 1988-89, expenditure under regional enterprise grants.

Over the same period in the Northern region, in gross terms, some 68,000 jobs were created or safeguarded by projects for which offers of regional selective assistance were made and a further 13,000 jobs were created in projects for which payments were made under the revised regional development grants scheme.

In addition, the Government have directly assisted job creation and safeguarding through their inner-city task forces and urban programmes in the region and through the employment measures of the Department of Employment.

Exports

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will set out in the form of a table a list of the value of visible and invisible exports as a percentage of gross national product for each of the member states of the European Community and for Japan and the United States of America; and if he will also show the total value of such exports and the value of exports per head of population.

Mr. Sainsbury: The table shows invisible credits as a percentage of gross national product for each of the member states of the European Community, Japan and the United States of America for 1989.

Information on the value of visible exports, gross national product and population is available in the IMF's "International Financial Statistics", which is held in the House of Commons Library.

Invisible credits as a percentage of gross national product (GNP)

	Invisible credits (US$ billion)	GNP (US$ billion)	Percentage
Belgium-Luxembourg	74·3	164·9	45·1
Denmark	15·7	100·3	15·6
France	114·1	956·3	11·9
Germany, F.R.	111·0	1,202·9	9·2
Greece	9·2	53·9	17·0
Ireland	6·2	29·6	20·9
Italy	58·9	854·3	6·9
Netherlands	50·5	223·0	22·7
Portugal	9·5	44·6	21·2
Spain	37·4	376·7	9·9
United Kingdom	178·4	839·3	21·3
Japan	144·9	2,833·7	5·1
USA	245·6	5,200·8	4·7

Source:
IMF Balance of Payments Statistics 1990 Yearbook.
IMF International Financial Statistics 1990 Yearbook.

British Satellite Broadcasting

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what will be the effect of the proposed multiplexed analogue components directive upon standards developed for British satellite broadcasting, if adopted; what is Her Majesty's Government's attitude to such a directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* The European Commission is currently consulting interested parties on how to follow up directive 86/529/EEC which imposes the MAC family of standards on high-power direct-to-home satellite broadcasts. This directive expires at the end of 1991. The Government will take a position when the Commission proposals become known. The Government believe in general that any follow-up directive should preserve freedom of choice for present broadcasters and viewers to invest in new technology when the time is right for them. The Government are not in favour of extending an exclusive standard to all satellite transmission.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the level of Export Credits Guarantee Department funding of trade between Iraq and the United

Kingdom that has been underwritten per year since 1979 and the amount paid by his Department due to default of payment by Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 17 October 1990, *Official Report*, column *837*. With regard to the amount paid by ECGD due to payment default by Iraq, it has not been the policy of this or previous Administrations to reveal the level of ECGD claims payments on individual countries.

No Smoking Day

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to support smokers in his Department to give up smoking on the eighth No Smoking Day on 13 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* The Department is happy to see a decline in smoking among its staff, and staff may wish to participate in this year's No Smoking Day. We intend to use No Smoking Day in 1992 as part of a rolling programme of health education.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Visitors Taxes

4. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many states impose either entry or exit taxes on visiting United Kingdom citizens; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I understand that more than 100 states impose taxes, charges or fees on arriving or departing travellers.

South Africa

18. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what talks he proposes to hold on the question of developments in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: The British Government are in frequent touch with the South African Government and all the major parties in South Africa.

We shall continue to encourage a speedy end to apartheid and a peaceful transition to a democratic, non-racial and prosperous South Africa.

25. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of reform in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: The international community is increasingly recognising that the continued application of sanctions will not help the peaceful abolition of apartheid. South Africa's political transformation needs urgently to be underpinned by economic growth. With the political process now irreversible, a point reinforced by the tabling of legislation yesterday, economic sanctions should be lifted as soon as possible.

Middle East

19. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he intends to hold with the Foreign Minister of Israel regarding a peace settlement in the middle east.

Mr. Hurd: I had constructive and useful talks with the Israeli Foreign Minister on 5 March. We agreed that the reversal of the Iraqi aggression offered some new opportunities to bring peace to the middle east region as a whole.

21. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest situation in the middle east.

Mr. Hurd: Coalition forces suspended hostilities against Iraq on 28 February. Security Council resolution 686 sets out the conditions which Iraq must fulfil for a definitive end to hostilities. We and our coalition partners will continue our efforts to achieve this and to restore peace and security to the area.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Israel about the convening of a middle east peace conference to discuss the question of a Palestinian state; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had useful talks about the middle east with the Israeli Foreign Minister on 5 March. We have long supported the idea of a peace conference. But a conference is a mechanism, not an end in itself. It needs to be called at the right moment.

Germany

22. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the Anglo-German summit on 11 March.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had excellent talks in Bonn with Chancellor Kohl on 11 March. He and my right hon. Friends, the Secretary of State for Defence, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Minister for Overseas Development also had talks with their opposite numbers. The subjects discussed included the Gulf, the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, and European Community and alliance issues.

Kuwait

26. **Mr. Churchill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit Kuwait.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State hopes to visit Kuwait again before long.

Iraq

27. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current state of diplomatic relations between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Iraq.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Diplomatic relations were broken off by Iraq with effect from 6 February.

33. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the latest developments in Iraq.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are clear indications of serious and widespread popular discontent with the Iraqi regime. It remains to be seen whether those opposed to Saddam Hussein will succeed in their efforts to remove him from power.

Somalia

28. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest information available to him on the situation in Somalia; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: There is no established nationwide authority and insecurity continues. Various clan-based groups control different parts of the country. A meeting to discuss national reconciliation has been called by the self-appointed interim government in Mogadishu for 14 March.

Climate Change

30. **Sir Trevor Skeet:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on securing an international convention on climate change.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Negotiations began at the first meeting of the intergovernmental negotiating committee for a framework convention on climate change in Washington last month. The United Kingdom is playing an active role. We hope that the negotiations will lead to agreement by the time of the United Nations conference on environment and development in June 1992 on an effective framework convention containing appropriate commitments, and on related legal instruments.

EC Foreign Policies

31. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next proposes to have discussions with his European Community partners concerning the development of common European foreign policies.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will attend a special informal meeting of EC Foreign Ministers in Luxembourg on 26 March which will discuss the development of common foreign and security policy.

EC Subsidiarity

32. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether it is currently proposed that member states or the European Commission should be the arbiter of the principle of subsidiarity.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Views differ on how the principle of subsidiarity should be enshrined in the treaty of Rome. Member states will decide on its definition and enforcement in the context of the political union IGC.

Hong Kong

34. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit Hong Kong.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs hopes to be able to pay a visit to Hong Kong in the near future.

India

35. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he intends to make to the Indian Government relating to human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As I told the House on 14 February, we have urged the Government of India to exercise the greatest restraint in dealing with the terrorist violence in Kashmir and we have regularly made clear our concern that human rights must be respected.

Yugoslavia

36. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last visited Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has not yet visited Yugoslavia. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs visited Belgrade and Zagreb on 25-28 February. He made clear to federal and republican leaders that we supported the unity and integrity of Yugoslavia. He also called upon the federal and republican Governments to settle their differences by negotiation and reiterated that we would deplore the use or threat of force against democratically elected Governments.

Sri Lanka

37. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We deeply regret the continuing violence in Sri Lanka which stems from a decision by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to abandon long-running negotiations with the Sri Lankan Government in June 1990 and resume terrorism. We support the Sri Lankan Government in their efforts to overcome the terrorist challenge they face, but at the same time have made clear our concerns that human rights should be fully respected.

Baltic States

38. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Foreign Ministers of the European Community on the collective response of the Community towards the democratic aspirations of the peoples of the Baltic states.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend discussed the situation in the Soviet Union at the 4 March Foreign Affairs Council. Community Foreign Ministers called for an early opening of a serious and constructive dialogue between the elected Baltic authorities and the central Government of the Soviet Union. The violence in Latvia and Lithuania in January caused the EC to suspend consideration of technical assistance to the USSR. The Council asked that preparations be resumed. The necessary decisions on the Commission proposal will be taken if the political and economic conditions allow.

Human Rights

Mr. Simon Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's human rights policy in respect of foreign countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We continue to develop an active and comprehensive human rights policy. It would not be possible to do it justice in a single document. We have however recently made public as a foreign policy document the guidelines issued to our posts abroad and FCO Departments at the end of last year. I am arranging to place a copy of the document, under the title "Human Rights in Foreign Policy", in the Library of the House.

British Hostages, Beirut

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards the release of British hostages in Beirut.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The plight of our citizens held hostage in Lebanon is of constant concern to us. We are determined to secure their freedom. Iran has undertaken publicly to use its humanitarian influence to obtain the release of western hostages in Lebanon. We believe that Iran's influence could be decisive and we have made clear to the Iranian authorities that the prospects for further advances in our bilateral relations depend on the release of the hostages. We are also encouraging Syria to maintain its efforts in this regard.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he has received from the Zimbabwean authorities to his request that a copy of the Zimbabwean police report, given to the high commissioner on the murder in Harare of Mr. Brian Angel, a United Kingdom citizen, may be placed in the Library.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have not yet received a reply from the Zimbabwean authorities and are not likely to do so until the judicial process has been completed following the inquest into the death of Mr. Brian Angel on 1 March 1991 in Harare.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the public inquiry which was held in Zimbabwe on 1 March into the murder of Mr. Brian Angel, a United Kingdom citizen, and place in the Library a transcript of proceedings or any official report or other relevant papers.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: On 1 March 1991 a representative from the British high commission in Harare attended the inquest into the death of Mr. Brian Angel, as an observer.

I am arranging for his account of the proceedings to be placed in the Library of the House.

Jordan

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further reports he has received from the Jordanian Government about damage to Jordanian transport on the Iraq-Jordan highway during the Gulf war.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received no further reports since my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs answered the hon. Member's earlier question on this subject on 11 February at column *302*.

Kurds

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) of 5 February, *Official Report*, column *82*, when Ministers last met representatives of the Kurdish nation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met representatives from a number of Iraqi opposition groups, including a Kurdish representative, on 7 March.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Capital Debt (Write-off)

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the individual capital debt write-off of industries and undertakings in each of the past 15 years.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is set out in the table. This information relates to national loan fund (NLF) write-offs and consolidated fund (CF) write-offs for nationalised industries and some other public authorities.

Year and Industry (details)		*Amount* £
1975–76	Post Office (NLF)	29,700,000
1976–77	—	—
1977–78	—	—
1978–79	National Freight Corporation (NLF)	53,096,733
1979–80	—	—
1980–81	National Freight Corporation (NLF)	100,000,000
	Welsh Development Agency (NLF)	1,000,000
	Welsh Development Agency (CF)	2,900,000
	Scottish Development Agency (NLF)	2,000,000
	Scottish Development Agency (CF)	7,000,000
	Civil Aviation Authority (CF)	160,000,000
1981–82	—	—
1982–83	British Transport Docks Board (NLF)	81,293,616
1983–84	Harbour Authorities (NLF)	29,584,254
1984–85	British Telecom (NLF)	2,789,865,772
1985–86	Harbour Authorities (NLF)	21,103,355
1986–87	British Airports Authority (NLF)	43,503,340
	Development Board of Rural Wales (NLF)	32,990,835
	New Towns DCC (NLF)	1,687,686,381
1987–88	—	—
1988–89	British Steel (CF)	500,000,000
	British Steel (CF on privatisation)	3,480,000,000
1989–90	Water-Nominated Holding Companies (NLF)	4,973,328,383
	Scottish Nuclear Electric (NLF)	1,368,390,398

Aid (Less Developed Countries)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the size of the British Government debt outstanding with each of the less developed countries of Asia, Africa and South America as at 31 March 1983 and the most recent available date; what are the rates of interest being applied to such debt; what is the interest income from such debt; what this is expressed as a

proportion of ODA aid to such countries in the most recent financial year; and what steps the Government have taken or propose to take to write off such debt.

Mr. Maples: The amounts of principal outstanding on British Government ODA-managed loans to developing countries were as follows:

	£ million	
	31 March 1983	*1 August 1990*
Asia, Mediterranean, Pacific	185	144
Africa	186	116
Central and South America, Atlantic and Caribbean	106	170

These figures exclude repayments due from India, for which we have agreed to provide an equivalent amount of local cost aid under our policy or retrospective terms adjustment (RTA). Rates of interest applied to loans have varied; but current policy is to charge 0 per cent. or 1·75 per cent. on new loans.

Total receipts of interest on aid loans in the 1989-1990 financial year were £5·981 million. This represented 2·6 per cent. of United Kingdom bilateral aid to countries with ODA loans outstanding in the same financial year.

The Government have cancelled through their RTA policy the aid debts of 22 of the poorest countries at a total value of around £1 billion, including India; and is ready to consider further such cancellations in appropriate cases.

Employee Share Ownership

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many companies have set up employee share ownership plans on a case law basis; what was the comparable figure for two years ago; and what are the values attributable to both sets of figures.

Mr. Maude: I regret that the information is not available centrally.

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many companies have taken advantage of the Finance Act 1989 to set up qualifying employee share ownership trusts.

Mr. Maude: The Inland Revenue may not learn of the establishment of employee share ownership trusts of the kind defined in the Finance Act 1989 until claims for the tax relief provided by that legislation are received. Such claims may be made up to two years after the end of the period of account in which the relevant company contributions are made. None has yet been cleared.

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to promote employee share ownership and employee share ownership trusts.

Mr. Maude: The Government are committed to promoting employee share ownership, as our record of legislation in 11 out of the last 12 Budgets testifies. We shall continue to examine sympathetically the various proposals made for improvements in this area, to see how far they are capable of building on the impressive progress already achieved.

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest information on mortgage tax relief in the same format as his answer of 19 February 1990, *Official Report*, column *519*.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* Estimates for 1990-91 are as follows:

Single people and married couples receiving mortgage interest relief by range of total income in 1990-91

Range of total income	*Numbers receiving mortgage interest relief (thousands)*	*Average value of relief per mortgage (£)*	*Total cost of relief (£ million)*
Up to £5,000	500	470	230
£5,001-£6,000	90	400	30
£6,001-£7,000	130	540	70
£7,001-£8,000	230	570	130
£8,001-£9,000	290	700	200
£9,001-£10,000	310	620	190
£10,001-£12,000	730	720	520
£12,001-£15,000	1,340	770	1,030
£15,001-£20,000	2,110	820	1,720
£20,001-£25,000	1,530	820	1,250
£25,001-£30,000	850	900	770
Over £30,000	1,310	1,260	1,650
Total	9,400	830	7,800

Estimates are based on projected information from the 1988-89 survey of personal incomes and the 1988 family expenditure survey and are provisional.

Income Tax

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the annual reduction in income tax for a person on an annual income of *(a)* £10,000, *(b)* £20,000, *(c)* £30,000, *(d)* £40,000, *(e)* £70,000 and *(f)* £150,000 as a result of income tax changes since the 1987 Budget.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* The information is in the following table, which compares the income tax liability in 1990-91 with liability under 1987-88 rates of tax allowances and thresholds indexed to 1990-91 levels by reference to the statutory formula. The calculations are for a single, non-aged person with no reliefs or allowances apart from the personal allowance.

Annual income £	*Reduction in tax liability* £
10,000	169·60
20,000	369·60
30,000	502·25
40,000	1,337·50
70,000	6,583·00
150,000	22,583·00

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average individual cumulative gain *(a)* in current prices and *(b)* in 1990-91 prices to those earning £5,000, £10,000, £15,000, £20,000, £25,000, £30,000, £40,000, £50,000, £60,000 and £70,000 a year as a result of changes in income tax since 1988.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* Latest estimates of the annual change in income tax liability

resulting from the changes in tax rates, allowances, and thresholds are in the table. The 1988-89 income tax regime has been indexed to 1990-91 levels by reference to the statutory formula, and allowing for independent taxation.

Average increase in income tax per individual in 1990-91 compared with 1988-89 indexed regime

Range of individuals income in 1990-91 (£)	*Average increase at 1990-91 prices (£)*
Under 5,000	0
5,000 to 10,000	0
10,000 to 15,000	0
15,000 to 20,000	0
20,000 to 25,000	0
25,000 to 30,000	40
30,000 to 40,000	200
40,000 to 50,000	225
50,000 to 60,000	225
60,000 to 70,000	225
Over 70,000	225
Total	10

Community Charge

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the increase in the rate of value added tax which would be necessary to yield the same revenue as his estimate of the yield of the community charge in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what increase in the rate of value added tax would be required in order to yield the same amount of revenue as the community charge.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* Estimates of the net yield of the community charge in 1990-91 and 1991-92 were given in reply to the right hon. Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) on 15 February, column *624*. To produce the same net yield in 1990-91 from additional VAT would have required about seven more percentage points on the VAT rate in that year. To produce the same net yield as the charge in 1991-92 would require an increase in 1991-92 of around six points, assuming that no change has been made to the VAT rate in 1990-91. These calculations are consistent with ready reckoner published in table 4.7 of the autumn statement 1990.

Balance of Trade

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the United Kingdom balance of trade to be in surplus.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 13 March 1991]:* As domestic demand pressures have eased, the visible trade deficit has fallen sharply. In the three months to January 1991 the deficit was £3·1 billion compared with a peak of £6·6 billion in the second quarter of 1989. A revised forecast will be presented on Budget day.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) whether he will estimate the number of new jobs created in the constituencies of Tynemouth, Langbaurgh, Darlington and Stockton, South *(a)* since February 1981 and *(b)* since June 1987;

(2) whether he will give the number of people at work in the constituencies of Tynemouth, Langbaurgh, Darlington and Stockton, South in February 1981, June 1983, June 1987 and February 1991.

Mr. Jackson: The available information for the constituencies is from the censuses of employment held in 1981, 1984 and 1987 and is given in the table. The figures relate only to employees in employment; they exclude the self-employed and members of Her Majesty's forces.

Employees in employment; September of each year

Thousands

Parliamentary constituency	*1981*	*1984*	*1987*	*Net change 1981 to 1987*
Tynemouth	28·3	28·4	28·1	−0·2
Langbaurgh	15·3	13·6	16·4	+1·1
Darlington	36·5	33·3	34·1	−2·4
Stockton, South	26·5	24·3	27·0	+0·5

Tourism

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what dialogue he has had with representatives of the tourist industry since the outbreak of hostilities in the Gulf; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what estimate his Department has of the trend in incoming visitors visiting Britain in 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The most recently available estimates of the numbers of overseas visitors to the United Kingdom are for December 1990. These show a 2 per cent. increase in 1990 compared with 1989. It is too early to assess what impact the Gulf crisis will have on visitor levels this year.

As I told the House in reply to questions on 26 and 28 February, both I and my noble Friend, the Viscount Ullswater, the Minister for Tourism, have been in close contact with the tourism industry about the effects of the crisis. My noble Friend recently announced the launch of a campaign this month to promote holidays at home in the United Kingdom. My Department is also making available an additional £800,000 to the British Tourist Authority to mount a recovery campaign in overseas markets.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for the financial years 1987-88 to 1991-92, all moneys given by central Government to tourism and the tourist industry under its different headings, including grant assistance to the tourist boards and section 4 grants.

Mr. Forth: The Government's financial support for the statutory tourist boards is as follows:

	1986-87 £ million	1987-88 £ million	1988-89 £ million	1989-90 £ million	1990-91 £ million	1991-92 £ million
British Tourist Authority	20·4	22·0	23·7	25·6	27·5	29·5
English Tourist Board (grant in aid)	10·3	11·3	12·6	13·4	14·8	14·7
Section 4 (ETB)	9·5	12·0	13·2	8·4	2·3	1·1
Scottish Tourist Board	6·1	6·1	6·8	7·9	8·6	9·1
Section 4 (STB)	3·0	3·0	3·1	3·3	3·6	3·5
Wales Tourist Board	5·4	5·5	5·9	6·5	7·25	7·7
Section 4 (WTB)	2·5	3·1	3·3	3·4	3·2	3·6
Northern Ireland	2·64	3·05	3·37	3·69	4·72	—[2]
Section 4 (NI)[1]	3·03	1·93	2·04	2·01	2·15	—[2]

[1] The Development of Tourism Act does not extend to Northern Ireland. The figures shown are for grants made to develop the Northern Ireland tourism industry.
[2] These figures are not yet available.

The Government's support for other tourism-related activity in 1988-89, the last year for which figures are available, is estimated to be about £380 million (excluding expenditure by local authorities).

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the British Tourist Authority's expenditure in the financial years 1987 to 1991-92 has been provided directly by the Government as grant in aid.

Mr. Forth: The proportions are as follows:

	Per cent.
1987-88	59
1988-89	63
1989-90	65
1990-91	69
1991-92	68

The figures for 1990-92 are estimates by the British Tourist Authority.

Northern Region

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will estimate the number of new jobs created in the Northern region *(a)* since February 1981 and *(b)* since June 1987.

Mr. Jackson: Changes in the civilian work force in employment in the Northern region are shown in the table.

Civilian workforce in employment in Northern Region

	Net change	Unadjusted percentage change
March 1981 to September 1990	65,000	5·3
June 1987 to September 1990	88,000	7·3

Self-employed

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were self-employed in the constituencies of Tynemouth, Langbaurgh, Darlington and Stockton, South in February 1981, June 1987 and February 1991.

Mr. Jackson: Information on the number of self-employed for constituencies is available only for April 1981 from the census of population. The available information is as follows:

Self-employed in Tynemouth, Langbaurgh, Darlington, and Stockton, South constituencies

	April 1981
Tynemouth	2,190
Langbaurgh	2,190
Darlington	1,960
Stockton, South	2,100

Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for employment training in each of the years 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 *(a)* the total estimated planned expenditure in both cash and real terms and *(b)* the total number of planned places, for Great Britain and each standard region; and what is the estimated outturn expenditure for 1990-91 employment training in 1990-91 for Great Britain and each standard region.

Mr. Jackson *[pursuant to his reply, 7 March 1991]:* I regret that the information given in my reply of 7 March at column *289* was incorrect due to a typographical error. The correct information is as follows:

Total planned expenditure on employment training in cash and constant prices in 1990-91 to 1993-94 is shown in the table. Information on the total number of planned places is not available. Estimated outturn expenditure in Great Britain for employment training in 1990-91 is £1,062 million. Regional expenditure forecasts are for internal management purposes only.

£ million

	Cash	Constant
1990-91	1,074	995
1991-92	877	766
1992-93	792	661
1993-94	811	654

Notes:
1. Cash figures for 1991-92 to 1993-94 are taken from the Departmental Report (Cm. 1501 to 1519) and adjusted to take account of recent additions to planned expenditure in 1991-92.
2. Cash figure for 1990-91 is the Spring Supplementary Estimate published in February 1991.

HEALTH

Product Licences

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are taken to ensure that Product Licence (Parallel Imports) products are recognised in national health service formularies.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We encourage the use of local formularies as a way of promoting more rational and cost-effective prescribing. The construction of formularies and the products they contain is a matter for the clinicians concerned.

Waiting Lists

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the change in the Bloomsbury in-patient waiting lists in the period from April 1989 to December 1990.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the 12 months to March 1990, the latest date for which information is available, the number waiting for in-patient treatment in Bloomsbury fell by 21 per cent. More importantly, the number waiting over one year for in-patient treatment fell by 34 per cent.

Drugs

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what cost benefit would accrue to the national health service from a 1 per cent. increase in the prescribing of generic pharmaceuticals by general practitioners in place of branded drugs.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is not possible to estimate such a saving. The saving which could be achieved would depend on which drugs GPs chose to prescribe generically and whether there was a generic equivalent of these branded products available on the market.

Food Safety

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list those organisations that will be invited to launch publicly the future draft codes of practice in respect of food hygiene training;

(2) when he proposes *(a)* to issue a draft code of practice in relation to food hygiene training and *(b)* to launch publicly his initiative to industry.

Mr. Dorrell: Codes of practice for enforcement authorities issued under the Food Safety Act 1990 are issued by Ministers after receiving advice from the Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC). The IAC has not yet begun discussions on a code of practice relating to food hygiene training, and is unlikely to do so until policy with regard to training requirements has been determined.

The Food Safety Act 1990 does not contain statutory provisions for the Government to issue codes of practice to industry. Food industry organisations may, of course, choose to produce guidance for the benefit of their own members if they so wish.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidance he proposes to give to industry lead bodies in respect of food hygiene training about conflict of interest between income generation from selling training services and their accreditation role in relation to performance-based testing by employers in the workplace;

(2) what advice he has offered food hygiene examination bodies in respect of *(a)* the content, length and mode of study, *(b)* testing and recertification and instructor qualifications, experience, refresher courses and recertification in relation to courses under the Food Safety Act 1990;

(3) what is his policy on ensuring reciprocity between United Kingdom-based hygiene training certificating bodies and other EC-based testing bodies;

(4) what is his policy towards the achievement of a generic national vocational qualification for the whole food chain or parts thereof, in respect of *(a)* manager, *(b)* supervisor and *(c)* operative levels of certification;

(5) what consultations he has had with hygiene training examination bodies about when they will be in a position to revise their syllabuses and regulations to be consistent with standards specified by regulations arising from the Food Safety Act 1990;

(6) what guidance he has given hygiene training certification bodies in respect of generic competences and performance criteria required for *(a)* operatives *(b)* supervisory grades and *(c)* managers for each sector in respect of the Food Safety Act 1990;

(7) how he intends to monitor and evaluate the work of examination bodies providing mandatory hygiene training certification in relation to the Food Safety Act 1990;

(8) which examination bodies he has consulted in respect of food hygiene certification in relation to the Food Safety Act 1990.

Mr. Dorrell: At present, there is no requirement for food handlers to achieve specified certificates in food hygiene or for training courses to be approved by certain bodies. The Department of Health's consultation document on the training of food handlers invited comments from interested parties on a number of issues including standards and accreditation. We will be determining our policy in the light of the comments received.

Paediatrics

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consultant paediatricians there are in each of the regions of England; and how many of these specialise in neonatal care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Data on the number of consultant paediatricians in each of the English regions are given in the table. Information on the numbers who specialise in neonatal care is not held centrally.

Consultant Paediatricians at 30 September 1989

Region	*Number*
England	771
Northern	58
Yorkshire	55
Trent	68
East Anglia	29
North West Thames	45
North East Thames	58
South East Thames	57
South West Thames	42
Wessex	35
Oxford	39
South Western	47
West Midlands	79
Mersey	35
North Western	58
Special Health Authorities	66

Note:

1 Figures include permanent paid and honorary staff.

2 Figures do not include consultants in the specialties of Paediatric Neurology nor Paediatric Surgery.

North West RHA

Ms. Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many consultants were employed in hospitals in the North West regional health authority in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1990;

(2) how many paramedical staff were employed by the North West regional health authority in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1990;

(3) how many nursing staff were employed in the North West regional health authority in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1990;

(4) how many ancillary staff were employed by the North West regional health authority in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1990.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is given in the table.

NHS staff at 30 September each year
North Western Regional Health Authority

	Whole-time equivalents[1]		
Staff groups	*1979*	*1986*	*1989*
Consultants[2] (medical and dental)	950	1,187	1,264
Professions allied to medicine[3]	1,790	2,500	2,660
Nursing and midwifery[4] (including agency)	32,160	37,860	37,620
Ancillary staff	14,130	11,640	9,310

[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalents.
[2] Figures include permanent paid and honorary staff only.
[3] Includes qualified chiropodists, dieticians, occupational therapists, orthoptists, physiotherapists, radiographers.
[4] Not adjusted for the reduction in nurses working hours during 1980-81 (from 40 hours to 37·5 hours per week).

The information for 1990 is not yet available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to Mr. B. Martin, the chairman of North Western regional health authority, for current details.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many beds in district health authority hospitals existed in the North West regional health authority in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1990.

Mr. Dorrell: There were 30,811, 28,406 and 25,204 beds in North Western region in 1979, 1986 and 1989-90, the latest date for which information is available, respectively. More importantly, the number of patients treated since 1979 has increased by over 27 per cent. in the North Western region as a whole.

Birth Statistics

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he collects figures relating to the percentage of births *(a)* artificially induced, *(b)* accelerated and *(c)* delivered by caesarean section, by regions and districts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The method of maternity data collection was changed in April 1987 with the introduction of the hospital episodes statistics system (HES). Data are now collected under the following categories:

Method of delivery
Normal Spontaneous
Normal Spontaneous-Vertex
Spontaneous-other cephalic
Low Forceps
Other Forceps
Ventouse vacuum extraction
Breech
Breech Extraction
Elective Caesarian Section
Other Unspecified (emergency) caesarian section
Other Unspecified including unknown

Method of onset of labour
Spontaneous
Elective caesarian
Surgical inductions
Oxytocic drugs
Combinations of surgical induction/oxytocic drugs
Not known

The most recent information available is for 1988-89, the first year for which additional delivery details were collected, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 8 March at columns *322-23*. Approximate national estimates of these percentages can be made for that year, but it has not been possible to make reliable regional and district estimates. Steps have been taken to improve quality and completeness of data which should reduce the level of approximation in later years and enable more detailed breakdowns to be made.

Pregnancy

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the Health Education Authority has any programme of work with trade unions for disseminating knowledge about pregnancy-related matters among working women.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The authority provides a range of information on pregnancy to women on an individual basis and through health care professionals. The authority's "Health at Work" programme provides a range of services for employers and their employees in areas such as coronary heart disease, cancer, women's health, AIDS/HIV and alcohol misuse. This programme has the support of both the CBI and the TUC. It is open to employers to approach the authority about workplace initiatives on pregnancy-related matters.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost to the national health service of a pregnancy test.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the categories of hospital and the aspects of their work that enjoy Crown immunity.

Mr. Dorrell: Currently national health service hospitals enjoy Crown immunity except in respect of food hygiene and health and safety legislation. From 1 April this year hospitals will cease to enjoy Crown immunity with the exception only of certain provisions in the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969, the Vehicles (Excise) Act 1971, the Road Traffic Act 1988, and the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Value for Money

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures of performance are employed by his Department to ensure value for money.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has a well-developed management accounting system which is designed to help managers at all levels to set clear objectives consistent with departmental aims and objectives; to monitor progress against these objectives, and to reassess them as conditions change. Achievement of plans set out in the management accounts is reviewed regularly and is linked to the annual assessment of personal performance through a stewardship exercise.

In addition, the delivery of VFM improvements for the NHS has focused on the cost improvement programme since 1984 with over £1 billion of cash-releasing cost improvements achieved. Performance monitoring is through the annual review process and particular attention is being drawn to value for money in 1991-92 with each region being asked to develop a strategy to include the change to purchaser and provider roles.

Infant Food

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the Government's position on the European Commission's draft directive on the marketing and composition of infant formulae and follow-up foods.

Mr. Dorrell: During the negotiations on this important draft directive, which are now nearing completion, the Government have unequivocally supported the adoption of strict compositional standards for these products so as to secure the health and safety of bottle-fed infants. In addition, we have been pressing, and will continue to press, for amendments to the text of the draft directive to align it more closely with the World Health Organisation's international code of marketing of breastmilk substitutes. The Government remain committed to promoting and protecting breastfeeding as the best means of nurturing infants.

Residential Homes

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will list those health authorities which provide incontinence aids free of charge to elderly people in residential homes.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will issue a circular to health authorities advising them to use their discretion to provide incontinence aids for elderly people in residential homes who are either on income support or who otherwise have difficulty in paying for these aids.

Mr. Dorrell: On 18 February 1991, the NHS management executive issued an executive letter to health authorities (EL(91)28), which reminded them that good practice in continence services includes provision for regular and adequate supplies of incontinence aids. A copy of this letter is available in the Library. Officials will shortly be beginning a departmental review of continence services and incontinence aids.

Long-stay Beds

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy for at least 10 per cent. of national health service beds for the elderly to be provided and staffed for long-stay patients who choose to remain in national health service care.

Mr. Dorrell: Health authorities are expected to provide an integrated pattern of services for elderly people, including long-term care. It is for each health authority to decide the level of this service, or any other service, to be provided, taking into account the local circumstances.

Basingstoke District Hospital

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many in-patients and how many day cases were treated at Basingstoke district hospital in 1978-79 and in 1990-91, or the most recent year for which statistics are available.

Mr. Dorrell: Over the period from 1979 to 1989-90 in-patient and day case treatment at the Basingstoke district hospital has increased as follows:

	1979	*1989-90*
In-patient Cases	13,958	21,303
Day Cases	2,887	6,365

The figures for 1979 are derived from discharge and deaths; those for 1989-90 are derived from finished consultant episodes.

NHS Neglect

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what sums were paid out in compensation for neglect by the NHS in each of the last three years for which figures are available in *(a)* the Yorkshire regional health authority area and *(b)* in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: The annual accounts of health authorities in England identify all compensation payments (made under legal obligation) in total only and separate information for cases of neglect is not collected centrally. Such information as is held by the Department for the Yorkshire region and England as a whole is shown in the table.

Questions concerning the national health service in the other countries within the United Kingdom are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for Northern Ireland.

Compensation payments (made under legal obligation)

	Yorkshire region		*England*	
	Number of cases	*Total amount £000s (cash)*	*Number of cases*	*Total amount £000s (cash)*
1987-88	322	836	4,641	10,142
1988-89	447	695	4,863	13,134
1989-90	497	2,196	5,488	19,764

Source:

Annual accounts of regional and district health authorities in England and those of the special health authorities for the London post-graduate teaching hospitals.

Note:

The figures shown represent the total amounts paid by the authorities, excluding costs. They are without deduction of any recoveries or contributions from outside sources.

Computers

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors' practices have been given a grant for the installation of a computer under the computer grant scheme; and what has been the total cost of this scheme.

Mr. Dorrell: No figures are held centrally in respect of the number of grants made by family health services authorities (FHSAs). From 1 April 1990 to 31 January 1991, £11,120,801 was reimbursed by FHSAs to GPs under the scheme.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will refer to the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service the current dispute between the officers of the London ambulance service and the London ambulance board.

Mr. Dorrell: No. This is a local matter for resolution by the London ambulance service board, which is responsible for the management of the London ambulance service.

Day Centres

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many local authorities levy charges for attendance at day centres for the elderly, disabled, mentally ill and mentally handicapped, other than for meals; and what is the average charge in each category.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 8 March 1991]:* We expect local social services authorities to develop effective costing and charging procedures for day and domiciliary care, since this can be valuable in achieving the best use of resources across the range of personal social services. But ability to pay should not in any way influence decisions on services to be provided.

The latest information available centrally on income for such charges is from the 1988-89 revenue outturn forms from the 109 English social services departments. Information on the average charge is not available centrally.

Client group	*Authorities with an income from users of day centres (other than for meals)*
Elderly	37
Disabled	37
Mentally Ill	24
Mentally Handicapped	55

Smoking

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current annual number of deaths from cancer in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland attributed to smoking; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the current annual number of deaths from heart disease in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland attributed to smoking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* The table shows the number of deaths attributed to those forms of cancer and heart disease usually associated with smoking. It is estimated that at least 90 per cent. of deaths from lung cancer and pulmonary heart disease are attributable to smoking. In addition cancers of the mouth, larynx and oesophagus have all been associated with smoking.

In 1983 the Royal College of Physicians in its report "Health or Smoking" estimated that perhaps 20 per cent. of deaths due to obstruction of the arteries of the heart were related to smoking; an extract is available in the Library. The medical term for this condition is "ischaemic heart disease", but it is often referred to as "coronary heart disease". The total number of deaths from this condition is shown in the table, but the proportion directly attributable to smoking is less certain as this is only one of a number of causes that give rise to obstruction of the arteries of the heart.

Number of deaths from major cancers and heart disease associated with tobacco smoking, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, 1989.

Cause[1]	*Number of Deaths*			
	England	*Wales*	*Scotland*	*Northern Ireland*
Malignant Neoplasms of Trachea, Bronchus and lung (1)	32,467	2,051	4,234	831
Lip, oral cavity and pharynx (2)	1,601	105	218	35
Oesophagus (3)	4,650	346	633	106
Larynx (4)	808	51	98	27
Chronic pulmonary heart disease (5)	566	71	23	7
Ischaemic heart disease (6)	140,509	9,686	18,107	4,508

[1] International classification of diseases code (9th revision): (1) 162, (2) 140-149, (3) 150, (4) 161, (5) 416, (6) 410-414.
[2] Data for Northern Ireland are provisional.

Death Statistics

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current annual number of deaths in the United Kingdom attributed to *(a)* smoking, *(b)* alcohol and *(c)* illegal drug use; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* The available data are shown in the tables.

Table 1 shows the number of deaths registered in 1989 in the United Kingdom with an underlying cause of death stated as drug dependence or non-dependent abuse of drugs.

It is not possible from death registrations reliably to identify which of these deaths were due to the use of illegal drugs.

Table 1. Deaths from drug dependence and non-dependent abuse of drugs.

Cause of death	*ICD code*[1]	*Number of deaths*
Drug dependence	304	191
Non-dependent abuse of drugs (excluding alcohol and tobacco)	305·2-305·9	54

Table 2 shows the number of deaths registered in 1989 in the United Kingdom assigned to underlying causes of death due to diseases associated with alcohol consumption.

Table 2. Number of deaths associated with alcohol consumption

Main diagnosis	ICD code[1]	Number of deaths
Alcoholic psychoses	291	13
Alcoholic dependence syndrome	303	273
Non-dependent abuse of alcohol	305·0	215
Alcoholic cardiomyopathy	425·5	112
Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, alcohol reported as a cause	571·0-571·3	1,573
Toxic effect of alcohol	980	130+
Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, alcohol not specifically reported as cause	571·4-571·9	1,947

[1] International classification of diseases 9th revision.
excludes Scotland—data not available.

In addition, statistics collated by the Department of Transport indicate that in 1988 in Great Britain, there were 840 deaths and 5,650 serious injuries in road accidents involving illegal alcohol levels.

For smoking it is not possible to be precise. Most deaths associated with cigarette smoking arise from three diseases: lung cancer, chronic bronchitis and "heart attacks" due to obstructions of the arteries of the heart. However, the proportion of deaths attributable to smoking from each of these diseases varies. Furthermore, smoking is also implicated in certain other conditions where no estimate of the numbers of the deaths caused by smoking is available—for example, obstruction of the arteries of the lower limbs, and strokes.

It is estimated that at least 90 per cent. of deaths from lung cancer, and 90 per cent. of deaths from chronic bronchitis, obstructive lung disease, chronic pulmonary heart disease and aortic aneurysm are attributable to smoking. In addition cancers of the mouth, larynx and oesophagus have all been shown to be associated with smoking. The total number of deaths from these conditions involved is given in table 3.

Table 3. Number of deaths associated with smoking tobacco, 1989

Cause of death	ICD code[1]	Number of deaths
Malignant neoplasms		
Trachea, bronchus and lung	162	39,646
Lip, oral cavity and pharynx	140-149	1,969
Oesophagus	150	5,747
Larynx	161	986
Diseases of the ciculatory system:		
Chronic pulmonary heart disease	416	679
Aortic aneurysm	441	8,906
Diseases of the respiratory system:		
Bronchitis and emphysema	490-492	9,451
Chronic airways obstruction, not elsewhere classified	496	21,482

In 1983, the Royal College of Physicians in its report "Health or Smoking" estimated that perhaps 20 per cent. of deaths due to obstruction of the arteries of the heart were related to smoking; an extract is available in the Library. The medical term for this condition is "ischaemic heart disease", but it is commonly referred to as "coronary heart disease". The total number of deaths from this condition for the United Kingdom in 1989 is as follows:

Cause of death	ICD code[1]	Number of deaths
Ischaemic heart disease	410-414	173,409

[1] International classification of diseases 9th revision.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number on the electoral roll per London constituency for 1987-88, 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and for 1991-92.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* Numbers of parliamentary electors on the 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 registers are given for each London constituency in the table. Information about the 1991 registers is still being collected centrally from local electoral registration officers. The OPCS expects to place the 1991 figures in the Library by 10 May.

Parliamentary electors on the 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 registers, for each London constituency

Parliamentary Constituencies	1987	1988	1989	1990
Barking	52,137	51,885	51,501	51,503
Battersea	67,462	67,198	66,508	66,383
Beckenham	60,718	60,558	60,336	60,261
Bethnal Green and Stepney	55,984	55,326	55,859	54,895
Bexleyheath	60,206	60,105	59,390	58,966
Bow and Poplar	59,503	58,346	57,884	57,655
Brent, East	61,378	59,821	58,764	58,693
Brent, North	63,652	63,465	62,424	61,664
Brent, South	63,229	61,787	60,757	60,463
Brentford and Isleworth	72,371	71,982	70,547	72,713
Carshalton and Wallington	69,906	67,224	65,529	65,736
Chelsea	49,745	46,763	44,381	45,618
Chingford	57,417	57,093	56,219	56,181
Chipping Barnet	61,419	60,880	59,543	58,269
Chislehurst	56,142	56,033	55,609	55,139
City of London and Westminster, South	57,619	55,407	55,454	53,347
Croydon, Central	55,962	55,506	55,284	53,792
Croydon, North East	63,627	62,844	63,547	61,849
Croydon, North West	57,807	56,825	56,703	54,015
Croydon, South	65,754	65,491	65,287	63,963
Dagenham	62,349	61,689	61,104	61,110
Dulwich	56,764	56,354	55,086	54,849
Ealing, North	72,321	71,123	70,012	70,142
Ealing, Acton	67,615	65,367	64,236	64,375
Ealing, Southall	75,660	74,304	72,565	72,698
Edmonton	66,719	65,593	65,856	65,490
Eltham	54,702	54,167	53,542	53,176
Enfield, North	70,190	69,861	69,754	69,414
Enfield, Southgate	67,257	66,533	66,436	66,093
Erith and Crayford	60,015	60,367	60,340	60,642
Feltham and Heston	81,999	81,808	80,714	82,955
Finchley	58,143	58,667	55,957	53,779
Fulham	54,843	53,963	52,107	51,976
Greenwich	51,289	50,319	49,007	48,638
Hackney, North and Stoke Newington	67,023	66,831	67,475	67,257
Hackney, South and Shoreditch	71,167	71,003	70,573	70,229
Hammersmith	48,621	47,888	47,198	46,957
Hampstead and Highgate	63,592	62,578	61,118	60,057
Harrow, East	81,842	81,280	77,538	76,918
Harrow, West	74,771	74,175	71,902	71,582
Hayes and Harlington	58,931	58,855	58,683	58,853
Hendon, North	55,534	55,068	54,059	52,220
Hendon, South	54,959	53,966	52,242	49,128
Holborn and St. Pancras	70,901	70,154	68,937	67,034
Hornchurch	63,129	62,772	62,228	62,045
Hornsey and Wood Green	81,122	79,819	78,030	76,449
Ilford, North	60,970	62,097	61,303	60,377
Ilford, South	59,057	60,054	59,139	57,068
Islington, North	59,241	57,005	55,550	55,206
Islington, South and Finsbury	58,255	55,817	55,309	54,961
Kensington	48,456	45,998	44,393	45,482
Kingston upon Thames	55,411	54,054	53,048	51,648
Lewisham Deptford	58,656	58,474	57,818	57,113
Lewisham, East	60,150	59,889	59,088	58,655
Lewisham, West	63,473	63,203	62,242	61,415
Leyton	58,263	57,751	56,954	57,682
Mitcham and Morden	63,696	63,197	64,236	64,772

Parliamentary Constituencies	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Newham, North East	61,366	61,315	60,183	59,453
Newham, North West	48,029	47,814	47,591	46,786
Newham, South	50,711	51,614	52,000	51,712
Norwood	56,876	56,528	55,955	55,123
Old Bexley and Sidcup	51,433	51,036	50,507	50,101
Orpington	60,373	59,958	59,342	58,825
Peckham	59,636	59,510	59,430	59,498
Putney	63,586	62,999	62,017	61,761
Ravensbourne	60,060	59,466	58,758	58,278
Richmond and Barnes	55,196	53,563	51,746	52,034
Romford	56,351	56,003	55,537	54,938
Ruislip—Northwood	56,957	56,661	56,479	56,070
Southwark and Bermondsey	55,786	56,024	56,949	57,858
Streatham	60,799	59,676	58,969	58,421
Surbiton	45,842	45,320	44,344	43,607
Sutton and Cheam	64,459	61,963	60,631	61,058
Tooting	68,670	67,635	66,777	66,599
Tottenham	76,713	76,092	75,530	73,196
Twickenham	65,281	64,571	62,618	63,551
Upminster	67,446	66,905	66,066	65,583
Uxbridge	63,856	64,122	64,309	64,721
Vauxhall	66,789	65,809	65,060	63,920
Walthamstow	49,222	49,072	48,744	49,319
Wanstead and Woodford	58,374	59,045	58,521	56,932
Westminster, North	59,538	57,665	55,414	54,516
Wimbledon	63,880	62,912	63,726	62,745
Woolwich	58,666	58,269	57,322	57,214

Source: Population Estimates Unit, OPCS.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bananas

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of Britain's bananas are imported from the Windward islands; and what calculations he has done on the difference in prices between Windward island bananas and those from other sources and of any extra cost falling on the British consumer of Windward island bananas.

Mr. Curry: Windward island bananas accounted for about 52 per cent. of total United Kingdom banana imports in 1990.

The table compares the United Kingdom retail price with the retail price for bananas in four other European countries—France, Germany, Denmark and Italy—during the most recently available period. These are the only countries for which retail price data (i.e. the cost to consumers) are available, but the five countries considered do account for 73 per cent of EC imports of bananas, and include virtually all sources which supply the EC market. Each country imports bananas from a different mix of sources: France is supplied mostly by her own growers in the Caribbean and the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, but also takes some from Latin America (the "dollar" area); Germany and Denmark are supplied entirely by dollar producers; Italy is mostly dollar but with some ACP.

Retail price (pence/pound)[1] September 1989—August 1990.

	pence
United Kingdom	50·8
France	53·7
Germany[2]	42·5
Denmark	55·2
Italy[3]	59·1

[1] Converted from national currencies at average market exchange rates valid for each month in question.

[2] Germany is exempted from a 20 per cent. tariff which applies to all other EC imports of dollar bananas.

[3] Adjusted to exclude a consumption tax levied then but now abolished.

Maryport Harbour

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will consider funding under the Fisheries Act 1955 urgent applications for assistance from representatives of the fishing industry or the Maryport harbour authorities to meet health and safety requirements in Maryport harbour.

Mr. Curry: I can assure the fishing community and the harbour authorities at Maryport that if they submit an application for grant under the Fisheries Act 1955 for safety works to the harbour it will be considered urgently and sympathetically by this Department.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about the National Rivers Authority's consideration of water levels on the Somerset levels.

Mr. Curry: We are aware that a sub-committee of the Somerset local flood defence committee of the National Rivers Authority is reviewing the authority's policy and practice as regards water level management on the Somerset levels and moors. We shall be interested in the outcome which will no doubt take account of Government policy.

Badgers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he has given to landowers or occupiers concerning the need to protect active badger setts during agricultural or related activities.

Mr. Curry: The Ministry's agricultural development and advisory service (ADAS) provides advice on request to landowners and occupiers where it is necessary to resolve problems caused by badger activities. This is done in strict adherence to legislation and the welfare of badgers and often is in co-operation with other interested organisations such as the Nature Conservancy Council.

All advice is subject to the statutory need to balance environmental and wildlife interests with those of agriculture and related activities.

Opportunities are taken to promote the protection of badgers to landowners and occupiers often in association with other organisations.

Exports

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a list of the tonnages of food and gallons of wine exported with subsidy support to *(a)* central and east Europe and the Soviet Union and *(b)* the rest of the world, respectively, in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what are the comparable figures for the previous two years.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is contained in the tables.

European Community exports of the main agricultural commodities to central and east Europe and the Soviet Union (a) (b) (000 tonnes)

	1988	1989	January to October 1990
Wheat	4,228	4,326	4,759
Barley	2,302	4,599	2,610
Wheat flour	4	5	2
Rice	8	7	69
Maize	209	899	389
Malt	—	62	115
Wholemilk powder	33	51	43
Skimmed milk powder	55	—	—
Condensed milk	—	—	—
Butter (including butter oil)	332	165	36
Beef and veal	94	275	169
Pigmeat	—	—	63
Poultrymeat	1	18	13
Sugar total (white equivalent)	111	424	70
(of which, refined sugar)	99	424	70
Olive oil	12	8	17
Wine	81	96	101

Notes:
(a) Soviet Union, German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania.
(b) From 3 October 1990 the German Democratic Republic ceased to exist.
(c) — denotes trade under 500 tonnes.

European Community exports of the main agricultural commodities to the rest of the world (a) (000 tonnes)

	1988	1989	January to October 1990
Wheat	8,201	11,077	9,786
Barley	4,122	4,273	3,430
Wheat flour	2,559	2,441	2,415
Rice	329	386	232
Maize	964	1,438	809
Malt	1,030	990	963
Wholemilk powder	563	517	392
Skimmed milk powder	561	409	292
Condensed milk	383	449	300
Butter (including butter oil)	276	209	132
Beef and veal	521	577	363
Pigmeat	11	14	193
Poultrymeat	388	417	325
Sugar total (white equivalent)	4,416	4,132	3,938
(of which, refined sugar)	4,404	4,101	3,907
Olive oil	134	127	115
Wine	1,188	1,162	863

Note: (a) Excluding central and east Europe and the Soviet Union.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of confirmed cases of BSE by county in England and Wales in the month to 17 February.

Mr. Gummer: The information for England and Wales is as follows:

County	Confirmed cases
Avon	28
Bedfordshire	5
Berkshire	8
Buckinghamshire	12
Cambridge	6
Cheshire	52
Cleveland	3
Clwyd	14
Cornwall	85
Cumbria	31
Derbyshire	43
Devon	161
Dorset	142
Durham	6
Dyfed	59
Essex	6
Glamorgan Mid	1
Gloucestershire	31
Gwent	12
Gwynedd	3
Hampshire	34
Hereford and Worcestershire	26
Hertfordshire	5
Humberside	9
Isle of Wight	15
Kent	24
Lancashire	34
Leicestershire	42
Lincolnshire	12
Manchester	1
Norfolk	26
Northamptonshire	17
Northumberland	7
Nottinghamshire	16
Oxfordshire	17
Powys	14
Shropshire	42
Somerset	178
Staffordshire	20
Suffolk	19
Surrey	9
Sussex East	20
Sussex West	34
Warwickshire	15
Wiltshire	95
Yorkshire North	54
Yorkshire South	14
Yorkshire West	8
Total	1,515

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the location of the incinerators used for the disposal of BSE cows on a county basis in England; if he will list those counties where there are no such facilities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list on a county basis in England the number of BSE confirmed cows which were *(a)* incinerated and *(b)* buried in 1990 and the most recent figures for 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The movement of carcases of suspect BSE cattle for incineration or burial is carried out on an England and Wales basis and is not restricted by county boundaries. Currently there are 10 incinerators in England used to handle BSE carcases. These are located in Avon, Hertfordshire, Northumberland, North Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Somerset, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. in 1990 11,824 carcases were incinerated and 2,707 buried in England. The figures for the first quarter of 1991 are not yet available.

Fishing Engines

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many commercial fishing engines operate in freshwater lakes and rivers in England and Wales which have as target species *(a)* salmon, *(b)* sea

trout, *(c)* wild brown trout and *(d)* coarse fish by species; and what quantities of each such species were taken by such engines in (i) 1990, (ii) 1985, (iii) 1980 and (iv) 1970.

Mr. Curry: I understand that there are five rivers in England and Wales—the Avon, Lyn, Conwy, Eden and Derwent—in which commercial fixed engines in freshwater have been licensed for catching salmon or sea trout. (There are no such licensed fixed engines in lakes, nor fixed engines whose target species are wild brown trout or coarse fish). The available data on the numbers of fish caught by these methods for the Rivers Avon, Lyn and Conwy are as follows:

	River Avon		*River Lyn*		*River Conwy*	
	Salmon	*Sea trout*	*Salmon*	*Sea trout*	*Salmon*	*Sea trout*
1970	103	0	33	80	58	11
1980	22	33	17	1	8	6
1985	87	73	0	0	37	0
[1]1989	205	134	0	0	0	0

[1] 1990 data not yet available.

Separate data are not available for the fixed engine catches on the Eden and Derwent. Further information about salmon and freshwater fisheries catches over the period 1983-88 appears in the "Fisheries Research Data Report Series" published by the fisheries laboratory, Lowestoft.

Agriculture Budget (EC)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action has been taken by the EC to ensure that its budget for agricultural spending does not exceed £24 billion; if such action is subject to the approval of the Council of Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Commission currently estimate that, if no further corrective action is taken, expenditure on market support in 1991 could reach 32,991 mecu (£22,990 million). This would be 1,475 mecu (£1,028 million) over the budget for market support and 480 mecu (£334 million) over the guideline. In addition, the depreciation of the dollar against the rate used in the preparation of the budget will lead to extra expenditure, 400 mecu (£279 million) of which will be financed from the guarantee section of the EAGGF; expenditure over this amount will be financed from the monetary reserve. The Commission is proposing to introduce a supplementary budget up to the level of the guideline. The Commission's 1991 price fixing proposals comply with Council decision 88/377 on budgetary discipline and envisage savings of 540 mecu (£376 million) in 1991 and 2,057 mecu (£1,433 million) in 1992. Both a supplementary budget and the price proposals will require approval by the Council of Ministers. The Commission also intends to obtain savings of 400 mecu (£279 million) through management action.

Other EC agricultural expenditure is expected to remain within current budget provisions.

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of workplaces for civil servants in his Ministry; what proportion of the total number have an on-site nursery facility; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide a holiday play scheme; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide after-school child care facilities; what charges are made for use of any facility; what the net cost has been for the provision of these facilities; and what estimate he can make of any future expenditure.

Mr. Curry: This Department has some 160 offices and laboratories of which about 40 have over 50 staff. Child care facilities are available for the children of staff working in about one fifth of the latter. The first workplace nursery opens on 2 April at Guildford. Holiday play scheme facilities are available in eight locations—namely, Exeter, Guildford, Leeds, Nottingham, Westminster, Weybridge, Wolverhampton, and Worcester and a further scheme starts in Bristol this Easter. Currently there are no facilities available for after-school child care.

Charges for play schemes range around about £5 per child per day; the Guildford nursery plans to charge between £40 to £50 per child per week. In respect of costs, it is estimated that the Guildford nursery will show a positive return in 1994, setting fees and savings derived from the anticipated reduction in staff turnover against management and running costs of about £200,000 per year. As for play schemes, most are run in conjunction with other Government Departments or organisations. Net cost figures are not readily available, but start-up costs can range up to about £3,000.

I cannot estimate overall future expenditure but I am planning for more provision for nursery places in central London and Bristol.

Brown Trout

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has considered a ban on the sale of wild brown trout in England and Wales.

Mr. Curry: No such ban has been considered.

Purchasing and Distribution

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the full annual cost, including overheads, of his Ministry's purchasing activity.

Mr. Curry: Information is not retained in a suitable format to enable the full annual cost, including overheads, of the Ministry's purchasing activity to be calculated without disproportionate costs. However the Ministry's administration cost for purchasing was £1·68 million, as reported to the central unit on purchasing for the 1989-90 report to the Prime Minister. This cost was for administering a spend of £114·8 million on goods, £200 million on services and £120·7 million on research and development services.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many people in his Ministry are wholly or substantially involved in purchasing stores and distribution activities.

Mr. Curry: The total number of people in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food involved in purchasing stores and distribution activities is 250 of which 104 are wholly involved and 146 substantially involved.

Tributyltin

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will bring forward proposals to ban the use of tributyltin on commercial and naval vessels.

Mr. Curry: The use, sale, supply, advertisement or storage of tributyltin paint for use on vessels under 25m was made an offence under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 as from 1 July 1987. This ban covers more than 98 per cent. of the United Kingdom fishing fleet. The United Kingdom is playing a leading role in international discussions of the need for further controls on the use of antifouling paints containing tributyltin on larger vessels.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now set a minimum permissible delay between stunning and slaughtering of animals in abattoirs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: It is not proposed to prescribe by law minimum periods between the stunning and sticking of animals. The law requires that when animals are stunned they must be instantaneously rendered insensible to pain until death occurs and that there must be no delay between stunning and sticking. Advice on stunning and sticking procedures will be included in planned codes of practice.

Seafood

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking in respect of his Department's aquatic environment monitoring report No. 23 insofar as this relates to the increase in the level of and exposure to radiation in 1989 by members of the public as a result of eating seafood; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The report referred to by the hon. Member shows that, in 1989, the highest dose received by consumers of large quantities of locally-gathered shellfish in the Sellafield area was 0·19 mSv. This is one quarter of the equivalent dose rate of four years earlier. This substantial reduction in the exposure to radiation as a result of eating seafood is a demonstration of the effectiveness of the Government's controls on nuclear discharges.

The minor fluctuations in dose rate over the most recent years are due to natural variations. The downward trend is expected to be resumed from 1993 when new treatment plant now being constructed at Sellafield is commissioned. Meanwhile the dose of 0·19 mSv is only one fifth of the internationally recognised limit of 1 mSv.

Value for Money

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures of performance are employed by his Ministry to ensure value for money.

Mr. Curry: The Ministry's activities are sub-divided into some 70 programmes, each of which has its own output measures and performance indicators. Progress against these measures and indicators is reviewed annually by Ministers and senior management in their assessment of the value for money which is being achieved.

Foxes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide a table of moneys allocated to fox destruction societies in England since 1979.

Mr. Curry: No moneys have been allocated to fox destruction societies since the cessation of payment of grant aid to such societies in 1979.

Wheat

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the prices of wheat for export, free on board, in the United Kingdom, France, the United States of America (Gulf of Mexico), Canada (St. Lawrence), Australia and Argentina.

Mr. Curry: Wheat export prices quoted in the bulletin of the Home-Grown Cereals Authority for 7 March are as follows:

	Price £/tonne	*Basis*
United Kingdom	48·65	FOB East coast
France	48·55	FOB Rouen
United States of America (Soft Red Winter)	59·10	FOB Gulf of Mexico excluding any Export Enhancement Programme bonus
Canada (Premium Milling)	72·10	In store St. Lawrence
Australia (Standard White)	66·85	FOB Eastern States
Argentina	43·73	FOB Bahia Blanca

Import Levies

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the current import levies for the main foods covered by the common agriculture policy; and if he will publish a table showing these figures and the comparable figures on the same date in each of the previous five years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

Information covering import levies on a selection of main foodstuffs covered by the common agricultural policy is as follows. The levies quoted were those in force on 8 March and on the same date in the previous five years:

Description	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Unit of charge						
Durum Wheat £/tonne	133·30	167·99	166·69	124·15	129·94	157·02
Beef forequarters £/100kg	244·68	249·87	265·76	245·01	257·60	281·47
Chicken £/100kg	17·90	25·09	26·12	20·93	21·21	25·01
Pigmeat fore-ends £/100kg	42·20	60·21	62·47	44·64	48·22	60·93
Cheese £/100kg	135·56	161·03	191·01	173·72	163·72	178·86

A more detailed breakdown would be available only at disproportionate cost, although if my hon. Friend is interested in the rates of charge for particular commodities, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise would be pleased to supply these.

DEFENCE

The Gulf

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his plans for weapons parks in the Gulf region.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Options for future United Kingdom contributions to security in the Gulf region are under consideration.

Birmingham Arms Fair

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria were used to determine which Governments were invited to the forthcoming Birmingham arms fair.

Mr. Alan Clark: This exhibition is not being organised by the Government.

Trident

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of *(a)* the percentage effect on the unit cost of Trident D5 missiles and *(b)* the effect on the overall cost of the Trident programme to the United Kingdom, as a result of the decision by the United States Department of Defense to cut back the projected number of Trident submarines.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is not our practice to publish unit production costs for equipment purchased by the Ministry of Defence. As regards the overall cost of the Trident programme, I have nothing to add to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 12 February at column *383*.

SCOTLAND

Badgers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has concerning the number of badgers and the current number of active badger setts in Scotland; how many such setts have been destroyed during the last three years; and for what reasons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on Scotland's badger population is given in the Nature Conservancy Council's publication "The history, distribution, status and habitat requirements of the badger in Britain", a copy of which is in the Library.

No information is available about the number of setts destroyed during the last three years.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken during the last five years to ensure the protection of the badger population and active badger setts from damaging forestry operations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Badger setts are not on the whole vulnerable to damage from forestry operations, since they are characteristically large, subterranean and in well-drained soils. The Forestry Commission nevertheless endeavours to locate all the badger setts on its land so that they can be protected from any possible damage. It has also published forest nature conservation guidelines, for use by its own forest managers and those in the private sector, which emphasise the importance of good management in protecting animal populations.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the cost of refurbishing the Nature Conservancy Council headquarters at Hope terrace, Edinburgh; and if he will outline his Department's assessment of the future use of this building.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Nature Conservancy Council's Scottish headquarters were refurbished between September 1988 and April 1989 at a cost in the region of £600,000.

It will be for Scottish Natural Heritage to consider the future use of the building.

Legal System

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list the average length in days of trials *(a)* on indictment and *(b)* in county courts in Scotland over the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Comprehensive information is not collected centrally in the form requested, but it is estimated that the average length of trials on indictment is between three and four days in the High Court of Justiciary and about two days in the sheriff courts. The average length of summary criminal trials in the sheriff courts is estimated to be about two hours. Such information is not held centrally on the district courts.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list the average payment from legal aid funds to *(a)* solicitors and *(b)* barristers in Scotland over the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

	Solicitors £	*Advocates* £
1985-86	211·32	200·02
1986-87	209·38	263·28
1987-88	207·54	406·07
1988-89	188·03	655·25
1989-90	213·12	746·04

The annual average payments from legal aid funds to solicitors reflect the varying amounts of different types of legal aid work, including advice and assistance, undertaken in each year. The figures for payment to advocates reflect changes in the law on divorce and in court practice.

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of workplaces for civil servants in the Scottish Office; what proportion of the total number have an on-site nursery facility; how many and what proportion

of workplaces provide a holiday play scheme; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide after-school child care facilities; what charges are made for use of any facility; what the net cost has been for the provision of these facilities; and what estimate he can make of any future expenditure.

Mr. Ian Lang: Within the Scottish Office there are 183 workplaces, none of which have on-site nursery or holiday play scheme facilities or provide after-school care. Staff in my Department do have the opportunity during school holidays to use the facilities provided for children of civil servants by the Central Edinburgh holiday play scheme. These facilities are available on a full repayment basis.

There is no planned future expenditure. My Department does not currently satisfy the value-for-money criteria which would justify the provision of financial support for child care schemes.

M8

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects work to begin on the upgrading of the M8 from Baillieston to Newhouse; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have emphasised that a top priority is to complete the central Scotland motorway network. At the west end of the M8 motorway extensions are planned from Baillieston to Shawhead and from Shawhead to Newhouse.

We have been carefully reviewing and scheduling the release of the large motorways schemes in central and southern Scotland to ensure that both the best value for money is obtained from these expensive projects and that the industry can digest them. A record number of motorway schemes are now under construction and as a consequence expenditure is at an all-time high. There are currently five motorway schemes being built and we expect this number to increase shortly.

As regards the Baillieston to Shawhead scheme, we are currently re-examining with British Rail the options for an alternative design and construction method for the Bargeddie railway bridge advance works which, if acceptable, could provide sufficient cost savings on previous tenders. Once this review and all the necessary statutory procedures have been completed, a date for commencing construction of the scheme can be considered.

Preparation work on the Shawhead to Newhouse section is continuing and this is likely to be completed by 1994.

Housing

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the capital debt of each Scottish housing authority at the end of each financial year for each of the past 15 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The following table shows for each local housing authority at 31 March of each year since 1980 the outstanding capital debt associated with houses, buildings and land to which the housing revenue account applies. Details for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Capital Debt as at 31 March (£ Million)

Authority	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*[1]1990*
Berwickshire	11·8	12·1	12·5	12·6	12·3	11·9	12·1	11·7	11·7	11·1	10·8
Ettrick and Lauderdale	17·2	17·3	17·2	17·1	16·6	15·1	14·4	14·1	14·0	13·8	13·7
Roxburgh	25·3	27·0	27·3	29·9	32·1	33·5	34·4	35·6	37·4	38·9	40·8
Tweeddale	3·7	4·2	4·1	3·7	3·5	3·4	3·4	3·5	4·0	3·8	3·6
Clackmannan	24·5	25·2	25·8	26·5	24·8	24·5	24·7	25·2	27·3	28·7	29·3
Falkirk	84·4	86·0	86·7	88·1	87·4	86·8	89·1	93·0	97·5	101·0	100·5
Stirling	28·4	31·8	34·6	37·0	37·5	38·2	40·2	42·5	45·5	48·8	50·2
Annandale and Eskdale	18·3	21·4	23·2	25·5	28·1	29·6	30·5	31·5	32·9	33·4	34·7
Nithsdale	14·1	15·3	14·9	16·6	17·8	18·8	20·0	22·1	24·8	27·0	29·5
Stewartry	8·9	9·4	9·6	10·3	11·2	11·6	12·5	13·2	13·7	14·5	15·1
Wigtown	13·5	14·6	14·5	15·3	16·1	16·4	17·2	18·3	20·0	21·2	22·1
Dunfermline	57·5	59·5	57·4	57·3	52·2	51·1	53·1	55·2	60·4	61·2	60·2
Kirkcaldy	64·4	66·0	69·2	72·5	73·2	71·8	71·8	73·5	77·8	80·6	83·1
North East Fife	22·2	23·7	22·6	19·7	22·6	23·2	24·3	26·1	27·6	27·3	26·2
Aberdeen	129·4	140·1	146·1	147·1	147·5	147·0	150·0	156·1	165·7	170·9	172·9
Banff and Buchan	53·6	57·1	58·7	60·2	60·4	59·4	59·0	59·3	59·7	59·2	58·7
Gordon	29·2	30·2	32·4	34·8	36·2	35·9	39·8	42·9	48·2	53·8	58·5
Kincardine and Deeside	14·7	15·7	15·5	16·9	18·7	20·5	22·5	24·5	27·6	29·5	31·7
Moray	43·0	46·9	48·8	52·0	53·5	53·8	53·7	53·7	55·1	55·0	54·5
Badenoch and Strathspey	4·8	5·6	6·2	6·8	7·3	7·7	7·9	7·7	7·8	7·6	7·7
Caithness	13·5	14·5	14·7	16·2	17·1	17·5	18·7	20·3	22·1	24·2	25·9
Inverness	27·3	29·4	30·1	30·9	33·6	35·4	37·1	40·0	42·0	44·1	45·8
Lochaber	15·9	17·6	18·1	18·7	19·7	21·0	23·0	25·7	27·6	29·3	31·7
Nairn	4·2	4·5	5·0	5·1	5·2	5·3	5·7	6·0	6·7	7·4	8·0
Ross and Cromarty	36·0	38·3	39·2	41·3	44·1	46·0	48·1	50·6	53·9	56·7	58·9
Skye and Lochalsh	3·6	4·0	4·3	4·9	5·5	6·2	7·6	8·9	10·5	11·9	13·2
Sutherland	6·6	6·7	7·0	7·9	8·6	9·4	10·3	11·7	13·0	14·4	16·0
East Lothian	46·2	48·0	50·1	50·3	50·8	49·7	50·6	52·3	54·2	57·7	51·6
Edinburgh	152·8	157·7	163·8	180·6	171·8	173·6	177·4	190·4	210·4	217·9	221·0
Midlothian	35·4	36·3	37·0	35·6	33·9	33·3	33·5	33·9	32·4	28·6	24·7
West Lothian	54·5	54·0	55·4	57·1	57·9	59·3	61·5	64·9	67·7	68·2	67·0
Argyll and Bute	36·2	39·3	41·6	43·8	45·4	45·8	45·3	46·7	48·3	49·5	50·3
Bearsden and Milngavie	6·5	6·5	6·6	6·7	6·6	6·5	6·7	7·3	8·3	9·6	9·6
Clydebank	37·7	39·5	40·7	41·2	42·0	42·2	42·7	43·3	44·4	43·8	42·7
Clydesdale	19·0	19·6	19·5	19·8	20·6	21·0	21·1	21·4	21·8	20·9	19·6
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	11·9	12·4	12·9	13·7	14·0	14·3	14·6	15·0	15·8	15·6	15·2
Cumnock and Doon Valley	21·6	22·8	23·3	24·1	24·5	24·8	25·0	24·9	25·4	25·1	25·6

Authority	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	[1]1990
Cunninghame	56·0	58·8	60·4	60·7	61·7	61·4	61·9	63·4	64·9	64·7	64·0
Dumbarton	29·9	31·0	32·0	31·9	31·6	30·7	31·2	33·0	36·7	37·3	37·1
East Kilbride	4·7	5·0	5·1	5·4	5·7	5·9	6·0	5·9	5·6	5·0	4·7
Eastwood	4·5	3·8	3·6	3·3	3·5	3·8	4·2	4·4	4·7	5·0	5·3
Glasgow	570·4	621·9	669·5	697·2	743·8	772·1	806·0	847·6	898·7	932·8	949·7
Hamilton	60·9	65·4	69·1	70·6	72·1	73·0	74·6	75·4	77·4	76·8	75·4
Inverclyde	60·5	62·7	63·7	65·5	66·8	66·0	65·9	68·5	71·4	75·1	77·8
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	41·2	42·1	42·1	41·9	42·2	42·4	43·1	44·0	45·3	45·6	44·3
Kyle and Carrick	57·3	58·0	60·4	62·1	63·4	63·4	64·6	64·2	64·9	62·1	59·8
Monklands	71·4	76·9	81·4	86·6	89·8	90·3	91·5	92·8	97·4	99·0	99·1
Motherwell	92·4	98·6	103·0	105·0	106·8	106·8	108·0	109·9	110·0	112·3	111·8
Renfrew	75·4	80·3	83·0	83·6	88·2	88·8	92·9	98·5	105·9	113·6	114·7
Strathkelvin	30·2	33·2	34·2	34·9	35·7	35·9	35·6	37·0	37·0	36·7	38·1
Angus	41·4	42·8	42·0	41·4	39·7	37·8	37·6	37·8	37·5	36·2	35·6
Dundee	96·4	101·7	103·9	107·2	111·2	112·1	114·8	119·2	127·0	129·2	128·0
Perth and Kinross	43·5	45·5	45·4	43·5	43·3	45·5	46·3	47·3	48·4	49·8	50·4
Orkney	10·0	10·4	9·8	10·3	10·6	11·3	11·4	11·2	11·2	11·1	10·8
Shetland	20·5	23·4	24·6	26·2	27·5	30·1	32·3	35·7	37·6	41·9	45·5
Western Isles	14·2	16·1	18·6	20·6	22·5	24·4	26·6	28·6	31·5	34·1	37·6

[1] Provisional.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the loss of housing stock in rural areas through the rent-to-mortgage scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Sales through the rent-to-mortgage scheme do not result in a loss of housing stock in rural or other areas but in a change of housing tenure. I consider that public sector tenants in rural areas should have the same opportunity to purchase their homes as their urban counterparts. Significant interest has been shown by around 10,000 local authority tenants throughout Scotland who will be eligible to participate in the rent to mortgage scheme from 1 April 1991. Wider issues relating to housing in rural areas are being addressed by Scottish Homes through its rural strategy.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the loan charges balance of each Scottish housing authority for each of the past 15 years, the source of loans and the rates of interest.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the loan charge proportion of each £ of rent charged by the four cities' housing authorities in Scotland, respectively, in the last available financial year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authority rented income is not allocated to meet any particular item or items of expenditure debited to housing revenue accounts. The following table expresses the total loan charges debited to the 1989-90 housing revenue accounts of the local housing authorities concerned as a percentage of the standard rental income credited to those accounts:

	Per cent.
City of Aberdeen District Council	69·9
City of Edinburgh District Council	46·9
City of Glasgow District Council	75·1
City of Dundee District Council	66·9

An Comunn Gaidhealach

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals his Department has to make available to An Comunn Gaidhealach additional funding for the pursuit of its objectives in 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office Education Department's grant to An Comunn Gaidhealach for the financial year 1991-92 will amount to £37,000, an increase of £2,000 over the currently financial year.

Nurses

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action the Greater Glasgow health board is taking to expedite its backlog of regrading appeals by nurses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I understand that by the end of March 1991, the great majority of appeals lodged with Greater Glasgow health board will have been heard and that the board intends to deal with the remainder as quickly as possible.

Higher Education

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average public expenditure per student in Scottish higher education in each year since 1975.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The average public expenditure through recurrent grant and tuition fees per student in the Scottish grant-aided colleges since 1980-81 is given in the following table.

Financial year	£
1980-81	3,028
1981-82	3,099
1982-83	3,179
1983-84	3,242
1984-85	3,422
1985-86	3,695
[1]1986-87	3,600
1987-88	3,793
1988-89	4,025
1989-90	4,106
[2]1990-91	4,225

[1] Napier Polytechnic of Edinburgh and Glasgow Polytechnic became central institutions on 1 September 1985, and are included from financial year 1986-87 onwards.
[2] Estimate.

Figures for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Information relating to the universities in Scotland has not been included since the funding of universities is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. Information about expenditure relating to higher education courses at further education colleges is not held centrally.

Recycling

Mr. McAllion To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how he intends to fund innovative recycling projects in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: All recycling projects put forward by local authorities when they submit their financial plans will be carefully considered for capital consent. Indeed, those authorities who have already identified such projects in their plans have received priority when consent allocations have been determined.

We also look to industry to invest in the necessary technology to meet consumer demand for recycled products. There is a wide range of research and development support schemes available to assist industry with innovative projects including recycling initiatives. Assistance is also available to voluntary bodies, in particular under the special grants (environmental) programme and the UK 2000 (Scotland) programme.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether there are schemes available to Scottish local authorities equivalent to the reserve fund for innovative recycling projects, and the supplementary credit approval scheme which are available to local authorities in England and Wales for funding recycling projects; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: There is no reserve fund for innovative recycling projects but assistance may be given under the environmental technology innovation scheme which was launched in December last year and covers Scotland as well as England and Wales. In Scotland assistance may also be available through the special grant (environmental) programme which is equivalent to the environmental grant fund in England. However, neither of these sources of funding are appropriate for local authorities. The supplementary credit approval arrangements for controlling local authority capital expenditure do not apply in Scotland. We have an established procedure within which local authorities can seek capital expenditure allocations to cover recycling projects. A summary of the procedure is given in my reply of 24 January 1991 to my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) at columns *306-07*.

Infertility

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Home and Health Department has completed its response to the report of the National Medical Advisory Committee of the Scottish Health Advisory Council on the provision of infertility treatment for childless couples; when it is proposed to publish its recommendations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The National Medical Advisory Committee's report on infertility services in Scotland is being considered by a Scottish Office Home and Health Department project team with the remit of developing the issues it raises, particularly in relation to how an assisted reproduction service for Scotland might be introduced, structured, organised and funded. The report will be published when these issues have been fully considered.

Health Services

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which hospital boards will have an underspend on salaries at the end of the current financial year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Local Government Finance

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland at what point after their Gulf posting local authorities are able to exempt *(a)* married and *(b)* single service personnel from the poll tax.

Mr. Allan Stewart: There is no provision for exempting service personnel from the personal community charge. However, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 19 February, the Government have concluded that service personnel and associated civilians posted to the Gulf should not have to bear the cost of the community charge during the period of their posting. The details of how this will be achieved are at present being finalised.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the average domestic rate bill in each local authority in Scotland which would be necessary to yield the same revenue as his estimate of the yield of the community charge in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* In the absence of up-to-date information on the number of domestic rateable subjects it is not possible to answer this

question precisely. The table is based on provisional outturn information from local authorities on the yield of the community charge in 1990-91 and the budgeted yield in 1991-92, together with details of the number of domestic subjects at 1 April 1988.

	Average rates yield per domestic subject to give same income as community charge in:	
	1990-91 (Provisional outturn) £	*1991-92 (Budget estimate)* £
District Councils		
Berwickshire	341·12	446·11
Ettrick and Lauderdale	357·91	471·59
Roxburgh	361·58	464·20
Tweeddale	360·39	459·01
Clackmannan	577·63	712·30
Falkirk	467·37	596·71
Stirling	591·51	706·80
Annandale and Eskdale	434·17	552·97
Nithsdale	420·91	549·25
Stewartry	399·99	514·14
Wigtown	402·36	536·68
Dunfermline	545·96	674·65
Kirkcaldy	552·51	670·19
North East Fife	569·19	682·86
Aberdeen City	438·20	587·99
Banff and Buchan	398·48	521·02
Gordon	372·38	498·11
Kincardine and Deeside	339·85	462·06
Moray	364·58	480·26
Badenoch and Strathspey	389·68	500·75
Caithness	382·92	488·32
Inverness	381·78	490·99
Lochaber	417·53	541·90
Nairn	384·56	495·91
Ross and Cromarty	415·85	536·38
Skye and Lochalsh	379·36	501·36
Sutherland	361·57	504·45
East Lothian	645·71	840·53
Edinburgh City	694·83	894·07
Midlothian	635·09	831·69
West Lothian	628·85	792·16
Argyll and Bute	501·63	625·84
Bearsden and Milngavie	519·54	631·19
Clydebank	535·67	675·87
Clydesdale	524·53	647·53
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	486·10	594·97
Cumnock and Doon Valley	484·86	596·04
Cunninghame	493·95	656·15
Dumbarton	559·03	718·45
East Kilbride	570·97	689·67
Eastwood	458·88	565·42
Glasgow City	495·80	647·93
Hamilton	515·74	655·51
Inverclyde	501·73	617·25
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	472·09	606·35
Kyle and Carrick	534·62	681·44
Monklands	538·90	664·36
Motherwell	499·40	614·78
Renfrew	536·63	665·62
Strathkelvin	543·33	670·29
Angus	446·80	573·28
Dundee City	482·80	634·57
Perth and Kinross	452·13	585·63
Islands Councils		
Orkney	234·95	250·00
Shetland	131·56	221·68
Western Isles	268·52	272·58

Scottish Homes

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of Scottish Homes grant-in-aid allocations has been spent in Greenock and Port Glasgow in 1989-90 and 1990-91 in percentage terms and as cash.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information sought is not held by the Scottish Office Environment Department. Allocations to particular areas are a matter for Scottish Homes.

Public Appointments

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the full-time and part-time public appointments for which he was responsible for each of the past eight years, together with the salary and the date when each appointment is due for renewal.

Mr. Lang: Table 1 shows the information requested as at 1 July 1990. Table 2 provides information in respect of these appointments for which I am jointly responsible with other Ministers. New appointments have been made in respect of most of the appointments which have expired since the annual updating of the list in July, but that information and similar lists for previous years could be produced only at disproportionate cost. The Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies", however, published each year since 1982 and available in the Library, lists the public bodies to which appointments are made, including numbers of appointments and the remuneration paid.

I have made appointments to four major new bodies since July. Scottish Enterprise (which from April will take over the functions of the Scottish Development Agency and the Training Agency in lowland Scotland) has a part-time chairman (salary £43,000, appointed to 31 December 1993) and 10 members (salary £6,000, appointed to 30 September 1993). Highlands and Islands Enterprise (which from April will take over the functions of the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Training Agency in the Highlands and Islands) has a full-time chairman (salary £57,105, appointed to 31 August 1992), one full-time member (salary £52,650, appointed to 30 April 1993) and eight part-time members (salary £6,000, one appointed to 31 October 1992 and seven to 30 August 1993). The Health Education Board for Scotland (which from April will replace the Scottish Health Education Group) has a part-time chairman (salary £13,500, appointed to 31 March 1995) and 10 members (salary £2,000, five appointed to 31 March 1993 and five to 31 March 1995). The Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland (which from April will take over the duties of the NCC in Scotland) has a part-time chairman (salary £20,000, appointed to 31 March 1992), 11 members (four with a salary of £8,616 and seven paid £5,385, all appointed to 31 March 1992). In addition the chief executives of the first three bodies are members ex-officio.

Appointments for which the Secretary of State for Scotland is responsible as at 1 July 1990

Rank	*Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)*	*Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)*	*Appointment to*
Aberdeen and District Milk Marketing Board			
1 Member	PT	0	31 October 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 March 1993
Advisory committee on Borderline Substances			
1 Member	PT	0	31 January 1992
Advisory committee on Dental Establishments			
1 Member	PT	0	31 July 1990
1 Member	PT	0	31 July 1991
3 Members	PT	0	31 July 1992
1 Member	PT	0	31 July 1994
Advisory committee on Medical Establishments			
1 member	PT	0	31 October 1990
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1990
1 Member	PT	0	31 March 1992
4 Members	PT	0	31 March 1993
8 Members	PT	0	31 March 1994
Advisory committee on Scotland's travelling people			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
Deputy Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
10 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Advisory group on breast cancer screening			
Chairman	PT	0	31 October 1990
11 Members	PT	0	31 October 1990
Ancient monuments board for Scotland			
Chairman	PT	0	31 May 1991
4 Members	PT	0	31 May 1991
7 Members	PT	0	31 May 1992
4 Members	PT	0	31 May 1993
Ancillary Dental Auxiliaries committee of the General Dental Council			
3 Members	PT	0	31 August 1992

Rank	*Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)*	*Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)*	*Appointment to*
Animal Diseases Research Association—Governing Body			
Member	PT	0	14 April 1993
Argyll and Clyde Health Board			
Chairman	PT	16,005	31 March 1991
Vice Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
14 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
Ayrshire and Arran Health Board			
Chairman	PT	13,415	31 March 1993
Vice Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
16 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 March 1993
Borders Health Board			
Chairman	PT	10,810	31 March 1993
Vice Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
13 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
Boundary Commission for Scotland			
2 Members	PT	0	31 December 1993
Building Standards Advisory Committee			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1990
14 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
Caledonian MacBrayne			
Chairman	PT	15,000	31 December 1992
2 Members	PT	4,500	31 March 1992
5 Members	PT	4,500	31 March 1993

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Central Advisory Committee on Justices of the Peace (Scotland)			
Chairman	PT	0	Open-ended
17 Members	PT	0	15 May 1991
Central Scotland Woodlands Ltd			
Chairman	PT	Fee paid	Term not yet decided
8 Members	PT		

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Children's panel advisory committee for Borders Region			
1 Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1992
Children's panel advisory committee for Central Region			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1992
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992
Children's panel advisory committee for Dumfries and Galloway Region			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
2 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992
Children's panel advisory committee for Fife Region			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1991
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992
Children's panel advisory committee for Grampian Region			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1990
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1990
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1992
Children's panel advisory committee for Highland Region			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1990
2 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1992
Children's panel advisory committee for Lothian Region			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1990
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1991
Children's panel advisory committee for Orkney Islands area			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1990
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1990
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1992

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Children's panel advisory committee for Shetland Islands area			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1992
Children's panel advisory committee for Strathclyde region			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1990
5 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1992
Children's panel advisory committee for the Tayside region			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1992
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1992

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Children's panel advisory committee for Western Isles islands area			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1992
2 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992
Children's panel for the Borders region			
Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1992
Deputy Chairman	PT	0	16 May 1994
Children's panel for the Central region			
Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1995
Deputy Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1992
Children's panel for the Dumfries and Galloway region			
Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1992
Deputy Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1991
Children's panel for the Fife region			
Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1992
Deputy Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1991
Children's panel for the Grampian region			
Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1992
Deputy Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1992
Children's panel for the Highland region			
Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1992
Deputy Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1992

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Children's panel for the Lothian region			
Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1991
Deputy Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1992
Deputy Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1993
Children's panel for the Orkney Islands area			
Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1992
Deputy Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1992
Children's panel for the Shetland Islands area			
Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1991
Deputy Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1992
Children's panel for the Strathclyde region			
Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1991
Deputy Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1991
Children's panel for the Tayside region			
Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1991
2 Deputy Chairmen	PT	0	15 May 1991
Children's panel for the Western Isles Island area			
Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1992
Deputy Chairman	PT	0	15 May 1992
Clyde River purification board			
8 Members	PT	0	15 May 1992
8 Members	PT	0	15 May 1994
Commission for local authority accounts in Scotland			
Chairman	PT	7,939	30 September 1991
Deputy Chairman	PT	5,030	30 September 1991
2 Members	PT	2,500	30 September 1990
3 Members	PT	2,500	30 September 1992
1 Member	PT	2,500	30 September 1993
2 Members	PT	2,650	30 September 1993
Committee of investigation for Scotland (under the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958)			
Chairman	PT	0	30 November 1991
1 Member	PT	0	14 August 1992

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Common services agency for the Scottish Health Service Management Committee			
Chairman	PT	12,355	31 March 1991
7 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 March 1991
Consultative committee on freshwater fisheries			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1992
8 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992
Consumers committee for Scotland			
Chairman	PT	0	23 August 1991
Counsel to Secretary of State private legislation procedure			
1 Member	PT	10,994	31 December 1999
1 Member	PT	7,568	31 December 1999
Countryside commission for Scotland			
Chairman	PT	15,365	31 March 1992
Deputy Chairman	PT	6,422	31 March 1992
12 Members	PT	0	31 March 1992
Court for Cranfield Institute of Technology			
1 Member	PT	0	14 January 1991
Craigie College of Education governing body			
Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
2 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board			
Member	PT	0	31 March 1992
Crofters Commission			
Chairman	FT	36,848	30 September 1992
6 Members	PT	9,393	30 September 1992
Cumbernauld Development Corporation			
Chairman	PT	18,202	31 December 1993
Deputy Chairman	PT	7,804	31 December 1993
3 Members	PT	3,525	31 December 1990
2 Members	PT	3,525	31 December 1991
1 Member	PT	3,525	31 December 1992
1 Member	PT	3,525	31 December 1993
1 Member	PT	3,735	31 December 1993

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Dairy produce quota tribunal for Scotland			
20 Members	PT	0	Open-ended
Dumfries and Galloway health board			
Chairman	PT	10,810	31 March 1992
Vice Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
15 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art—Board of Governors			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
5 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992
Dundee Institute of Technology—Board of Governors			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
4 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
East Kilbride Development Corporation			
Chairman	PT	18,202	31 December 1994
Deputy Chairman	PT	8,272	31 December 1993
2 Members	PT	3,525	31 December 1991
3 Members	PT	3,525	31 December 1992
2 Members	PT	3,735	31 December 1994

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Edinburgh College of Art—Board of Governors			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1990
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1990
4 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Edinburgh New Town Conservation Committee			
Chairman	PT	0	31 January 1996
2 Members	PT	0	30 November 1990
Fife Health Board			
Chairman	PT	13,415	31 March 1991
Vice Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
16 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Fish Farming Advisory Committee			
Chairman	PT	0	Open-ended
Deputy Chairman	PT	0	Open-ended
Forth River Purification Board			
6 members	PT	0	15 May 1992
5 members	PT	0	15 May 1994
Forth Valley Health Board			
Chairman	PT	13,415	31 March 1993
Vice Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
11 members	PT	0	31 March 1991
2 members	PT	0	31 March 1993
General Teaching Council for Scotland			
4 members	PT	0	31 January 1991
Glasgow College of Technology—Board of Governors			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1992
4 members	PT	0	31 December 1990
4 members	PT	0	31 December 1991
4 members	PT	0	31 December 1992
Glasgow School of Arts—Board of Governors			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
5 members	PT	0	31 December 1990
3 members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Glenrothes Development Corporation			
Chairman	PT	10,202	31 December 1994
Deputy Chairman	PT	7,804	31 December 1993
1 member	PT	3,525	31 December 1990
3 members	PT	3,525	31 December 1991
2 members	PT	3,525	31 December 1993
2 members	PT	3,525	31 December 1994
Grampian Health Board			
Chairman	PT	18,250	31 March 1993
Vice Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
16 members	PT	0	31 March 1991
1 member	PT	0	31 March 1993

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Greater Glasgow Health Board			
Chairman	PT	22,730	31 March 1991
Vice-Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
17 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
Hannah Research Institute—Governing Body			
1 Member	PT	0	31 January 1992
1 Member	PT	0	31 January 1993
Highland Health Board			
Chairman	PT	13,415	31 March 1991

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Vice Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
16 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
Highland River Purification Board			
4 Members	PT	0	15 May 1992
5 Members	PT	0	15 May 1994
Highlands and Islands Development Board			
Chairman	FT	56,540	31 July 1992
Deputy Chairman	FT	52,130	30 April 1993
1 Member	FT	41,500	31 March 1991
1 Member	PT	8,123	30 November 1991
1 Member	PT	8,123	31 December 1991
1 Member	PT	8,123	31 October 1992
1 Member	FT	46,695	31 December 1992
Highlands and Islands Consultative Council (the Council will be dissolved on 31 March 1991)			
Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1992
22 Members	PT	0	31 August 1990
11 Members	PT	0	31 July 1992
Hill Farming Advisory Committee for Scotland			
14 Members	PT	0	5 November 1990
Historic Buildings Council for Scotland			
Chairman	PT	0	30 November 1991
2 Members	PT	0	30 November 1991
5 Members	PT	0	30 November 1992
5 Members	PT	0	30 November 1993

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Her Majesty's Commissioners for Queen Victoria school Dunblane			
1 Member	PT	0	Open-ended
1 Member	PT	0	19 February 1991
1 Member	PT	0	26 June 1992
1 Member	PT	0	31 May 1993
1 Member	PT	0	5 February 1994
1 Member	PT	0	31 August 1994
1 Member	PT	0	30 April 1996
Horse Race Betting Levy appeal tribunal for Scotland			
2 Members	PT	109 per day	31 December 1990
Irvine Development Corporation			
Chairman	PT	18,202	31 December 1993
Deputy Chairman	PT	8,272	31 December 1993
1 Member	PT	3,735	31 December 1990
2 Members	PT	3,735	31 December 1991
2 Members	PT	3,735	31 December 1992
2 Members	PT	3,735	31 December 1993
Jordanhill college of education governing body			
Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
3 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
Lanarkshire health board			
Chairman	PT	16,005	31 March 1991
Vice Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
17 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
Livingston Development Corporation			
Chairman	PT	17,172	31 December 1990
Deputy Chairman	PT	8,272	31 December 1992
4 Members	PT	3,525	31 December 1991
2 Members	PT	3,735	31 December 1992
1 Member	PT	3,525	31 December 1993
Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland			
Chairman	PT	4,691	31 October 1994
Vice Chairman	PT	11,122	31 March 1992
1 Member	PT	1,573	31 October 1991

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
1 Member	PT	1,573	31 October 1992
1 Member	PT	1,573	31 October 1993

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Local Review Committee HM Prison Aberdeen			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
5 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Local Review Committee HM Prison Cornton Vale			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
5 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Local Review Committee HM Prison Dungavel			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
5 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Local Review Committee HM Prison Edinburgh			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
8 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Local Review Committee HM Prison Glenochil			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
7 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Local Review Committee HM Prison Penninghame			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
5 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Local Review Committee HM Prison Perth			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
6 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Local Review Committee HM Prison Peterhead			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
4 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Local Review Committee HM Prison Shotts			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
10 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Local review committee Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institution Dumfries			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
5 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Local review committee Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institution Polmont			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
5 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Local review committee Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institution Castle Huntly and Her Majesty's Prison Noranside			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
5 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Lothian Health Board			
Chairman	PT	20,490	31 March 1991
16 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 March 1993
Macaulay land use Research Institute			
Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1994
7 Members	PT	0	31 March 1992
6 Members	PT	0	31 March 1994
Milk appeals tribunal			
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1999
Moray House College of Education Governing Body			
Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
3 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Napier Polytechnic of Edinburgh—Board of Governors			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
Vice Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1992
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
4 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992
National appeal panel for entry to Pharmaceutical Lists in Scotland			
Chairman	PT	0	30 September 1990
Vice Chairman	PT	0	30 September 1990

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
National board for nursing midwifery and health visiting for Scotland			
11 Members	PT	0	14 September 1993
National galleries of Scotland board of trustees			
Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1993
1 Member	PT	0	31 March 1991
1 Member	PT	0	4 May 1991
4 Members	PT	0	31 March 1992
2 Members	PT	0	31 March 1994
National health service tribunal Scotland			
1 Member	PT	0	Open-ended
National library of Scotland board of trustees			
4 Members	PT	0	Open-ended
National museums of Scotland—board of trustees			
Chairman	PT	0	30 September 1993
7 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
1 Member	PT	0	30 September 1991
2 Members	PT	0	30 September 1992
2 Members	PT	0	30 September 1993
National panel of specialists			
17 Members	PT	0	31 March 1992
11 Members	PT	0	31 March 1994
North east river purification board			
3 Members	PT	0	15 May 1992
3 Members	PT	0	15 May 1994
North of Scotland milk marketing board			
1 Member	PT	0	2 December 1990
1 Member	PT	0	31 January 1991
Northern college of education—governing body			
Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
3 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Orkney Health Board			
Chairman	PT	6,610	31 March 1991
Vice Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
12 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
Paisley College of Technology-Governors			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1990
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
5 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
4 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992
Parole Board for Scotland			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
6 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
5 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Police (Scotland) Examinations Board			
Chairman	PT	0	28 February 1992
1 Member	PT	0	28 February 1992
Police Advisory Board for Scotland			
1 Member	PT	0	31 May 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 May 1992
2 Members	PT	0	31 May 1993
Post Qualification Education Board for Health Service Pharmacists			
Chairman	PT	0	28 February 1992
10 Members	PT	0	28 February 1992
Preliminary Review Committee for life sentence prisoners			
Chairman	PT	0	Open-ended
3 Members	PT	[1]—	Open-ended
1 Member	PT	0	Open-ended
Queen Margaret College Edinburgh-Governors			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
4 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
2 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Race relations assessors in Scotland			
10 Members	PT	0	Open-ended

[1]Varied daily fees paid.

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Red Deer Commission			
Chairman	PT	15,173	31 December 1992
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1991
1 Member	PT	0	21 December 1992
10 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992
Registration of social work establishments appeal tribunal panel			
12 Members	PT	0	26 October 1991
Rent assessment panel for Scotland			
President	PT	12,471	6 May 1993
Vice President	PT	7,863	6 May 1993
Robert Gordon's Institute of Technology—Board of Governors			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1993
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
2 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992
Rowett Research Institute-governing body			
2 Members	PT	0	31 March 1992
Royal Botanic Garden—Board of Trustees			
Chairman	PT	0	30 June 1994
3 Members	PT	0	31 October 1990
4 Members	PT	0	31 October 1992
Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama—governors			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
4 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
5 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992
St. Andrew's Links Trust			
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1993
Scottish Standing Committee calculation of residual values of Fertilisers and Feeding stuff			
Chairman	PT	0	Open-ended
4 Members	PT	0	Open-ended

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Scottish Advisory Committee on Top Grade Scientific Posts			
2 members	PT	0	31 March 1992
6 members	PT	0	31 March 1994
Scottish Agricultural Consultative Panel			
25 members	PT	0	31 December 1999
Scottish Agricultural Wages Board			
Chairman	PT	137 per day	17 May 1991
2 members	PT	87 per day	3 May 1993
1 member	PT	87 per day	15 December 1992
Scottish Agricultural Statistics Consultative Committee			
5 members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Scottish Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council			
15 members	PT	0	Open-ended
Scottish College of Textiles Galashiels—Board of Governors			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1990
3 members	PT	0	31 December 1990
4 members	PT	0	31 December 1991
5 members	PT	0	31 December 1992
Scottish Committee for Staff Development in Education			
Chairman	PT	0	17 May 1991
14 members	PT	0	17 May 1991
Scottish Community Education Council			
Chairman	PT	18,250	31 March 1991
7 members	PT	0	31 March 1991
3 members	PT	0	31 March 1993
Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum			
Chairman	PT	0	31 August 1990
12 members	PT	0	31 August 1990
17 members	PT	0	31 August 1991
Scottish Council for Educational Technology			
Chairman	PT	0	30 September 1990
13 members	PT	0	30 September 1990

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Scottish Council for Post Graduate Medical Education			
Chairman	PT	0	30 April 1994
1 Member	PT	0	30 September 1990
5 Members	PT	0	30 September 1992
Scottish Council for Research in Education			
Chairman	PT	0	31 August 1992
2 Members	PT	0	31 August 1992
Scottish Crop Research Institute—Governing Body			
Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1992
12 Members	PT	0	31 March 1992
1 Member	PT	0	30 June 1992
1 Member	PT	0	2 August 1992
Scottish Dental Practice Board			
Chairman	FT	33,991	31 December 1999
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1993
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1995
Scottish Development Agency			
Chairman	PT	38,836	31 December 1993
Deputy Chairman	PT	19,665	31 December 1990
4 Members	PT	5,370	31 December 1990
1 Member	PT	5,370	31 December 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 July 1992
Scottish Economic Council			
1 Member	PT	0	31 January 1991

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
1 Member	PT	0	31 January 1992
11 Members	PT	0	31 January 1993
19 Members	PT	0	31 January 1995
Scottish Examination Board			
Chairman	PT	0	31 August 1990
23 Members	PT	0	31 August 1990
14 Members	PT	0	31 August 1992

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Scottish health service planning council			
Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1993
9 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
6 Members	PT	0	31 March 1993
Scottish homes			
Chairman	PT	30,719	31 March 1993
Deputy Chairman	PT	13,957	30 September 1993
3 Members	PT	5,330	31 March 1991
3 Members	PT	5,330	31 March 1993
1 Member	PT	5,330	31 March 1995
(The Chief Executive is also a member ex-officio)			
Scottish hospital endowments research trust			
Chairman	PT	0	30 June 1995
3 Members	PT	0	31 March 1992
2 Members	PT	0	31 March 1996
Scottish hospital trust			
Chairman	PT	0	31 August 1994
1 Member	PT	0	31 August 1993
1 Member	PT	0	31 August 1994
3 Members	PT	0	31 August 1995
Scottish Hydro-Electric plc			
Chairman	PT	39,750	31 March 1993
3 Members	PT	4,860	31 March 1993
3 Members	FT	60,000	31 March 1993
1 Member	FT	79,700	31 March 1993
Scottish industrial development advisory board			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
2 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
5 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
4 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992
Scottish legal aid board			
Chairman	PT	17,170	31 March 1991
7 Members	PT	8,529	31 March 1992
7 Members	PT	8,529	31 March 1994

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Scottish Milk Marketing Board			
1 Member	PT	0	2 December 1990
1 Member	PT	0	13 December 1991
Scottish National War Memorial Board of Trustees			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1990
2 Members	PT	0	31 December 1993
Scottish Police College Board of Governors			
1 Member	PT	0	31 May 1993
Scottish Power plc			
Chairman	FT	66,900	31 March 1993
4 Members	PT	4,860	31 March 1993
1 Member	FT	57,000	31 March 1993
1 Member	FT	54,600	31 March 1993

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
1 Member	FT	63,000	31 March 1993
1 Member	FT	66,000	31 March 1993
Scottish Records Advisory Council			
Chairman	PT	0	30 September 1991
5 Members	PT	0	31 January 1992
6 Members	PT	0	31 July 1993
Scottish Seed Potato Development Council			
Chairman	PT	7,110	17 January 1994
Deputy Chairman	PT	0	17 January 1994
15 Members	PT	0	17 January 1994
Scottish Sports Council			
Chairman	PT	0	15 November 1991
Vice Chairman	PT	0	15 November 1992
2 Members	PT	0	15 November 1991
2 Members	PT	0	15 November 1990
9 Members	PT	0	15 November 1993
Scottish Studentship Selection Committee			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1992
2 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1993

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Scottish Tourist Board			
Chairman	PT	28,048	28 February 1995
1 Member	PT	5,330	30 June 1991
2 Members	PT	5,300	30 September 1992
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1993
1 Member	PT	5,330	28 February 1993
1 Member	PT	5,330	31 October 1993
Scottish Transport Group			
Chairman	FT	64,610	31 December 1990
Deputy Chairman	PT	12,922	31 December 1990
1 Member	PT	6,804	31 December 1990
3 Members	PT	5,184	31 December 1990
Scottish Valuation Advisory Council			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
Deputy Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
10 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Scottish Vocational Educational Council			
Chairman	PT	0	31 August 1991
Vice Chairman	PT	0	31 August 1991
7 Members	PT	0	31 August 1991
6 Members	PT	0	31 August 1993
Secretary of States (Electricity) Fisheries Committee			
Chairman	PT	0	31 October 1990
Secretary	PT	0	31 October 1990
4 Members	PT	0	31 October 1990
Secretary of States Advisory Panel of Economic Consultants			
9 Members	PT	0	31 December 1999
Shetland Health Board			
Chairman	PT	6,510	31 March 1993
Vice Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
12 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
Solway River Purification Board			
3 Members	PT	0	15 May 1992
2 Members	PT	0	15 May 1994

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
St. Andrew's College of Education Governing Body			
Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
2 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
State Hospital Management Committee			
Chairman	PT	11,955	31 May 1991
3 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 January 1992
6 Members	PT	0	31 May 1992
1 Member	PT	0	31 May 1993
1 Member	PT	0	31 October 1993
Tay River Purification Board			
3 Members	PT	0	15 May 1992
3 Members	PT	0	15 May 1992
Tayside Health Board			
Chairman	PT	18,250	31 March 1991
17 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
The Queen's College Glasgow—Board of Governors			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1992
3 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
5 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
3 Members	PT	o	31 December 1992
The Scottish Agricultural College			
Chairman	PT	—	31 May 1994
6 Members	PT	—	31 March 1992
4 Members	PT	—	31 March 1994
Tweed River Purification Board			
3 Members	PT	0	15 May 1992
2 Members	PT	0	15 May 1994
Visiting Committee HMYO Glenochil			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
10 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Visiting committee HMYO Institution Castle Huntly			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
9 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Visiting committee HMYO Institution Cornton Vale			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
9 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Visiting committee HMYO Institution Polmont			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1990
6 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
Western Isles Health Board			
Chairman	PT	6,510	31 March 1991
Vice Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
13 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991

Table 2

Appointments made jointly by Secretary of State for Scotland and other Ministers as at 1 July 1990

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Advisory committee on Borderline Substances			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1992
Advisory committee on Distinctive Awards			
Chairman	PT	21,450	31 July 1993
Deputy Chairman	PT	7,900	31 May 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 January 1991
4 Members	PT	0	31 May 1991

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
1 Member	PT	0	31 January 1992
7 Members	PT	0	31 May 1992
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1992
1 Member	PT	0	31 January 1993
7 Members	PT	0	31 May 1993
Advisory committee on NHS drugs			
10 Members	PT	0	8 October 1992
4 Members	PT	0	8 October 1993
Agricultural Training Board			
Chairman	PT	6,589	31 March 1992
Deputy Chairman	PT	6,041	31 March 1992
9 Members	PT	0	31 March 1992
British Pharmacopeia Commission			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1993
Deputy Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1993
9 Members	PT	0	31 December 1993
6 Members	PT	0	31 December 1993
British Wool Marketing Board			
1 Member	PT	5,675	13 March 1992
1 Member	PT	5,675	24 September 1992
1 Member	PT	5,675	31 March 1993

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Committee of investigation for Great Britain			
Chairman	PT	0	31 July 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 July 1991
1 Member	PT	0	30 November 1991
1 Member	PT	0	5 December 1991
1 Member	PT	0	5 January 1993
Committee on dental and surgical materials			
Chairmen	PT	0	31 December 1992
18 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992
Committee on safety of medicines			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1992
19 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992
Committee on the review of medicines			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1992
13 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992
Consumers committee for Great Britain			
Chairman	PT	0	26 September 1991
1 Member	PT	0	29 November 1990
3 Member	PT	0	31 December 1990
1 Member	PT	0	7 January 1991
1 Member	PT	0	23 August 1991
1 Member	PT	0	23 May 1992
1 Member	PT	0	7 December 1992
1 Member	PT	0	4 June 1993
Council for national academic awards			
Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1991
23 Members	PT	0	31 August 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 August 1992
Council for professions supplementary to medicine			
Vice Chairman	PT	0	30 June 1992
1 Member	PT	0	28 February 1991
1 Member	PT	0	30 June 1992
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board			
Chairman	PT	22,650	31 March 1995
38 Members	PT	0	31 March 1992

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Director General of Electricity Supply			
	FT	71,000	26 July 1994
Extra Parliamentary Panel			
20 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
Farm Animal Welfare Council			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1994
3 Members	PT	0	30 June 1991
1 Member	PT	0	30 September 1991
4 Members	PT	0	31 October 1991
1 Member	PT	0	30 November 1991
6 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 January 1992
2 Members	PT	0	31 December 1992
4 Members	PT	0	31 December 1993
Food Advisory Committee			
Chairman	PT	0	31 October 1991
3 Members	PT	0	31 October 1991
10 Members	PT	0	30 October 1992
1 Member	PT	0	31 July 1993
Food From Britain			
Chairman	PT	30,000	30 March 1994
Deputy Chairman	PT	4,290	22 September 1992
2 Members	PT	1,804	30 September 1990
9 Members	PT	1,895	22 September 1992
1 Member	PT	4,290	21 September 1993
Home Grown Cereals Authority			
Chairman	PT	15,441	2 June 1992
Deputy Chairman	PT	5,330	2 June 1991
6 Members	PT	2,660	2 June 1991
7 Members	PT	2,660	2 June 1992
6 Members	PT	2,660	2 June 1993
Horticultural Development Council			
Chairman	PT	21,138	31 July 1992
Deputy Chairman	PT	3,830	31 July 1992
6 Members	PT	25 per day	31 July 1991
14 Members	PT	25 per day	31 July 1992

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce			
Chairman	PT	5,477	21 February 1992
Meat and Livestock Commission			
Chairman	PT	45,453	31 August 1993
Deputy Chairman	PT	22,465	7 January 1992
1 Member	PT	10,840	31 March 1992
9 Members	PT	5,330	31 March 1992
Medicines Commission			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1993
12 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
11 Members	PT	0	31 December 1993
National Biological Standards Board			
Chairman	PT	0	31 March 1992
10 Members	PT	0	31 March 1992
5 Members	PT	0	31 March 1994
1 Member	PT	0	30 October 1998
National Council for Educational Technology			
Chairman	PT	0	31 October 1991
3 Members	PT	0	23 February 1991
National Radiological Protection Board			
Chairman	PT	9,310	30 September 1993
5 Members	PT	per day 66	30 September 1991
1 Member	PT	per day 66	31 December 1992

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
4 Members	PT	per day 66	30 September 1993
2 Members	PT	per day 66	30 September 1994

Rank	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Annual Salary as at 1 July 1990 (£)	Appointment to
Plant varieties and seed tribunal			
2 Members	PT	0	31 January 1991
11 Members	PT	0	31 March 1991
3 Members	PT	0	30 April 1991
2 Members	PT	0	30 June 1992
2 Members	PT	0	31 August 1992
1 Member	PT	0	30 April 1993
5 Members	PT	0	30 September 1993
1 Member	PT	0	31 October 1993
Potato Marketing Board			
2 Members	PT	0	31 December 1990
1 Member	PT	0	5 November 1991
1 Member	PT	0	31 December 1993
Salmon Advisory Committee			
Chairman	PT	0	3 November 1992
8 Members	PT	0	2 February 1992
9 Members	PT	0	2 February 1993
Sea Fish Industry Authority			
Chairman	PT	25,490	30 September 1993
10 Members	PT	5,330	30 September 1993
United Kingdom Central Council for Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors			
Chairman	PT	0	31 October 1993
16 Members	PT	0	31 October 1993
United Kingdom Seeds Executive			
Chairman	PT	6,689	21 November 1992
4 Members	PT	2,382	21 November 1992
Veterinary Products Committee			
Chairman	PT	0	31 December 1991
5 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991
9 Members	PT	0	31 December 1991

Ambulance Service

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what calculations his Department has made of the cost of replacing single-manned ambulances in Caithness and Sutherland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A total of £2 million has been allocated to the Scottish ambulance service in the coming year to reduce the level of single-manning. The general manager is responsible for decisions on how the money will be spent in each ambulance area.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list on a regional basis in Scotland the location of incinerators used for the disposal of BSE cows; if he will list those counties where there are no such facilities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list on a regional basis in Scotland the number of BSE confirmed animals which were *(a)* incinerated and *(b)* buried in 1990 and the most recent figures for 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The movement of carcases of suspect BSE cattle for incineration or burial is not restricted by regional boundaries. Currently there are five incinerators in Scotland used to handle BSE carcases. These are located in Borders, Grampian, Lothian, Strathclyde and Tayside. In 1990, 593 carcases were incinerated and 10 were buried in Scotland. The figures for the first quarter of 1991 are not yet available.

Landfill Sites

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on planning policy for developments carried out near landfill sites.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* Planning authorities should exercise due caution in granting planning permission for development or redevelopment on or near landfill sites. The Scottish Office proposes to issue advice on planning policy in relation to development near landfill sites as part of wider guidance reflecting the changes to waste disposal legislation which are included in part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to require planning authorities formally to consult waste disposal authorities on developments within 250 m of a landfill site.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* Our recent consultation paper on the review of the General Development Order included a proposal that planning authorities should have to consult the relevant waste disposal authority when considering a planning application for a proposed development within 250 m of land which is used, or has been used, for the deposit of waste. This requirement will be included in the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (Scotland) Order which we expect to lay before Parliament after the Easter recess.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make regulations to prescribe regular tests to be carried out by local authorities on open and on completed landfill sites regarding *(a)* methane production, *(b)* possible methane migration, *(c)* toxic infill materials and *(d)* the stability of the fill.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* We have no plans to make regulations on these particular issues. Authoritative guidance covering these aspects of waste management has been issued already by the Government in the form of a series of waste management papers. It is for the regulatory authorities to ensure that such matters are taken into account when exercising their functions in relation to active and completed landfill sites.

When the relevant sections of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 are implemented, waste regulation authorities will have a duty to have regard to such guidance.

Waste Disposal Authorities

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many waste disposal authorities are also planning authorities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* Waste disposal authorities are the district and islands councils, 40 of which are also planning authorities.

Waste Disposal Departments

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will issue a circular to local authorities to ensure better co-ordination between planning and waste disposal departments.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* We shall shortly be issuing a circular to local authorities on the changes being made to the General Development Order, including the new requirement for the planning authorities to consult the relevant waste disposal authority about development within 250 m of a landfill site. Planning advice note 33 already urges local authorities to consult waste disposal authorities about proposed development on land which may be contaminated.

Homelessness

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish statistics listing the number of homeless applicants and the number of people housed under the homeless persons legislation by each local authority in Scotland in each of the last five years for which statistics are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* Returns submitted by local authorities to the Scottish Office indicate that the numbers of households applying for help under the homelessness legislation, and the numbers of those households for whom each authority secured permanent accommodation in the years 1985-86 to 1989-90, were as set out in the following table. The figures for 1989-90 are provisional, since returns may still be received from some authorities. In most years, some authorities failed to submit complete returns; the increase in the provisional figures for 1989-90 is in part the result of more comprehensive returns being received from some authorities.

In comparing the figures it should be noted that not all applicant households are found to be homeless. For example in 1989-90, provisional figures for Scotland indicate that 39 per cent. of applicant households were assessed to be homeless; another 23 per cent. were potentially homeless.

The figures given for those found accommodation exclude households for whom authorities secured short-stay accommodation.

Applicants under the Homeless Persons Legislation, Scotland 1985-86 to 1989-90
1985-86

District	*Number of applicant households*	*Households found permanent accommodation*
SCOTLAND	23,735	11,228
Borders		
Berwickshire	5	3
Ettrick and Lauderdale	11	7
Roxburgh	17	2
Tweeddale	—	—
Central		
Clackmannan	490	256
Falkirk	1,620	224
Stirling	150	58
Dumfries and Galloway		
Annandale and Eskdale	55	22
Nithsdale	171	135
Stewartry	73	61
Wigtown	49	22
Fife		
Dunfermline	552	351
Kirkcaldy	506	332
North East Fife	399	300
Grampian		
Aberdeen	1,236	739
Banff and Buchan	46	23
Gordon	63	52
Kincardine and Deeside	18	18
Moray	242	155
Highland		
Badenoch and Strathspey	—	—
Caithness	2	2
Inverness	274	106
Lochaber	42	24
Nairn	24	10
Ross and Cromarty	14	—
Skye and Lochalsh	39	23
Sutherland	—	—
Lothian		
East Lothian	568	374
Edinburgh	1,609	657
Midlothian	342	10

District	Number of applicant households	Households found permanent accommodation
West Lothian	249	79
Strathclyde		
Argyll and Bute	306	129
Bearsden and Milngavie	65	39
Clydebank	281	212
Clydesdale	46	33
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	375	225
Cumnock and Doon Valley	46	19
Cunninghame	320	222
Dumbarton	868	261
East Kilbride	431	168
Eastwood	7	3
Glasgow	6,084	2,150
Hamilton	425	236
Inverclyde	358	200
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	278	141
Kyle and Carrick	518	217
Monklands	404	143
Motherwell	1,106	506
Renfrew	1,252	1,053
Strathkelvin	224	139
Tayside		
Angus	224	117
Dundee	662	601
Perth and Kinross	451	315
Islands Councils		
Orkney Islands	11	8
Shetland Islands	98	28
Western Isles	29	18

1986-87

District	Number of applicant households	Households found permanent accommodation
SCOTLAND	25,185	12,628
Borders		
Berwickshire	8	4
Ettrick and Lauderdale	7	6
Roxburgh	34	26
Tweeddale	—	—
Central		
Clackmannan	695	262
Falkirk	1,401	831
Stirling	283	112
Dumfries and Galloway		
Annandale and Eskdale	38	15
Nithsdale	185	149
Stewartry	76	61
Wigtown	70	66
Fife		
Dunfermline	475	301
Kirkcaldy	546	387
North East Fife	424	274
Grampian		
Aberdeen	1,853	1,290
Banff and Buchan	80	51
Gordon	71	60
Kincardine and Deeside	37	36
Moray	299	161
Highland		
Badenoch and Strathspey	—	—
Caithness	—	—
Inverness	302	123
Lochaber	93	52
Nairn	27	12
Ross and Cromarty	19	3
Skye and Lochalsh	40	28
Sutherland	—	—
Lothian		
East Lothian	604	411
Edinburgh	2,128	708
Midlothian	270	26
West Lothian	243	58
Strathclyde		
Argyll and Bute	294	145
Bearsden and Milngavie	61	47
Clydebank	396	363
Clydesdale	96	51
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	381	186
Cumnock and Doon Valley	47	12
Cunninghame	314	206
Dumbarton	927	336
East Kilbride	440	226
Eastwood	7	2
Glasgow	5,702	2,165
Hamilton	359	161
Invoclyde	416	210
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	213	93
Kyle and Carrick	591	229
Monklands	523	126
Motherwell	1,005	483
Renfrew	1,196	852
Strathkelvin	301	159
Tayside		
Angus	309	168
Dundee	688	553
Perth and Kinross	473	284
Islands Councils		
Orkney Islands	14	12
Shetland Islands	77	13
Western Isles	47	33

1987-88

District	Number of applicant households	Households found permanent accommodation
SCOTLAND	24,659	11,799
Borders		
Berwickshire	9	7
Ettrick and Lauderdale	16	10
Roxburgh	23	13
Tweeddale	—	—
Central		
Clackmannan	527	163
Falkirk	1,219	401
Stirling	436	121
Dumfries and Galloway		
Annandale and Eskdale	46	37
Nithsdale	156	134
Stewartry	96	80
Wigtown	75	71
Fife		
Dunfermline	460	338
Kirkcaldy	814	498
North East Fife	422	230
Grampian		
Aberdeen	1,961	1,333

District	Number of applicant households	Households found permanent accommodation
Banff and Buchan	101	60
Gordon	79	60
Kincardine and Deeside	31	29
Moray	174	59
Highland		
Badenoch and Strathspey	1	1
Caithness	4	4
Inverness	290	116
Lochaber	75	39
Nairn	29	9
Ross and Cromarty	39	16
Skye and Lochalsh	34	18
Sutherland	—	—
Lothian		
East Lothian	449	226
Edinburgh	1,603	623
Midlothian	307	7
West Lothian	288	30
Strathclyde		
Argyll and Bute	318	122
Bearsden and Milngavie	54	40
Clydebank	521	429
Clydesdale	389	195
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	406	186
Cumnock and Doon Valley	38	18
Cunninghame	299	173
Dumbarton	1,327	599
East Kilbride	494	265
Eastwood	9	—
Glasgow	5,353	2,003
Hamilton	269	131
Inverclyde	327	157
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	189	84
Kyle and Carrick	603	247
Monklands	495	123
Motherwell	877	398
Renfrew	1,021	664
Strathkelvin	257	159
Tayside		
Angus	401	207
Dundee	667	526
Perth and Kinross	453	280
Islands Councils		
Orkney Islands	10	10
Shetland Islands	51	9
Western Isles	67	41

1988-89

District	Number of applicant households	Households found permanent accommodation
SCOTLAND	24,702	12,136
Borders		
Berwickshire	7	3
Ettrick and Lauderdale	21	19
Roxburgh	29	21
Tweeddale	18	6
Central		
Clackmannan	535	185
Falkirk	895	324
Stirling	535	166
Dumfries and Galloway		
Annandale and Eskdale	83	61
Nithsdale	177	154
Stewartry	96	85
Wigtown	61	57
Fife		
Dunfermline	332	212
Kirkcaldy	1,020	470
North East Fife	472	245
Grampian		
Aberdeen	1,909	1,262
Banff and Buchan	140	106
Gordon	146	111
Kincardine and Deeside	20	19
Moray	189	113
Highland		
Badenoch and Strathspey	9	5
Caithness	15	7
Inverness	270	118
Lochaber	44	22
Nairn	17	9
Ross and Cromarty	38	27
Skye and Lochalsh	36	10
Sutherland	10	9
Lothian		
East Lothian	664	327
Edinburgh	1,800	894
Midlothian	271	10
West Lothian	305	31
Strathclyde		
Argyll and Bute	284	100
Bearsden and Milngavie	58	44
Clydebank	736	559
Clydesdale	385	136
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	331	177
Cumnock and Doon Valley	52	9
Cunninghame	235	118
Dumbarton	1,390	461
East Kilbride	427	201
Eastwood	13	—
Glasgow	5,254	2,245
Hamilton	290	142
Inverclyde	256	94
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	246	129
Kyle and Carrick	607	253
Monklands	439	128
Motherwell	624	296
Renfrew	1,175	877
Strathkelvin	190	96
Tayside		
Angus	394	220
Dundee	681	502
Perth and Kinross	292	192
Islands Councils		
Orkney Islands	17	17
Shetland Islands	95	16
Western Isles	67	36

1989-90[1]

District	Number of applicant households	Households found permanent accommodation
SCOTLAND	28,287	14,043
Borders		
Berwickshire	18	13
Ettrick and Lauderdale	19	13
Roxburgh	17	6
Tweeddale	60	18

District	Number of applicant households	Households found permanent accommodation
Central		
Clackmannan	432	166
Falkirk	1,057	397
Stirling	599	229
Dumfries and Galloway		
Annandale and Eskdale	59	38
Nithsdale	278	221
Stewartry	50	46
Wigtown	78	75
Fife		
Dunfermline	372	230
Kirkcaldy	1,204	476
North East Fife	441	226
Grampian		
Aberdeen	1,960	1,355
Banff and Buchan	166	135
Gordon	315	222
Kincardine and Deeside	38	36
Moray	174	83
Highland		
Badenoch and Strathspey	4	1
Caithness	1	—
Inverness	268	122
Lochaber	59	27
Nairn	23	14
Ross and Cromarty	106	68
Skye and Lochalsh	64	30
Sutherland	—	—
Lothian		
East Lothian	711	398
Edinburgh	3,029	1,945
Midlothian	197	11
West Lothian	430	46
Strathclyde		
Argyll and Bute	320	166
Bearsden and Milngavie	68	34
Clydebank	650	377
Clydesdale	434	95
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	453	204
Cumnock and Doon Valley	56	12
Cunninghame	345	212
Dumbarton	1,485	580
East Kilbride	448	256
Eastwood	10	2
Glasgow	5,986	2,330
Hamilton	361	173
Inverclyde	326	114
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	259	103
Kyle and Carrick	669	214
Monklands	456	221
Motherwell	775	366
Renfrew	940	730
Strathkelvin	252	156
Tayside		
Angus	365	188
Dundee	852	580
Perth and Kinross	367	208
Islands Councils		
Orkney Islands	14	14
Shetland Islands	109	40
Western Isles	58	21

[1]Provisional.

Fords

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on provisions relating to warning signs at fords in the light of the incident at Knowes farm, East Linton, on 5 March; and if he will take steps to ensure that depth gauges are provided in association with such warnings where there is a possibility of dangerous flood conditions.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* The tragic loss of a young life as a result of the incident at Knowes farm, East Linton on 5 March, involving a car drifting down the River Tyne while crossing the ford, is very much to be regretted.

There is already a prescribed road sign to warn people of the existence of a ford. Roads authorities are at liberty to instal such signs without seeking the Secretary of State's consent. A prescribed gauge for indicating water depth at a ford is also available for use by roads authorities without the need for consent. Where it is felt that in particular circumstances further information should be provided in signs for road users the roads authority may seek the Secretary of State's authorisation for departures from the prescribed sign. The Scottish Office will respond as promptly as possible to any application for authorisation.

I would expect authorities to consider carefully whether depth gauges would be needed for fords in their areas.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Accommodation

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *372*, about consideration of the possible leasing of 7 Millbank, London SW1, how many rooms are available; when will the offices be available; what length of lease will be sought; and whether any office furniture will be included in any deal.

Mr. MacGregor: The agents' details indicate that No. 7 Millbank, which provides some 130,000 sq ft of accommodation, will become available at various dates later this year.

The other matters are primarily for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment who, I understand, still has a number of properties under consideration to meet the House's needs for accommodation.

Mr. Harris: To ask the Lord President of the Council what action is being taken to seek the views of hon. Members on the accommodation to be provided in the next phase of the new parliamentary building.

Mr. MacGregor: The chairman of the New Building Sub-Committee, the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), wrote to all right hon. and hon. Members on 12 December 1990 seeking their views. The letter is repeated hereto for the convenience of Members who might wish to comment now. The views of the 1922 Committee, parliamentary Labour party and other political parties represented in the House were also sought.

On the basis of the views received so far, together with papers from Departments of the House and others, the Parliamentary Works Office has prepared for discussion

purposes a draft brief and a diagometric layout of the new building. These will be on display in Committee Room 7 on Thursday, 21 March from 11 am to 5 pm to provide hon. Members with the opportunity to comment on the emerging proposals.

The Services Committee hopes to report its decisions to the House shortly after the Easter recess.

Dear Colleague,

The New Building Sub-Committee of the Services Committee is drawing up a design brief for Phase 2 of the new parliamentary building. Phase 2 will involve redeveloping the site currently occupied by Palace Chambers, Nos. 1 and 2 Bridge Street, and St. Stephen's House.

The Sub-Committee is anxious to consult as widely as possible within the House before drawing up its recommendations.

My colleagues and I are very much aware of the demand for improved standards of office accommodation for Members. Our top priority is to implement the recommendation of the Services Committee in 1987, that by the time the new building as a whole is complete, "every Member who wants a room of his or her own should have one".

When Phase 1 of the project is complete next year a considerable amount of extra accommodation will become available. This will include 60 Members' offices, 100 office spaces for Members' staff, new catering facilities, a small shop, a parliamentary bookshop and increased Library accommodation. Offices will also become available within the Palace as staff of the House are moved into Phase 1.

The opening of Phase 1 will improve the number and quality of Members' offices available but it will certainly not solve all the existing problems. It is realistic to suppose that a considerable part of Phase 2 will need to consist of Members' offices also. This in turn will reduce the amount of space in Phase 2 that can be used to provide other facilities.

The decisions the Services Committee will need to take will therefore be difficult ones. Hence our wish to sound the opinions of as many colleagues within the House as possible.

It would be helpful to the Sub-Committee if you could send any written evidence you wish to submit to the Clerk of the Sub-Committee in the Private Bill Office not later than Friday 1st February.

Yours sincerely

12th December 1990. RAY POWELL

Chairman.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 14 March 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Repossessions

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General how many possession orders on the grounds of mortgage arrears have been made in the Lambeth and Wandsworth county courts in the last year for which figures are readily available.

The Attorney-General: In 1990 Lambeth county court made 505 mortgage possession orders and Wandsworth county court made 497.

Trials (Statistics)

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will list the average length in days of trials *(a)* on indictment and *(b)* in county courts in (i) England, (ii) Wales and (iii) Northern Ireland over the last five years.

The Attorney-General: Crown court hearing times are recorded in hours rather than days. The relevant information for Crown courts is given in the tables.

Crown Court committal for trial cases: Hearing times in hours

	England			*Wales*			*Northern Ireland*		
	Trials	*Guilty pleas*	*All cases*	*Trials*	*Guilty pleas*	*All cases*	*Trials*	*Guilty pleas*	*All cases*
1986	7·5	0·6	3·1	8·0	0·7	3·4	13·9	0·9	3·1
1987	7·3	0·6	2·8	7·2	0·8	3·0	12·6	1·2	3·5
1988	7·4	0·7	2·6	8·0	0·8	2·8	15·1	0·9	4·6
1989	7·2	0·7	2·6	7·7	1·0	2·9	12·2	1·2	4·1
1990	7·1	0·7	2·6	7·5	1·0	3·0	13·2	1·3	4·7

Between 1987 and 1989 the information on county court hearing times was collected only on a sample basis, in terms of days, hours and minutes, for two months of each year. It is not possible to calculate an average hearing time from these data, unless an assumption is made about the average length of a day. However, the information for 1990 is available as follows.

	1990
County court trials: England	3·1
Hearing time in hours Wales	3·1

No information is collected on hearing times of county court trials heard in Northern Ireland.

Legal Aid Payments

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will list the total payments from legal aid funds and the payments per head of the population in (i) England, (ii) Wales and (iii) Northern Ireland over the last five years.

The Attorney-General: The table sets out the total payments from legal aid funds and the payments per head of the population for England and Wales and for Northern Ireland. It is not possible to break down the information between England and Wales. These figures do not include administration costs.

Year	*England and Wales*		*Northern Ireland*	
	Total payment £ thousands	*Per head £*	*Total payment £ thousands*	*Per head £*
1985-86	466,081	9·34	11,300	7·25
1986-87	499,381	9·97	12,200	7·79
1987-88	544,006	10·83	14,000	8·89
1988-89	618,270	12·27	18,200	11·53
1989-90	726,678	14·37	17,300	10·93

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will list the average payment from legal aid funds to *(a)* solicitors and *(b)* barristers in (i) England, (ii) Wales and (iii) Northern Ireland over the last five years.

The Attorney-General: Separate information is not available for England and Wales. The table sets out the average payment to *(a)* solicitors and *(b)* barristers from all forms of legal aid but excludes disbursements.

Year	*Solicitors £*	*Barristers £*
1985-86	161·39	218·78
1986-87	175·19	247·54
1987-88	188·08	274·82
1988-89	195·58	320·59
1989-90	216·85	365·41

Information on the number of payments made to solicitors and barristers in Northern Ireland is not available and therefore information on average payments cannot be provided.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

National Curriculum

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many additional administrative staff local education authorities have been required to employ as a result of the national curriculum; and how many in fact have been employed.

Mr. Eggar: Data are not available on the number of administrative staff employed by LEAs in connection with the national curriculum. The extent to which individual LEAs and schools think it appropriate to employ additional staff will depend on their circumstances, including the scope for redeploying existing staff to new tasks.

Higher Education

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is, for each year since 1975, and in 1990 moneys, the average public expenditure per student in higher education in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The available data on higher education unit public funding are shown in table 11.13 of the Department's report on "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1991-92 to 1993-94", Cm 1511, a copy of which is in the Library.

Architecture Courses

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 6 February to the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs), *Official Report*, column *145-46*, if he has yet reached a decision about the length of architecture courses; what representations he has received about the likely effects of a reduction in their length; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend is still considering this matter in the light of the responses received from RIBA, ARCUK and other bodies to which the Department's consultation paper on the length and structure of architecture courses was sent last August, the advice of the Universities and Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Councils on the outcome of their parallel consultations with institutions in their respective sectors, and the representations received from a number of other bodies and individuals. He is not yet in a position to announce his conclusions.

Institute of Food Research

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields of 11 March, *Official Report*, column *342*, whether there have been or are planned to be any alterations to the parapet wall during the construction of the new building of the Institute of Food Research at the Reading university campus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: A number of options were considered at the design stage concerning the parapet wall; the chosen option incorporated a safety handrail. There were no alterations to the parapet wall during the construction phase of the project; nor are any planned.

Special Schools

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what was the number of pupils with statements of special educational need in non-maintained special schools and independent schools under the arrangements of each local authority in January 1989 and 1990;

(2) how many pupils belonging to each local education authority attended non-maintained special schools and independent schools for the purposes of special education treatment in January 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Fallon *[pursuant to the reply, 17 December 1990, c. 35-38]:* The information provided in the original reply was incomplete. The table lists as at January 1989 the numbers of pupils belonging to each local education authority who are receiving special education treatment in non-maintained special schools and independent schools.

Number of pupils as at January 1989 for whom LEAs are paying tuition fees and who are attending: (a) non-maintained special schools; and (b) independent schools for the purpose of receiving special educational treatment

	(a)	(b)
Barking and Dagenham	16	16
Barnet	35	62
Bexley	47	73
Brent	36	35
Bromley	31	50
Croydon	33	112
Ealing	82	128
Enfield	23	62
Haringey	21	60
Harrow	91	47
Havering	24	21
Hillingdon	56	42
Hounslow	30	59
Kingston upon Thames	11	67
Merton	25	26
Newham	11	17
Redbridge	91	53
Richmond upon Thames	7	13
Sutton	13	68
Waltham Forest	21	17
Inner London	104	159
Birmingham	21	75
Coventry	18	9
Dudley	14	22
Sandwell	20	1
Solihul	4	35
Walsall	2	9
Wolverhampton	8	22
Knowsley	17	12
Liverpool	72	8
St. Helens	69	21
Sefton	48	57
Wirral	33	109
Bolton	58	8
Bury	60	3
Manchester	108	20
Oldham	24	0
Rochdale	26	20
Salford	11	8
Stockport	78	63
Tameside	12	17
Trafford	45	2
Wigan	81	16
Barnsley	18	0
Doncaster	41	15
Rotherham	113	0
Sheffield	2	7
Bradford	12	9
Calderdale	15	20
Kirklees	51	16
Leeds	11	8
Wakefield	59	35
Gateshead	31	10
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	38	17
North Tyneside	37	33
South Tyneside	26	0
Sunderland	41	10
Isles of Scilly	0	0
Avon	122	120
Bedfordshire	55	78
Berkshire	188	127
Buckinghamshire	55	81
Cambridgeshire	9	61
Cheshire	242	76
Cleveland	40	40
Cornwall	29	60
Cumbria	54	80
Derbyshire	85	55
Devon	184	191

	(a)	(b)
Dorset	171	36
Durham	70	21
East Sussex	140	120
Essex	188	315
Gloucestershire	70	30
Hampshire	367	454
Hereford and Worcester	51	71
Hertfordshire	80	218
Humberside	68	42
Isle of Wight	37	2
Kent	301	346
Lancashire	260	306
Leicestershire	29	46
Lincolnshire	32	107
Norfolk	20	107
North Yorkshire	54	90
Northamptonshire	38	64
Northumberland	41	17
Nottinghamshire	66	128
Oxfordshire	38	44
Shropshire	34	39
Somerset	71	55
Staffordshire	29	46
Suffolk	88	122
Surrey	146	144
Warwickshire	31	98
West Sussex	137	114
Wiltshire	115	173

Figures as returned to the Department by each LEA on Form 8b.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Whisky Stocks

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make inquiries into the exclusion of whisky stocks from Lonrho's most recent published accounts in the light of their former inclusion.

Mr. Redwood: I see no reason to do so. The chief executive's statement included in the annual report for 1990 explains that the sale of bulk whisky stocks in 1989 was a one-off event. In future, for public companies with financial years starting after 23 December 1989, any questions about the accounts will be a matter for the Financial Reporting Review Panel.

Kuwait

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how accurately his Department's sector groups match the responsibility areas of individual Kuwait Ministries; and what arrangements he is making to ensure the closest liasion between the two.

Mr. Salisbury: The sector groups were originally set up to match areas of responsibility in the Kuwait emergency recovery programme, which broadly correspond to those of Kuwaiti Ministries. Some changes have since been made in the light of developments, but it is not considered feasible for their responsibilities to match those of Kuwaiti Ministries on every point.

Inner Cities Task Force

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish the results of the recent external evaluation of the inner cities task force initiative.

Mr. Leigh: The evaluation of task forces in Birmingham Handsworth, Doncaster and Rochdale was completed at the end of last year by PA Cambridge Economic Consultants. Their report is published today. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Exporters

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any new plans to help British exporters.

Mr. Salisbury: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and for Trade and Industry have agreed that a new unit, reporting to Ministers in both Departments, should be established on 2 April 1991. The unit—to be called the joint directorate—will be responsible for the development of export promotion policy.

Its aims will be to: deploy staff effectively in the United Kingdom and overseas, in line with the priorities for export promotion; ensure that all staff engaged in export promotion are trained to consistent standards; provide a fully integrated service both at home and overseas; and improve the ability to respond swiftly and effectively to the changing needs of United Kingdom businesses.

Earlier today, the British Overseas Trade Board published the second edition of its forward plan. The plan, which has the full support of Ministers, sets out the priorities which will guide the way in which the substantial resources available for export promotion will be used in 1991-92.

Information about the joint directorate and copies of the forward plan have been placed in the Library.

Iraq

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement giving details of the assistance which is being provided by his Department to those United Kingdom companies which face delayed time of completion penalty clauses in contracts with Iraq.

Mr. Salisbury *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* My Department is giving urgent consideration to what further measures might be taken to ensure that, as far as is possible, companies do not find themselves liable to penalties as a result of being unable to fulfil contracts because of sanctions. The Export Credits Guarantee Department will consider, and is considering, claims from its customers in accordance with the terms of the policies they hold.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Purchasing and Distribution

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the full annual cost, including overheads, of his Department's purchasing activity.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1989-90 the annual cost, including overheads, of the purchasing and supply activity of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was £2,294,423. For the current financial year, the cost is likely to be £2,300,000. With adjustment for inflation, this would represent a decrease in real terms of 5 per cent.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people in his Department are wholly or substantially involved in purchasing stores and distribution activities.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 54 staff are engaged full-time on the purchasing and supply activity. A further 17 officers spend over 50 per cent. of their time on purchasing work.

Value for Money

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures of performance are employed by his Department to ensure value for money.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office diplomatic wing uses a variety of performance measures, which vary according to the function or activity involved, to ensure value for money. Specific value for money targets for the last two financial years have been notified to Parliament in evidence on the annual public expenditure White Paper. Some of the most significant of these measures will continue to be published annually in the departmental report, which replaced the public expenditure White Paper.

In the aid programme, value for money is ensured through the application of the Overseas Development Administration's aid effectiveness procedures which are set out in the annual departmental report.

Hostages

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new steps he is taking to speed up the release of British hostages held in Beirut; and if he will make a statement on his latest approach to the Governments of Syria and Lebanon in this connection.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) on 13 March, at column *549*. The Syrian Foreign Minister confirmed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 6 February his Government's intention to continue their efforts to obtain the release of western, including British, hostages in Lebanon. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is visiting Damascus this week. Her Majesty's ambassador in Beirut maintains close and regular contacts with all those in Lebanon who might be able to influence the hostages' release.

Kuwait

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what statements Her Majesty's ambassador to Kuwait has made about the treatment of Palestinian nationals in Kuwait.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In an interview with BBC Radio 4 last weekend Mr. Weston, the British ambassador in Kuwait, spoke of the reasons why the authorities in Kuwait were detaining and screening Palestinians. He made it clear that he did not believe the Kuwaiti authorities were carrying out reprisals. In answer to a question, Mr. Weston agreed that not all the Palestinian former residents of Kuwait could be assured of future residence and employment in Kuwait.

Weapons

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Attorney-General's answer of 11 March, *Official Report*, column *364*, for what reasons Her Majesty's Government have decided not yet to ratify the specific conventional weapons convention or to accept the protocol on prohibitions or restrictions on the use of incendiary weapons; and whether he has any plans to ratify them.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are still considering ratification of the United Nations weaponry convention, and in particular whether to accept the optional protocol No. III, which restricts the use of incendiary weapons in certain circumstances. We hope to be able to come to a decision on ratification when this review is complete.

The Gulf (Belgian Contribution)

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement about the Belgian financial contribution to the United Kingdom's role in the Gulf crisis.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am sorry that my reply to my hon. Friend's oral question of 13 March, at column 934, was inadvertently inaccurate in one respect. On 27 February the Belgian Government announced a contribution of £15 million towards British military expenditure in the Gulf. We welcomed this concrete expression of international solidarity.

ENERGY

Sizewell B

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he has had with the nuclear installations inspectorate concerning the Westinghouse digital protection system governing the computerised safety monitoring system for the Sizewell B nuclear power station.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate—NII—is assessing the computerised protection systems for Sizewell B as part of the continuing licensing process. It is also assessing the secondary protection system, which is fitted to Sizewell B in addition to the digital system, and which employs established United Kingdom technology. The nuclear installations inspectorate will not permit fuel to be loaded into the reactor until it has assessed Nuclear Electric's safety case for the station and found it to be adequate.

Trawsfynydd Nuclear Power Station

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will request a report from the nuclear installations inspectorate on the shutdown in February of the Trawsfynydd nuclear power station.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am aware of the shutdown, but I have no plans to ask the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate for a specific report on the matter. The decision to shut down the Trawsfynydd reactors was taken by the operators, Nuclear

Electric plc, and was to enable adjustments to be made in order to allow operation at reduced pressure. The reactors will not be permitted to return to power until the NII is satisfied with the operator's safety case for such action.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of Nuclear Electric to discuss pressure vessel integrity in the reactors at the Magnox nuclear power station at Trawsfynydd.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend has no plans to hold such discussions. The matter is an operational one for Nuclear Electric, which is keeping the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate informed.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will be proposing any alteration in the level of the non-fossil fuel obligation following the cut in output at the Trawsfynydd nuclear power station.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The nuclear non-fossil fuel obligation—SI 1990/263—was fully complied with by the regional electricity companies through the arrangements they submitted to the Director General of Electricity Supply by 1 April 1990. However, in the event of any contracted capacity ceasing to be available for a cause other than an act or omission on the part of a regional electricity company, the order provides that the level of the obligation shall be deemed to reduce accordingly.

Gas-fired Power Stations

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will make it his policy to consider the availability of gas for other customers when considering licence applications for gas-fired electricity power stations.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Applications for electricity generation licences are a matter for the Director General of Electricity Supply.

Petroleum Production

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the Government's latest forecasts of levels of United Kingdom petroleum production.

Mr. Wakeham: The latest forecasts for United Kingdom petroleum production in the years 1991 to 1995 are as follows:

	Million tonnes
1991	80-100
1992	80-105
1993	80-115
1994	90-125
1995	90-125

As in previous years, the forecasts are presented in the form of a range of outcomes for each year. These take into account the many uncertainties involved. The figures include stabilised crude oil, natural gas liquids—NGLs—and condensates. NGL and condensate production is expected to contribute between 4 million and 10 million tonnes annually.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Company Cars

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the amount of additional revenue raised if the capital and running costs of company-owned cars were included in the calculation of taxable income for income tax and national insurance purposes on the basis of actual costs incurred.

Mr. Maude: Employees who have cars made available to them for private use are charged to tax on the basis of scale charges for broad bands of types of car and depending on the current business mileage. The actual costs incurred by employers in providing cars are not known. However, in considering the appropriate level for the scale charges, a full range of appropriate capital and running costs is taken into account. The value of employer-provided cars is not subject to the national insurance charge.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which of his Ministers has been given responsibility for energy use by his Department; and what is his or her brief regarding energy efficiency.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I am responsible for energy use in HM Treasury. My brief is to reduce energy consumption within the Treasury and to support cost-effective measures to obtain benefits from the more efficient use of energy in all Departments.

Employee Share Ownership

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest calculation on the numbers of employees who benefit from schemes set up under (i) FA1978, (ii) FA1980 and (iii) FA1984 for employee share or share option arrangements; what were the comparable figures for a year ago; and what are the values attributable to each of these figures.

Mr. Francis Maude *[holding answer 13 March 1991]:* Estimates for the two most recent years for which figures are available are as follows:

	FA1978 schemes		*FA1980 schemes*		*FA1984 schemes*	
	Number of participants receiving share allocations in year	*Initial market value of shares appropriated*	*Number of employees to whom options granted during year*	*Initial value of shares over which options granted*	*Number of employees to whom option granted during year*	*Initial value of shares over which options granted*
	('000)	*(£ million)*	*('000)*	*(£ million)*	*('000)*	*(£ million)*
1988-89	870	350	370	740	90	1,660
1989-90	850	380	440	990	100	1,700

Profit-related Pay

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the average percentage of pay in profit-related pay schemes in each year; and what is their distribution.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* The information is as follows:

Live schemes with profit periods ending in	*Profit related pay as a percentage of total pay. All schemes.*
1988-89	6·5
1989-90	7·3

Live schemes with profit periods ending in	*Range of profit related pay as a percentage of total pay*				
	Below 5 per cent.	*5-10 per cent.*	*10-15 per cent.*	*15 per cent. and below*	*Total*
1989-89	16	48	17	19	100
1989-90	24	46	21	9	100

Personal Pensions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the tax relief on the employer's share of the personal pensions rebate paid by the Inland Revenue to the Department of Social Security for each of the years for which figures are available; and what is his estimate of the costs for each of the future years for which estimates are available.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 8 March 1991]:* There is no additional tax relief on the employer's share of national insurance contribution rebates for personal pensions. Payments made to the Department of Social Security by the Inland Revenue as tax relief on the employees' share are as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1988-89	37
1989-90	208
[1]1990-91	170

[1]Estimated.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost of tax relief on the future income of the funds invested to provide personal pensions, using the technical assumption that the rate of return which will build up in personal pension schemes would otherwise have been subject to tax in the hands of individuals and institutions.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 8 March 1991]:* Such an estimate would depend on future levels of investment, rates of return and tax rates.

TRANSPORT

Rail Services

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been spent on *(a)* improvements to the east coast main line and *(b)* support for provincial railway services in the Northern region in each year since 1987.

Mr. McLoughlin: Figures are not available for BR investment and Government support in particular geographical regions.

Hungary (Negotiations)

Mr. Grist: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will announce the outcome of recent negotiations on road transport between his Department and the Hungarian Ministry of Transport.

Mr. Chope: These negotiations resulted in agreement to abolish with immediate effect the quota on the number of lorry journeys permitted annually between the UK and Hungary. From 1 January 1992, the need to carry a permit will also be abolished. This welcome extension of liberalisation means that British hauliers will no longer be prevented from carrying out business by a lack of Hungarian permits.

Seat Belts

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will announce the outcome of the consultation exercise about the proposal to introduce mandatory seat belt wearing for adults in the rear seats of cars and taxis.

Mr. Rifkind: The consultation period ran from 16 November 1990 to 31 January 1991. Some 1,100 copies of the consultation document were issued and to date 81 responses have been received. My Department has also received a number of letters on this subject in response to press reports, rather than to the consultation document itself.

There was overwhelming support for the proposal, including those from the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, the police, the motoring organisations and all 36 local authorities which responded.

I am today sending to all those who responded draft regulations, on which comments are invited by 12 April. I have placed copies in the Library. The intention is to lay the regulations before the House after Easter with a view to implementation on 1 July this year.

Channel Tunnel

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list those locations being considered by his Department as possible freight terminals offering trunk rail services from Scotland to the channel tunnel;

(2) what provision he is making for relevant bodies, such as regional or district councils in Scotland, to consult his Department on possible freight terminals offering trunk rail services from Scotland to the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: The siting of regional terminals for channel tunnel freight traffic is a commercial matter for

British Rail. British Rail is currently discussing possible locations in Strathclyde with local authorities and private sector developers.

North Sea Standby Vessels

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list those North sea standby vessels which do not meet the requirements of recommendation 89 of the Cullen report;

(2) if he will list those North sea standby vessels which meet the requirements of recommendation 89 of the Cullen report.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available from the survey records kept by the Department, but, since September 1990, most ships converting for standby vessel duties have been meeting those requirements of the Cullen report which the Department had anticipated it might contain. The full requirements of recommendation 89 have now been incorporated into the Department's latest standard for standby vessels.

Cam Spirit

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the name of the Silver Pit was changed to the Cam Spirit.

Mr. McLoughlin: The change of name was recorded in the register of ships on 4 September 1990.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the current refit of the Silver Pit/Cam Spirit will result in that vessel meeting all the requirements of recommendation 89 of the Cullen report on Piper Alpha.

Mr. McLoughlin: The refit is not complete, but the present intention of the owner is that the vessel will meet the relevant recommendations of the Cullen report.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all official inspections and surveys of the Silver Pit/Cam Spirit carried out since the Piper Alpha disaster.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Silver Pit was inspected by marine surveyors of the Department in July 1988 shortly after the Piper Alpha disaster. Further surveys were carried out in December 1988, January 1989 and December 1989. She was also inspected by authorities in the Netherlands in July 1990 for operation in their sector of the North sea.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the periods when the Silver Pit/Cam Spirit has been on duty in the North sea since the Piper Alpha disaster; and the nature of her duties in each case.

Mr. McLoughlin: After the Piper Alpha disaster the Silver Pit continued to operate at various locations in the North sea, but separate operational records of standby vessels are not maintained by the Department. This information will be contained in the ship's log books, but could be extracted only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all modifications made to the Silver Pit/Cam Spirit between the Piper Alpha disaster and the current refit.

Mr. McLoughlin: During this period no modifications were made to the structure of the vessel. But the fast rescue craft and the Department of Trade and Industry DOTI boat were renewed, the bow thruster unit replaced, the lubricating oil piping repaired, the generator engine re-aligned, and a number of other deficiencies made good.

Accident (M4)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department will hold an inquiry into the causes of the multiple road accident on the M4 in Berkshire, between junctions 14 and 15, on Wednesday 13 March, including the significance of motorists ignoring the weather conditions; if he will indicate the weather conditions at the time and whether the fog/speed warning lights were switched on; and what consideration he is giving to whether the fire which followed the collision suggests a need for manufacturers to look again at fire hazards on heavy goods vehicles and cars.

Mr. Chope: I offer my condolences to those who were injured and to the relatives of those who were killed in this tragic accident.

The police are still carrying out investigations and are not able to give a definite opinion on the causes of the accident. I have asked to see the report of the investigation as soon as it is available and shall consider urgently what lessons may be learnt including, as my hon. Friend suggests, lessons about driver behaviour.

There was blanket fog in the area and preliminary indications are that drivers were driving too fast for these conditions. I also understand that the warning lights in the area were not switched on before the accident. This was a decision by the police, which was in accordance with advice given to all police forces by the Association of Chief Police Officers, that they should be used only for hazards which are not readily apparent to drivers, and not for general adverse weather conditions. I have already spoken to the chief constables of Thames Valley and Wiltshire constabularies. We are arranging to meet to discuss this policy.

My Department continually seeks to reduce the risk of fires in vehicles and liaises both with manufacturers and with fire services on research into better design for this purpose.

HEALTH

Food Safety

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the recommendations of the World Health Organisation's 1989 consultation report on health surveillance and management procedures for food handling personnel in relation to food service operations.

Mr. Dorrell: This is an interesting report which is consistent with the Government's view that food handlers should receive training in food hygiene. We will consider its recommendations carefully before determining our overall policy on training of food handlers.

Neonatal Care

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many neonatal intensive care cots there are in England.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Neonatal intensive care cots in maternity units are not separately identified in returns submitted to the Department. Of those not in maternity units, 3,496 intensive care cots were in use during 1989-90, of which 865 were in regionally designated intensive care units.

General Medical Services

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the total annual expenditure, in cash and adjusted for changes in input unit costs, on general medical services for each family health authority in each year since 1985.

Mr. Dorrell: The total annual expenditure on general medical services—GMS—in cash and adjusted by the GMS service inflation factor has been placed in the Library. Details are provided for each family health services authority and aggregated at regional health authority and national level.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give, for each family health services authority, the cost per patient of general medical services.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is in the table.

Cost per patient of General Medical Services: England 1989-90

	£ per head of registered population
Cleveland	29·32
Cumbria	33·81
Durham	30·76
Northumberland	35·13
Gateshead	29·75
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	31·20
North Tyneside	29·01
South Tyneside	29·10
Sunderland	26·28
Northern RHA	30·75
Humberside	29·75
North Yorkshire	35·44
Bradford	29·60
Calderdale	29·40
Kirklees	28·10
Leeds	31·86
Wakefield	32·67
Yorkshire RHA	31·30
Derbyshire	31·12
Leicestershire	30·61
Lincolnshire	33·24
Nottinghamshire	28·93
Barnsley	28·25
Doncaster	29·63
Rotherham	28·83
Sheffield	32·28
Trent RHA	30·60
Cambridgeshire	33·08
Norfolk	35·27
Suffolk	35·53
East Anglia RHA	34·63
Bedfordshire	31·59
Hertfordshire	34·13
Barnet	28·67
Brent and Harrow	30·96
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	28·15
Hillingdon	28·47
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	31·42
North West Thames RHA	30·96
Essex	31·25
Barking and Havering	28·84
Camden and Islington	30·58
City and East London	30·85
Enfield and Haringey	28·26
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	29·35
North East Thames RHA	30·24
East Sussex	31·67
Kent	32·28
Greenwich and Bexley	29·40
Bromley	29·88
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	28·13
South East Thames RHA	30·73
Surrey	31·08
West Sussex	32·95
Croydon	28·79
Kingston and Richmond	31·47
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	28·04
South West Thames RHA	30·66
Dorset	34·85
Hampshire	33·71
Wiltshire	31·88
Isle of Wight	32·88
Wessex RHA	33·59
Berkshire	33·17
Buckinghamshire	33·39
Northamptonshire	31·75
Oxfordshire	33·11
Oxford RHA	32·89
Avon	31·71
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	37·23
Devon	36·33
Gloucestershire	35·71
Somerset	36·00
South Western RHA	35·02
Hereford and Worcester	30·66
Shropshire	32·00
Staffordshire	28·94
Warwickshire	31·73
Birmingham	30·19
Coventry	30·63
Dudley	27·14
Sandwell	30·00
Solihull	34·70
Walsall	27·60
Wolverhampton	28·66
West Midlands RHA	30·10
Cheshire	30·93
Liverpool	28·35
St. Helens and Knowsley	29·17
Sefton	28·97
Wirral	29·72
Mersey RHA	29·75
Lancashire	29·14
Bolton	28·89
Bury	29·34
Manchester	31·50
Oldham	26·22
Rochdale	27·62
Salford	30·07
Stockport	30·61
Tameside	28·79
Trafford	28·35
Wigan	26·46
North Western RHA	29·06
ENGLAND	31·22

Mentally Handicapped Children

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the level of provision of care available to children with severe learning difficulties, extreme challenging behaviour and autism and on the provision of care available to them after they are of school age.

Mr. Dorrell: It is for local statutory authorities to determine the form and extent of services to be provided locally in the light of their knowledge of local needs and resources. We would expect the relevant education, social services and health authorities to work together with parents to identify what arrangements are appropriate for a young person leaving full-time education. Detailed statistics on the range of services provided are not held centrally, but in 1989 there were 2,032 places in local authority, voluntary and private homes and hostels for mentally handicapped children.

Dentists

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists in each FHSA have withdrawn from the NHS since 1 October 1990.

Mr. Dorrell: Between 1 October 1990 and 28 February 1991, 509 dentists withdrew from Family Health Services Authority—FHSA—dental lists in England, and 394 dentists were added to those lists. This represents a net decrease of 115, less than 0·7 per cent. of the total. The details for each FHSA in England are set out in the table.

Changes to the number of registered dentists on FHSA lists since 1 October 1990 (England only)

FHSA	Withdrawals	Additions	Net change
Cleveland	5	3	−2
Cumbria	2	1	−1
Durham	7	1	−6
Northumberland	1	1	0
Gateshead	0	4	4
Newcastle upon Tyne	13	2	−11
North Tyneside	0	1	1
South Tyneside	2	0	−2
Sunderland	3	2	−1
Humberside	0	5	5
North Yorkshire	4	6	2
Bradford	6	11	5
Calderdale	0	2	2
Kirklees	1	5	4
Leeds	7	5	−2
Wakefield	2	1	−1
Derbyshire	3	11	8
Leicestershire	4	3	−1
Lincolnshire	0	12	12
Nottinghamshire	2	6	4
Barnsley	4	5	1
Doncaster	0	8	8
Rotherham	0	3	3
Sheffield	4	4	0
Cambridgeshire	2	0	−2
Norfolk	2	2	0
Suffolk	4	3	−1
Bedfordshire	2	7	5
Hertfordshire	15	8	−7
Barnet	23	2	−21
Brent and Harrow	12	5	−7
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	21	3	−18
Hillingdon	4	0	−4
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	41	0	−41
Essex	5	10	5
Barking and Havering	1	12	11
Camden and Islington	25	0	−25
City and East London	20	0	−20
Enfield and Haringey	22	0	−22
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	1	1	0
East Sussex	9	8	−1
Kent	16	6	−10
Greenwich and Bexley	9	0	−9
Bromley	1	6	5
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	13	8	−5
Surrey	10	21	11
West Sussex	10	11	1
Croydon	5	4	−1
Kingston and Richmond	1	9	8
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	8	8	0
Dorset	6	4	−2
Hampshire	5	4	−1
Wiltshire	7	1	−6
Isle of Wight	1	0	−1
Berkshire	7	10	3
Buckinghamshire	5	10	5
Northamptonshire	5	1	−4
Oxfordshire	5	3	−2
Avon	5	10	5
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	5	1	−4
Devon	4	7	3
Gloucestershire	7	3	−4
Somerset	1	2	1
Hereford and Worcester	4	3	−1
Salop	3	1	−2
Staffordshire	6	2	−4
Warwickshire	1	1	0
Birmingham	11	9	−2
Coventry	6	1	−5
Dudley	6	5	−1
Sandwell	0	3	3
Solihull	2	4	2
Walsall	0	3	3
Wolverhampton	2	0	−2
Cheshire	7	8	1
Liverpool	6	4	−2
St. Helens and Knowsley	6	5	−1
Sefton	6	5	−1
Wirral	2	6	4
Lancashire	2	12	10
Bolton	1	1	0
Bury	1	3	2
Manchester	5	9	4
Oldham	1	6	5
Rochdale	4	1	−3
Salford	2	2	0
Stockport	1	2	1
Tameside	5	0	−5
Trafford	2	2	0
Wigan	2	4	2
Total	509	394	−115

These figures are derived from information on the number of registered dentists on an FHSA list as notified by FHSAs to the Dental Practice Board. Since some dentists practise in more than one FHSA, the total number of different dentists for England is less than the sum of the dentists for individual FHSAs.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department has any plans to introduce charges for replacement batteries for national health service hearing aids.

Mr. Dorrell: No.

Children at Risk

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children who are or may be at significant risk have not been allocated to a qualified social worker; and what action is being taken to remedy the position.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information collected centrally about children who are or may be at risk relates to children on the child protection register.

A child's name is normally placed on the child protection register following discussion at a case conference, convened by the social services department or by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, when abuse or potential abuse is confirmed and an inter-agency agreement is made to work co-operatively to protect the child. When a registered child moves, the child should be registered at once pending the first case conference in the new area.

The most up-to-date information about numbers on child protection registers relates to 31 March 1990. This information is collected from all local authorities in England and is published in the provisional feedback "Children and Young Persons on Child Protection Registers, year ending 31 March 1990, England". Copies are available in the Library.

The latest information about the number of children on the registers in London boroughs who are not allocated to a social worker is published in "Child Protection Services in London, Aspects of Management Arrangements in Social Services Departments, 31 December 1989", together with numbers on the registers at the time at which the survey took place. Copies are available in the Library. Similar information is not available centrally for the rest of England.

It is for individual local authorities to make arrangements to carry out the child protection plans for children in their area on the child protection register. The social services inspectorate offers positive support to local authorities in their efforts to maintain and develop the child protection services which they have a duty to provide.

London Ambulance Service

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list *(a)* for each of the last six months and *(b)* for each division of the London ambulance service (i) the total number of non-emergency ambulance journeys and (ii) the number of cancelled patient journeys by category.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally. The management of the London ambulance service is the reponsibility of the London ambulance service board. The hon. Member may wish to write to Mr. James Harris, the chairman of the board, for details.

Immunisation and Cervical Screening

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of general practitioners in each family health services authority received target payments for childhood immunisation and cervical screening in the first six months of 1990-91.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[pursuant to her reply, 11 February 1991, c. 351-56]:* I regret that the table published contained errors in respect of Suffolk and Wakefield family health services authorities. The correct figures are as follows:—

FHSA	*Higher payment*	*Lower payment*	*Total*
Childhood Immunisation percentage qualifying			
Suffolk	93	7	99
Wakefield	44	43	87
Pre-School booster percentage qualifying			
Suffolk	89	11	99
Wakefield	32	34	66
Cervical Cytology percentage qualifying			
Suffolk	89	12	100
Wakefield	90	9	99

NB. Figures for higher and lower payments may not add to total because of rounding error.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Justices of the Peace

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the number of justices of the peace in Stockport and Tameside by ward; and what steps have been taken over the last three years to increase the proportion of young JPs, women JPs, JPs from ethnic minorities and JPs from under-represented wards.

Mr. Chris Patten: My advisory committees in the area of Stockport and Tameside have done their best to improve the balance in appointment of magistrates as suggested; they have been partially successful and I shall be sending the hon. Gentleman the figures separately in due course.

WALES

Homelessness

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West of 20 February, *Official Report*, column *151*, how much of the support for Swansea Accommodation for the Single Homeless for 1990-91 is for staff costs; and if he will list the projects for which support for staff costs is provided;

(2) if he will give details of all proposed support from his Department to Swansea Accommodation for the Single Homeless for 1991-92; how much of this is to meet staff costs; and if he will list the projects for which support for staff costs is to be provided.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information requested is as follows:

Source of Welsh Office funding	Amount £	Staff costs[1] £	Project
1990-91			
1. Section 73 of the Housing Act 1985	71,150	45,650	Resettlement and housing provision
2. Urban programme	33,600	25,200	Day centre
3. Grant under Section 28(a) of the National Health Service Act 1977	19,000	13,100	Life skills support
1991-92			
1. Section 73 of the Housing Act 1985	Application currently being considered		
2. Urban Programme	33,600	25,200	Day centre
3. Grant under Section 28(a) of the National Health Service Act 1977	17,000	11,700	Life skills support

[1] Staff costs only include salaries and National Insurance costs.

Health Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many operating theatres in Wales are closed *(a)* because of a shortage of staff and *(b)* by other measures.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not available centrally.

Health Boards (Appointments)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy on appointments to health boards in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Welsh chapter of the White Paper "Working for Patients" announced that in making non-executive appointments to district health authorities there would be a strong emphasis on leadership and top-level management qualities. That remains the position. Persons are appointed on the strength of the skills and experience they can bring to the work of an authority and not because they represent particular organisations or interests.

Executive members of authorities are members either by virtue of the post they hold or because, in accordance with the relevant legislation, they have been appointed by the chairman, non-executive members and the general manager acting jointly.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many long-term unemployed there are in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: In January 1991 there were 24,020 long-term unemployed claimants in Wales—that is, those claiming benefit for 12 months or more.

Primary Schools (Testing)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he plans to meet *(a)* the teacher organisations and *(b)* the parent-teacher associations concerning primary school testing.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Although I have no immediate plans to meet representatives from teacher organisations and parent-teacher associations, they are being fully consulted about the development of the statutory arrangements for the assessment of primary school pupils.

North-south Roads

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress he has made concerning improvements to north-south roads in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Office has spent £165 million on 35 improvement schemes to the A470 and A483 since 1979. The A470 Llanidloes bypass was opened on 25 February; the A483 Chirk bypass is on course for completion in the spring. Information on further plans for improving north-south links is contained in the 1991 supplement to "Roads in Wales", published on 25 February.

Council Housing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to meet the Association of District Councils in Wales to discuss council house building; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I shall be meeting the Welsh Housing Consultative Committee next month, and representatives of local authorities may well raise this subject then.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to enable the district councils in the valleys of Wales to build more council houses.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Within the context of their enabling role, local authorities in the valleys, as elsewhere, work in close partnership with housing associations to make the most effective use of public resources in the provision of new social housing.

Pwllpeirian Hill Experimental Farm

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is now in a position to announce what plans he has for Pwllpeirian Hill experimental farm, Cwmystwyth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 16 January 1991, at column *517*.

A44

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress is being made in upgrading the A44 trunk road from Aberystwyth to Llangurig; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Blaeng'euffordd footway and Llangurig junction improvements were completed last year. Tenders have been invited for the Capel Bangor footway improvement scheme and draft statutory orders for the Penllwyn crossroads improvement are expected to be published by early summer.

School Facilities

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what extra resources he will make available to make good deficiencies in the schools library service, as instanced by Her Majesty's inspectorate for Wales's annual report; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he proposes to make extra resources available to re-equip school laboratories and workshops; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The responsibility for the allocation of resources for school libraries, laboratories and workshops lies with local education authorities which must decide such matters in line with their assessment of priorities within the education service.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of staff in the local education authorities of Wales to ensure that school libraries are opened and supervised during school hours; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Decisions on staffing levels for services such as school libraries are for local education authorities and individual schools to take in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what average amount per pupil has been spent on library books in each of the local education authorities in Wales for each year since 1980.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is not held centrally.

Technology and Design

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to make extra resources available to meet the requirements of the national curriculum in technology and design.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Additional funding has been provided and existing resources redirected under the specific grants for education support and training schemes to help local education authorities with the progressive implementation of all subjects within the national curriculum, including technology. It is not possible to identify support given for a particular subject, but approved expenditure related to the national curriculum under these specific grant programmes rose from almost £7 million in 1989-90 to just under £10 million in the current financial year. This will rise again to over £14·5 million in 1991-92 and we intend to continue support in future years.

Local education authorities are being asked to target expenditure on the needs of pupils directly affected by the phased introduction of the core and foundation subjects of the national curriculum. Technology commenced implementation into schools from August 1990.

Specialist Teachers

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the ratio of the number of specialist advisers to the number of teachers in each subject in each education authority in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Local Government Finance

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of local authority income was provided or will be provided for each year from 1979-80 to 1991-92 by *(a)* rate or revenue support grant, *(b)* domestic rates or poll tax and *(c)* non-domestic rates or receipts from the non-domestic rate pool for *(a)* Cynon Valley, *(b)* Mid Glamorgan and *(c)* Wales as a whole.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The figures requested are shown in the following table; 1979-80 and 1980-81 are not available on a consistent basis.

The community charge system uses a different method for sharing out the various elements making up the total income, so the two parts of the table are not comparable.

	Cynon Valley		*Mid Glamorgan*		*Total Wales*	
Year	*Rate support grant*	*Total rate call*[1]	*Rate support grant*	*Total rate call*[1]	*Rate support grant*	*Total rate call*[1]
1981-82	80	20	66	34	63	37
1982-83	80	20	67	33	64	36
1983-84	79	21	67	33	64	36
1984-85	79	21	64	36	62	38
1985-86	78	22	68	32	60	40
1986-87	79	21	63	37	59	41
1987-88	77	23	63	37	58	42
1988-89	77	23	64	36	58	42
1989-90	77	23	62	38	56	44

		National			*National*			*National*	
Year	*Revenue support grant*	*Non-domestic rates*	*Community charge*	*Revenue support grant*	*Non-domestic rates*	*Community charge*	*Revenue support grant*	*Non-domestic rates*	*Community charge*
1990-91	60	18	23	58	21	21	56	22	22
1991-92	62	19	[2]19	56	22	[2]21	55	23	[2]22

[1] Includes both domestic and non-domestic rates.
[2] Community charge for standard spending for 1991-92.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for *(a)* each local authority, *(b)* each class of authority and *(c)* Wales as a whole, the capital receipts accumulated by 31 March and his estimates of the amount set aside as provision for credit liabilities in 1990-91 from (i) housing capital receipts, (ii) non-housing capital receipts and (iii) all capital receipts.

Mr. David Hunt: The table shows total cash-backed accumulated receipts at 31 March 1990. The amount each authority has set aside as provision for credit liabilities in 1990-91 is not available centrally.

Total cash backed receipts at 31 March 1990

	£ thousand
Alyn and Deeside	3,471
Colwyn	2,913
Delyn	—
Glyndwr	3,430
Rhuddlan	2,773
Wrexham Maelor	10,267
Carmarthen	5,038
Ceredigion	6,031
Dinefwr	1,661
Llanelli	484
Preseli Pembrokeshire	7,653

	£ thousand
South Pembrokeshire	5,183
Blaenau Gwent	6,124
Islwyn	8,809
Monmouth	2,995
Newport	21,238
Torfaen	8,677
Aberconwy	7,272
Arfon	6,465
Dwyfor	324
Meirionnydd	1,469
Ynys Mon	5,181
Cynon Valley	3,187
Merthyr Tydfil	2,416
Ogwr	6,105
Rhondda	810
Rhymney Valley	5,154
Taff-Ely	6,436
Brecknock	7,176
Montgomeryshire	9,260
Radnorshire	3,678
Cardiff	12,159
Vale of Glamorgan	27,358
Lliw Valley	4,809
Neath	3,083
Port Talbot	2,383
Swansea	7,254
Clwyd	2,074
Dyfed	42
Gwent	14,840
Gwynedd	140
Mid Glamorgan	650
Powys	238
South Glamorgan	200
West Glamorgan	1,521
Dyfed Powys JPA[1]	554
North Wales JPA[1]	201
South Wales JPA[1]	—
Total Districts	218,726
Total Counties	20,460
Total Wales	239,186

[1] JPA: Joint Police Authority

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the cost to his Department of *(a)* implementing and *(b)* monitoring the community charge or poll tax in Wales in the financial years (i) 1989-90 and (ii) 1990-91; and what is his estimate of the cost for 1991-92.

Mr. David Hunt: Staff and related costs for implementation of the new local government finance systems, including the introduction of the community charge, were £305,000 in 1989-90. Expenditure in that year on publicity amounted to £450,000. For 1990-91, staff and related costs for administration of the systems will be £330,000. I anticipate staff and related costs for 1991-92 of £375,000.

River Taff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to fund the Keep Wales Tidy campaign and National Rivers Authority proposal for a consortium to undertake a two-stage clean-up of the River Taff and its banks.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I understand that the Keep Wales Tidy campaign expects to fund phase 1 of the project—the study phase—from contributions by the Welsh Development Agency, the National Rivers Authority, the Cardiff Bay development corporation and local authorities in the Taff valley.

When phase 1 has been completed the local authorities concerned will be able to apply for funding for the next phase—the project proper—from the urban programme and such applications would be considered alongside other competing priorities for urban programme support. The next opportunity to submit such bids will be at the end of July this year for projects commencing in 1992-93.

Minor Operations

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the cost of minor operations carried out by general practitioners and the cost of equivalent treatment through the hospital service.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The new contract for GPs, which came into force on 1 April 1990, introduced a new payment to GPs who personally provide minor surgery services and who are on the minor surgery list of their local family health services authority. In Wales payments made to GPs since the introduction of the scheme amount to £513,187. Information regarding the cost of equivalent treatment through the hospital service is not held centrally.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drake Hall (Absconding Prisoners)

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners absconded from Drake Hall open prison in 1989;

(2) how many prisoners absconded from Drake Hall open prison in 1990;

(3) how many prisoners absconded from Drake Hall open prison in 1988.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The number of prisoners who absconded in each of the three years referred to is as follows:

	Number
1988	48
1989	81
1990	57

These figures include prisoners who absented themselves from the prison and those prisoners who failed to return having been temporarily released for such purposes as home leave.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners who absconded from Drake Hall open prison in 1900 were recaptured;

(2) how many prisoners who absconded from Drake Hall open prison in 1988 were recaptured;

(3) how many prisoners who absconded from Drake Hall open prison in 1989 were recaptured.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In 1988 a total of 38 prisoners unlawfully at large from Drake Hall open prison were recaptured.

During 1989 a total of 64 prisoners unlawfully at large from Drake Hall open prison were recaptured. Of these, three had absconded during 1988.

During 1990 a total of 53 prisoners unlawfully at large from Drake Hall open prison were recaptured. Of these, two had absconded during 1989.

During 1991, two prisoners who had absconded during 1990 have been recaptured.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners who absconded from Drake Hall open prison in 1989 and have not been recaptured were serving sentences for drug-related offences;

(2) how many prisoners who absconded from Drake Hall open prison in 1990 and have not been recaptured were serving sentences for drug-related offences;

(3) how many prisoners who absconded from Drake Hall open prison in 1988 and have not been recaptured were serving sentences for drug-related offences.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Of those prisoners who absconded during 1988 and remain unlawfully at large, a total of four were in custody for drug-related offences.

Of those prisoners who absconded during 1989 and remain unlawfully at large, a total of 12 were in custody for drug-related offences.

Of those prisoners who absconded during 1990 and remain unlawfully at large, a total of three were in custody for drug-related offences.

Video Films (Rental to Children)

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has yet received the report of the investigation undertaken by the Federation Against Copyright Theft at the request of the Video Standards Council into the background circumstances of two surveys undertaken by the Birmingham *Sunday Mercury* into age-restricted videos being rented to children below the specified age.

Mr. John Patten: The Video Standards Council—a trade body—sent us a copy of this report last August. The report urged video dealers to be more careful to comply with the law and supported tougher enforcement against those who do not. It did not call for any immediate action by the Government.

Broadcasting (Independent Productions)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to lay an order under section 16(5) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 in relation to independent productions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Section 16(2)(h) of the Broadcasting Act requires regional Channel 3 licensees to ensure that in each year not less than 25 per cent. of the total amount of time allocated to the broadcasting of qualifying programmes in their service is allocated to the broadcasting of a range and diversity of independent productions. Under section 16(5) of the Act, I am empowered to specify, by order, the definition of "qualifying programmes" and "independent productions". I hope to lay the draft of such an order before the House later this month.

In drawing up the draft order, I shall have regard to the current voluntary independent production initiative, in which the independent television companies and the BBC are participants, the details of which my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) announced on 28 April 1988. I am, however, minded to make one important change to the current arrangements. Under the voluntary initiative, an independent producer is defined as one in which no broadcaster has any shareholding. Although I accept the need to limit the scope for undue influence which may arise through cross-shareholdings of this kind, I believe that the present requirement is too restrictive and is not in the best interests of the independent sector itself. I therefore propose to permit a broadcaster to have up to a 15 per cent. shareholding in an independent producer, and to apply a similar limit on investment by an independent producer in a broadcaster.

I have placed a more detailed set of proposals in the Library.

Metropolitan Police

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the Metropolitan police establishment for 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have agreed with the Commissioner some important changes to the way in which the Metropolitan police establishment is presented.

Up to now, the Metropolitan police establishment has been presented as a single figure. No distinction is made between those posts available for operational policing across the Metropolitan police district; posts funded nationally or by other organisations, for example, at Heathrow airport, and which are therefore tied to the particular purpose for which those funds are given; and posts in support both locally and at headquarters.

I have agreed therefore a more detailed way of presenting the figures which will enable the public to see more clearly how the resources available to the force are being deployed.

We have also made some changes in the way the establishment is formed. First, we are bringing the Metropolitan police into line with provincial forces in the way in which their officers who are assigned to central or common police service posts are shown on the establishment. In the case of provincial forces, such officers are already treated as supernumerary to the establishment of the force. In future, the Metropolitan police will likewise no longer carry such officers within their establishment and, accordingly, it will be reduced by the extent of the current commitment to central and common police services.

Secondly, I have agreed an important value for money initiative put forward by the Commissioner. This enables the moneys used at present to fund certain police posts which require neither the powers nor the skills of a police officer to be used instead to fund civilian posts. The extra funds released in this way will enable further much-needed civilian support to be funded or officers to be redeployed on operational duties. The total establishment figure will naturally reduce as such police posts are "cashed in" in this way. One hundred posts have been cashed in this year, the effect of which has been to allow the Commissioner to provide more support staff while preserving the present strength of operational police officers. I am confident this change will enable the Commissioner to manage his manpower resources better and deliver an improved service.

The effects of these and other changes, including the increase of 100 posts I announced on 20 December 1990 to take effect from the end of 1991-92, is that the Metropolitan police establishment for 1991-92 will be

28,486, of which 709 are reimbursable posts, 4,609 are support and specialist posts and 23,168 will be available for operational policing in the Metropolitan police district.

European Court

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to make arrangements for the reviewing of life sentences following the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights on 25 October 1990.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Government are carefully considering the implications of the court's judgment to see what changes are necessary to the existing arrangements for reviewing the cases of discretionary life sentence prisoners in order to meet the requirements of the European convention on human rights.

Passport Office

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what parties have been organised to coincide with the new agency status for the Passport Office; what is the cost to the Exchequer; how many people have been invited; and where these entertainments are being held.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is proposed to mark the launch of the United Kingdom Passport Agency as an executive agency of the Home Office on 2 April 1991 with events at the six regional passport offices in Belfast, Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Newport and Peterborough, at the passport records unit at Hayes, Middlesex, and at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre in London.

The events will be attended by the staff of the agency, and invitations will also be extended to representations of foreign governments, the travel trade, Government Departments and others with whom the agency will have a business relationship.

These gatherings will provide an opportunity to outline the agency's plans for obtaining the maximum benefit from the change to executive agency status under the Government's "next steps" initiative in terms of value for money and a continuing emphasis on high levels of service to the public. They will also be used to publicise ways of making the best use of the passport service, for example by sending non-urgent applications by post rather than applying in person at a passport office. About 1,900 staff and business contacts of the Passport Agency are expected to attend the eight events at an overall average cost in the region of £10 per person.

Voluntary Organisations

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the main funding headings which are used in providing grants to voluntary organisations and the changes that have taken place over the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: On 4 April last year my right hon. and noble Friend, the then Home Secretary, announced the publication of the report of the efficiency scrutiny of Government funding of the voluntary sector. Annex D of that report, a copy of which is in the Library, contains a list of grant schemes through which voluntary organisations were funded in 1987-88 and 1988-89. Details of changes which have taken place over the last five years are not available centrally.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in a table under the relevant headings all funding given to voluntary organisations in the most recent year for which figures are available and for the previous four years.

Mr. John Patten: Details of the total funding given to voluntary organisations by Government Departments are announced each year by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Details for 1988-89 were announced on 11 May last year at columns *254-55*. Similar announcements covering total grants made in 1987-88, 1986-87 and 1985-86 were made on 16 May 1989 at columns *120-21*, 14 April 1988 at columns *217-19* and 2 March 1987 at columns *464-65*. An announcement in respect of total funding in 1989-90 is expected to be made shortly.

A list of all voluntary organisations funded by Government Departments was placed in the Library when details of grants made in 1988-89 were announced last May.

Police Records

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the availability to hon. Members of information about the names, dates of conviction, offences of conviction and length of sentences of convicted persons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In general, police records are regarded as confidential and information is not disclosed from them unless there are important considerations of public interest. Exceptions to the general rule of confidentiality are usually only made for the protection of vulnerable members of society; to ensure probity in the administration of the law; and national security.

Immigration

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the statutory provisions that govern whether an individual whose application for entry into the United Kingdom as the spouse of a British citizen has been rejected by an entry clearance office in the Indian sub-continent, and who has appealed to an adjudicator against that decision, may be allowed to be present in person when that appeal is heard; and if he will list the circumstances in which that person can be permitted to attend a hearing of their case, or be in the United Kingdom at the time when it is heard.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no provision in the Immigration Rules—HC 251—for someone who has been refused entry clearance to be granted leave to enter the United Kingdom for the specific purpose of attending an appeal hearing. In order to qualify for a visit visa, such an applicant would need to satisfy the entry clearance officer that he meets the requirements set out in paragraph 22 of the rules. A copy of the rules is in the Library.

Political Asylum

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for political asylum were received in January and February; from which countries the applicants came; and how many had entered the United Kingdom prior to 31 December 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* Reliable estimates of the number of applications for

asylum in the United Kingdom in January and February 1991 by nationality and date of arrival are not yet available. However, provisional indications are of a total of more than 3,000 principal applications, excluding associated dependants, in each month. This figure does not include applications for upgrading to refugee status by those previously granted exceptional leave.

Iraqi Nationals

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the entry of Iraqi nationals to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* Under the "Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules" laid before Parliament on 18 January—HC 160—an application for entry falls to be refused if the applicant is an Iraqi national. However, discretion is exercised in compassionate circumstances where we are satisfied that no threat to national security is involved.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Dyslexia

10. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many dyslexic children attend Northern Ireland schools.

Dr. Mawhinney: Dyslexia can describe a variety of specific learning difficulties experienced by children and the education and library boards are aware of some 600 such children attending schools.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

11. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further discussions he has had regarding the Anglo-Irish Agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Matters arising under the Anglo-Irish Agreement continue to be discussed within the framework of the regular meetings of the intergovernmental conference. The last conference meeting was on 31 January. Subjects discussed included political development, security matters, extradition and environmental issues. A joint statement has been placed in the Library and the Vote Office.

18. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his discussions with the Irish Government about the future of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave earlier today to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor).

Extradition

12. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has had any recent discussions with the Government of the Republic of Ireland concerning extradition.

Mr. Brooke: Extradition was discussed at the last meeting of the Anglo-Irish Inter-Governmental Conference on 31 January. A copy of the joint statement has been placed in the Library.

Tourism

13. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on tourism in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: Implementation of the Government's strategy for tourism in Northern Ireland is now well advanced and I am confident that its targets for sustained growth in tourism numbers will be achieved.

Ministerial Meeting

14. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his most recent meeting with the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave earlier today to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor).

Unemployment

15. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he plans to take to deal with unemployment.

Mr. Needham: The Government's economic development strategy for Northern Ireland aims to improve the competitiveness of the Northern Ireland economy and thereby bring about increased profitability and employment.

17. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: At 7 February 1991, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 97,817 unemployment claimants in the Province. This represents a fall of 451 over the last month and 1,122 over the last year.

Unadopted Entries

16. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the policy of his Department for upgrading unadopted entries in towns.

Mr. Needham: The Department of Environment for Northern Ireland has no plans to upgrade unadopted entries in towns. Responsibility for such entries lies with the frontagers or landowners concerned.

Prison Service

20. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his priorities for the Northern Ireland prison service.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Northern Ireland prison service will continue to discharge its responsibilities to hold in secure and humane confinement those committed by the courts and to reduce the risk of re-offending by encouraging prisoners to take full advantage of the opportunities offered during their confinement.

Education Expenditure

21. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement upon trends in expenditure upon education in Northern Ireland since 1978-79.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1978-79 spending on education in Northern Ireland was £332 million. In 1989-90 it was £898 million. This cash increase of £566 million over the period represents a real increase of 15½ per cent. This year I expect expenditure on education to be around £1 billion.

Rathlin Island

22. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when Rathlin island will have a mains electricity distribution system.

Mr. Needham: The board of Northern Ireland Electricity gave its approval to a scheme to provide mains electricity on the island. Some details have still to be worked out, but it is hoped that work on the scheme will begin this summer.

New Hospital

23. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received on the proposed new hospital in Northern health board area.

Mr. Hanley: I have received several representations from the Coleraine/Ballymoney area in support of the proposal for a new hospital in that area. These include a petition of approximately 20,000 signatures together with more than 15,000 signed letters.

Environmental Protection Agency

24. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will establish an independent environmental protection agency.

Mr. Needham: The establishment of an independent environmental protection agency was one of the recommendations in the recent report by the Environment Committee of this House in relation to environmental issues in Northern Ireland. The report is currently being studied. A command paper giving the Government's response to the Committee will be presented to the House. I would not wish to anticipate that response.

Community Relations

25. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his plans for industry to encourage better community relations.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government believe that the business sector can play an important role in encouraging community relations in Northern Ireland, although they do not wish to be prescriptive or directive. Therefore, as a first step, I intend having early meetings with business people to explore with them how they could contribute to promoting greater harmony within the work force and the wider community.

Future Government

26. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his discussions with the political parties in the province about the future government of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave earlier today to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor).

Arts Funding

27. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the per capita arts funding in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The answer is £3·14 in 1990-91.

Hospital Beds

28. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many beds will be available in Northern Ireland hospitals by the end of the current year.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not available. However, the average number of available beds in Northern Ireland hospitals has decreased in each of the last five years from 16,595 in 1985 to 14,154 in 1989-90. These reductions are consistent with targets set in my Department's regional strategy (1987 to 1992) and I expect the downward trend to continue this year. Over the same period as above the number of patients treated increased from 290,109 to 315,962 as a result of the more intensive use of beds and greater concentration on day cases.

Public Expenditure

29. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the public expenditure plans and priorities for Northern Ireland for 1991-92 and 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: The recently published report on the Government's expenditure plans and priorities gives further information about the resource allocations announced last November by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State are being utilised for the benefit of Northern Ireland. The report shows the very substantial programme of work in which all Departments are engaged, covering the full spectrum of economic, social and environmental provision.

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of workplaces for civil servants in his Office and in the Northern Ireland Departments; what proportion of the total number have an on-site nursery facility; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide a holiday play scheme; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide after-school child care facilities; what charges are made for use of any facility; what the net cost has been for the provision of these facilities; and what estimate he can make of any future expenditure.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Northern Ireland civil service and the Northern Ireland Office have staff based in 341 buildings throughout the Province and in London.

There are no on-site nurseries or after-school child care facilities provided. However, the feasibility of establishing a nursery in Northern Ireland is currently being investigated and nursery facilities for London-based staff are being sought with larger Government Departments and private companies.

Three holiday play schemes have been established in Northern Ireland. They are not located in Government buildings but they serve staff working or living in the Ballymena, Londonderry and Stormont areas. Additional schemes will be set up in the future in areas where the demand for them exists. The small home civil service part of the Northern Ireland Office in London can link into schemes already set up by larger Departments and hopes to be able to take advantage of any new schemes.

The charges to parents using holiday play schemes range from £3 to £4 per child per day. The Northern Ireland civil service made grants of approximately £8,000 to fund the three holiday play schemes in 1990-91. Future expenditure on these schemes is expected to continue at the same level; if additional schemes are set up grants will be paid to them on a similar basis.

River Dun (Breakwater)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what effects have been observed as a result of the breakwater erected at the mouth of the River Dun in respect of *(a)* deposition or removal of sand, *(b)* on commercial fisheries and *(c)* on the freedom of movement of migratory fish.

Mr. Hanley: The answer is:

(a) No effect on the deposition or removal of sand can be attributed with certainty to the breakwater.

(b) There has been an increase in the commercial salmon catch in the vicinity of the breakwater since its erection.

(c) Fish migrating from the River Dun should not be affected by the breakwater but those returning to the River, while not obstructed by the structure itself, may be impeded to an extent during periods when the adjacent fixed draft net is also in the fishing mode. To facilitate the passage of fish the owner of the net has made application to change the site and characteristics of the net and following a recent public inquiry the matter is awaiting decision.

Fishing

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) whether the use of nylon monofilament nets are permitted in the freshwater commercial fisheries of Northern Ireland;

(2) whether he has considered a ban on the sale of wild brown trout in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: No.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the minimum size of each species of coarse fish which can be taken by commercial fishing engines from the freshwater lakes and rivers of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: The coarse fish species for which a minimum takeable size has been prescribed are:

(a) Pollen: 19.5 cm (7½in).

(b) Pike: 60 cm (24in) only applicable in Lough Erne.

(e) Eels: 40 cm in all waters controlled by the Fisheries Conservancy Board except Lough Neagh where the mimimum size is 30 cms.

There is no mimimum size for eels in the waters controlled by the Foyle Fisheries Commission.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what number of *(a)* salmon and *(b)* sea trout have been taken by nets in the River Dun in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Hanley: Commercial fishing for salmon and sea trout is not permitted in the River Dun.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to at what age and what size brown trout in Lough Neagh reach maturity.

Mr. Hanley: Lough Neagh brown trout mature between their third and sixth years, with most maturing by their fifth year. Within this range there are differences between the sexes (females tend to mature later than males) and between different sub-populations of trout. The size at maturity ranges from approximately 20 to 50 cms.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* salmon and *(b)* sea trout redds have been counted in the River Dun in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Hanley: The counting of redds is by visual observation and numbers observed can be distorted by water and weather conditions. Figures for the years concerned were:

	Salmon redds	*Sea trout redds*
1981	Nil	Nil
1982	Nil	Nil
1983	4	N/c
1984	N/c	N/c
1985	Nil	Nil
1986	Nil	Nil
1987	N/c	N/c
1988	N/c	N/c
1989	6	Nil
1990	16	Nil

N/c = No count undertaken.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the minimum size of brown trout which can be taken by commercial fishing engines from the freshwater lakes and rivers of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: There is no minimum size of brown trout which can be taken by commercial fishing engines, but commercial fishermen cannot have in their possession for sale any trout of less than 30 cm (12 inches).

Housing

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Antrim of 5 March, *Official Report*, c. *127*, if he will list by name the four Housing Executive and 40 private developments concerned.

Mr. Needham: The developments concerned are as follows:

Development	*Borough Council area*
NIHE sites	
Station Park, Tome	Antrim
Ardeen Gardens, Rathcoole	Newtownabbey

Development	Borough Council area
Hightown Road, Glengormley	Newtownabbey
The Diamond, Rathcoole	Newtownabbey
Private Sites	
Laurel Park, New Street, Randalstown	Antrim
The Gables, New Street, Randalstown	Antrim
Trommery Park, Ballytrommery Road, Crumlin	Antrim
Kings Court, Templepatrick	Antrim
Fortview Stage 1, The Folly, Antrim	Antrim
Hightown Gardens/Rise, Hightown Road, Glengormley	Newtownabbey
Shermond Park, Ballyhenry Road, Glengormley	Newtownabbey
Fairhill Crescent—Carnmoney	Newtownabbey
Mount Pleasant Road, Jordanstown	Newtownabbey
Doagh Road/Monkstown Road, Glengormley	Newtownabbey
Toberdowney Estate—Lismenary Road, Ballynure	Newtownabbey
Jordanstown Mews (115 Jordanstown Road, Newtownabbey)	Newtownabbey
Hampton Court—138-148 Jordanstown Road, Jordanstown	Newtownabbey
Monkstown Avenue, Newtownabbey	Newtownabbey
Burnside Road, Doagh	Newtownabbey
Collinview Avenue—Ballyclare	Newtownabbey
Whitehouse Park—Shore Road, Newtownabbey	Newtownabbey
Archvale Avenue—Carnmoney	Newtownabbey
Jordanstown Heights—Mount Pleasant Avenue Jordanstown	Newtownabbey
Beechgrove Dev, Manse road, Glengormley	Newtownabbey
Collinbridge Park—Glengormley	Newtownabbey
Ferndale Road—Carnmoney	Newtownabbey
Cogry Hill and Cogry Rise—Cogrey Road, Doagh	Newtownabbey
Meadowcroft, Ballyclare Road, Ballyrobert	Newtownabbey
Cherry Meadows—Burneys Lane, Glengormley	Newtownabbey
Foundry Lane—Ballyclare	Newtownabbey
Mossley Road—Ballyrobert	Newtownabbey
Ashley Park—Doagh Road, Ballyearl	Newtownabbey
Clare Heights—Doagh Rroad, Ballyclare	Newtownabbey
Asbourne/Glendermore—Ashgrove Road, Glengormley	Newtownabbey
Merrion Avenue—Ballyclare	Newtownabbey
Carnhill Road—Prince Charles Way, Carnmoney	Newtownabbey
Glenbourne Park, Jordanstown	Newtownabbey
Dorchester Park, Ballyhenry Road—Glengormley	Newtownabbey
Carnhill No. 2 Estate—Prince Charles Way, Carnmoney	Newtownabbey
George Court, Main Street, Ballynure	Newtownabbey
Hightown Road, Glengormley	Newtownabbey
Grange Valley, Ballyclare	Newtownabbey
Lismara, Shore Road, Newtownabbey	Newtownabbey
Christine Road, Manse Road, Glengormley	Newtownabbey

Social Security

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many social security claimants have been *(a)* prosecuted and *(b)* found guilty of claiming benefit while working and receiving wages during each year from 1985-86 to 1989-90.

Mr. Hanley: During the period 1985 to 1989 the number of social security claimants prosecuted and the number of convictions was:

	Total prosecuted	Total convictions
1985	940	759
1986	1,079	1,024
1987	1,079	1,015
1988	1,184	1,151
1989	1,075	1,033

Figures in respect of 1990 will not be available until mid 1991.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many workers in the construction industry have been *(a)* prosecuted and *(b)* found guilty of claiming social security benefit while receiving wages during each year from 1985-86 to 1989-90.

Mr. Hanley: During the period 1985 to 1989 the number of workers, including employers in the construction industry, who have been prosecuted for social security fraud was:

	Number prosecuted
1985	412
1986	416
1987	408
1988	476
1989	373

Details concerning actual convictions in individual sectors of industry could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost. Figures in respect of 1990 will not be available until mid-1991.

Agriculture

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show for each of the months of September, October and November in the years 1975, 1980, 1985, 1988, 1989 and 1990 the price received for suckled calves in the principal markets for such cattle, sums to be shown in cash and real terms, taking for real terms 1975 as the base year, or as much of such information as is available to him.

Mr. Hanley: Estimates of prices received for suckled calves in the principal markets in Northern Ireland for the months of September, October and November in the years 1975, 1980, 1985, 1988, 1989 and 1990 are given below in current prices and in real terms.

	Current prices (£/head)			Prices in real terms[1] (£/head)		
	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.
1975	64·33	73·25	74·16	64·33	72·24	72·28
1980	—	157·27	163·89	—	81·28	84·00
1985	225·20	227·81	242·61	84·03	84·88	90·09
1988	363·62	360·78	348·73	119·49	117·33	112·93
1989	317·60	337·01	318·80	97·01	102·16	95·82
1990	246·08	210·67	279·81	67·77	57·58	76·66

[1] Deflated by changes since September 1975 in the United Kingdom index of retail prices.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show for each of the months of June, July, August, September and October the average price received

for fat lambs in the principal markets of Northern Ireland in the years 1975, 1980, 1985, 1988, 1989 and 1990, showing also the average final price received by the farmer taking into account sums which arise from market support payments, all prices to be shown in cash and real terms taking 1975 as the base year, or as much of such information as is available to him.

Mr. Hanley: Estimates of prices received for finished lambs in the principal markets in Northern Ireland for the months of June, July, August, September and October in the years 1975, 1980, 1985, 1988, 1989 and 1990 are given in the following tables in current prices and in real terms. Since 1982, market support for sheep has not been based on payments on lambs marketed but is paid, on a per ewe basis, to those keeping eligible breeding ewes. Therefore lamb prices which include market support payments are not available.

Current prices - (pence/kg deadweight)

	June	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*
1975	33·30	28·71	28·20	28·76	32·83
1980	162·00	142·30	121·00	122·70	116·20
1985	176·24	158·95	158·70	155·28	162·54
1988	203·67	199·68	198·11	194·93	194·90
1989	201·00	185·99	179·72	176·23	173·51
1990	167·67	130·43	133·05	137·68	133·86

Prices in real terms[1] (pence/kg deadweight)

	June	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*
1975	33·30	28·43	27·76	28·06	31·60
1980	83·59	72·82	61·80	62·25	58·60
1985	64·20	58·01	57·75	56·55	59·08
1988	66·41	65·04	63·80	62·50	61·85
1989	60·52	55·97	53·94	52·53	51·32
1990	45·99	35·74	36·11	37·00	35·70

[1] Deflated by changes since June 1975 in the United Kingdom index of retail prices.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Homeless Claimants

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place in the Library a copy of the review of the future arrangements for homeless claimants in London being undertaken by the district manager of the New Southwark district.

Miss Widdecombe: It is not our intention to publish this report.

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of workplaces for civil servants in his Department; what proportion of the total number have an on-site nursery facility; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide a holiday play scheme; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide after-school child care facilities; what charges are made for use of any facility; what the net cost has been for the provision of these facilities; and what estimate he can make of any future expenditure.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department has just under 500 workplaces. One workplace has an on-site nursery, but staff in other workplaces have access to another 23 nursery schemes provided by other Government Departments or private organisations.

Sixty-five workplaces have access to places to holiday play schemes, and three have access to after-school child care.

Child care charges vary by scheme and location—the main criterion is the provision of good value for money. The charge to staff for nurseries ranges from £20 to £55 per week; for holiday play schemes from £1·50 to £7 per day; and for after-school child care from £1·00 to £1·30 an hour.

In 1990-91 £1·6 million was allocated for expenditure on child care. Specific allocations for later years are not made centrally.

Departmental Accounts

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he has taken to rectify those mistakes and miscalculations identified by the Comptroller and Auditor-General in refusing to approve his Department's accounts for *(a)* 1989-90 and *(b)* 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Three of the Department's accounts for 1989-90 were qualified by the Comptroller and Auditor-General. As a result the Department has taken steps to improve its computer systems, provided additional training and guidance to staff and has corrected errors in individual payments. The 1990-91 accounts have not yet been prepared and will be presented for audit in September 1991.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received to index the level of the cold weather payment to rises in fuel prices since 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We are not aware of any recent representations on this subject.

Mr. Orme: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much has been paid out in cold weather payments by region since 1 February.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not yet available, but it will placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Mr. Orme: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what have been the staffing costs, by region, of administering the cold weather payments since 1 February.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not yet available, but I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Purchasing and Distribution

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the full annual cost, including overheads, of his Department's purchasing activity.

Miss. Widdecombe: The full annual cost, including overheads, of those staff wholly or substantially engaged in purchasing in the DSS is £4 million, including the cost of staff engaged in stores activities. This figure excludes warehousing costs, those storage and distribution activities which are contracted out and staff who spend only a small proportion of their time in purchasing and supply. This cost amounts to 0·5 per cent. of the total purchasing spend of £812 million.

Family Credit

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what proportion of cases family credit is payable to the mother.

Miss Widdecombe: In two-parent families family credit is payable to the mother in almost every case. Legislation provides that in such families the claim has to be made by the woman, which means that she becomes the payee. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may accept a claim by the man where he is satisfied that this would be reasonable, but this provision is used only in exceptional circumstances.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families in *(a)* the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland are in receipt of family credit; and what estimated proportion these families represent of those judged to be entitled to this benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: Information about the total number of families eligible for family credit can be obtained only for Great Britain as a whole, and only retrospectively, from family expenditure survey data.

The latest available information for families receiving family credit is as follows:

	Families
(a) Greenock and Port Glasgow	1,010[1]
(b) Strathclyde	16,200[1]
Scotland	39,000[2]

[1] Number of awards actually in payment on 8 February 1991 i.e. excludes awards on claims made before that date but not decided at that stage.

[2] True case load at the end of July 1990, i.e. including backdated awards. Information on this more comprehensive basis is only available for Scotland as a whole.

Family Credit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether information about family credit, similar to that supplied to parents whose child benefit is paid by order book, has been sent to those receiving it by credit transfer.

Miss Widdecombe: The same personalised message, telling the family that they may be able to get family credit if their income is less than the figure quoted in the message, now appears on the child benefit award notices, change of rate notices and statements of entitlement sent to those people whose payment is made by credit transfer.

Purchasing and Distribution

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in his Department are wholly or substantially involved in purchasing stores and distribution activities.

Miss Widdecombe: The number of people wholly or substantially involved in purchasing, stores and distribution at the Department of Social Security is 217. This includes 69 people engaged in related stores activities.

Criminal Injuries (Compensation)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if his Department will review its rules with regard to the treatment of awards from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board as savings for the purpose of benefit entitlement assessment; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The vast majority of payments from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board have no effect whatsoever on social security benefits.

The rules for the income-related benefits were changed in October 1990 so that compensation payments arising from a personal injury which are placed on trust are completely disregarded when deciding entitlement to benefit. The normal rules apply to payments made by the trustees.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will consider the determination of a higher trigger point for the cold weather payment in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: As I announced in the House on 11 February, we will shortly undertake a review of the scheme.

Value for Money

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures of performance are employed by his Department to ensure value for money.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department uses a wide range of indicators to measure its performance and the quality of service it provides. These are set out in the 1991 departmental report (Cm 1514) a copy of which is available in the Library. To ensure value for money in administrative expenditure, the Department has an ongoing target to increase efficiency and uses mechanisms such as efficiency scrutinies, internal consultancy, market testing of in-house activities and the monitoring of purchasing improvements.

Income Support Deductions

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list his Department's offices in Glasgow and show against each how many income support arrestments and statutory reductions have been made at the request of Strathclyde regional council.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is as follows:

Glasgow local office	*Number of deductions in place*
Anniesland	667
Bridgeton	794
City	257
Craigton	1,002
Cranstonhill	1
Laurieston	704
Maryhill	678
Partick	273
Provan	787
Rutherglen	1,181
Shettleston	841
Southside	850
Springburn	1,063

The information is not routinely published. It derives from the Department's management information system and is obtained from a quarterly count of deductions in action completed on 28 February 1991. The data are provisional and subject to amendment.

Pensioners (Heating)

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the annual costs for heating faced by pensioners.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department receives annual information on the patterns of pensioner expenditure, including the amounts spent on household fuel, from the family expenditure survey.

Income Support

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many income support claims in the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow are from *(a)* elderly citizens, *(b)* families, *(c)* single parents and *(d)* people with disabilities as a total figure and as a percentage of all claims.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available in the form requested. However, it is possible to identify the number of current claims from pensioners and from lone parents aged less than 60 in the two local offices serving the Greenock and Port Glasgow area. This information is as follows:

	Pensioners	Single parents
Total number of claims	5,164	2,539
Percentage of claims in Greenock/Port Glasgow area	32·4	16·0

Note:
Data derived from 30 November 1990 count of cases in action, which include a number of cases where payment has ceased but other action is continuing. Data are provisional and subject to amendment.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which offices of his Department have received additional social fund allocations since 1 January; on what dates; and of what amounts.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on 13 March 1991.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether polycythaemia has been accepted as attributable to service by nuclear test veterans in addition to leukaemia and multiple myeloma.

Mr. Scott: Expert medical authorities now accept that polycythemia rubra vera may be looked upon as a disease similar to certain types of leukaemia. If the condition occurs in a British nuclear test participant, it will be certified as attributable to service for war pension purposes.

National Insurance Fund

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total cost to the National Insurance Fund to date of the 2 per cent. of banded earnings offered as an incentive to opt out of SERPs expressed *(a)* as a cash amount and *(b)* as an amount per head of those who remain in SERPs.

Miss Widdecombe: Revenue forgone by the National Insurance Fund in respect of the 2 per cent. incentive is to date just under £1,400 million. Because individuals move in and out of employment and also move between contracted in and contracted out employment or take out a personal pension during the course of a contribution year, it is not possible to determine accurately the number of individuals remaining in SERPs.

ENVIRONMENT

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the cost of lowering the maximum permissible annual increase in uniform business rate bills in *(a)* nominal and *(b)* real terms (i) for small businesses, from 15 per cent. to 10 per cent. and (ii) for larger businesses, from 20 per cent. to 15 per cent., for the financial years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Key: The estimated costs in England, to the nearest £5 million, are as follows:

	Nominal (cash) terms	
	1990-91	1991-92
Small properties	25	40
Large properties	135	205

	Real terms (1990 prices)		
	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Small properties	25	35	45
Large properties	135	185	185

No allowance has been made for changes to the rating lists since 1 April 1990 in making these estimates. Estimates for cash terms increases for 1992-93 have not been made because any increase in the cost in cash terms will be the result of an increase in the value of the multiplier for 1992-93, which will be determined in relation to the annual increase in the retail prices index in September 1991.

The maximum increase for small composite hereditaments, most commonly where the owner lives "over the shop", has already been changed. From 1 April 1991, the limit will be 10 per cent. for these properties. The cost of this change is estimated to be £5 million in each of 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the cost of increasing the threshold at which businesses are eligible for the small business category of uniform business rate transitional relief from a rateable value of £10,000 to £15,000 outside London and from a rateable value of £15,000 to £25,000 within London, for the financial years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Key: The cost in England, in 1990 prices, is estimated to be £25 million in 1990-91 and £35 million in each of 1991-92 and 1992-93. These estimates take no account of changes to the rating lists since 1 April 1990.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has for the cost of allowing businesses to remain eligible for transitional relief from the uniform business rate although they move premises for the financial years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Key: The estimated cost in England of allowing businesses to remain eligible for transitional protection when moving premises is, in 1990 prices, £60 million in 1990-91, and £75 million in each of 1991-92 and 1992-93. These estimates take no account of changes to the rating lists since 1 April 1990.

Green Labelling

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in agreeing a system of green labelling with the other EC member countries; and what proposals Her Majesty's Government have with regard to *(a)* the proportion of low-grade paper waste to be included in a green-labelled toilet roll, *(b)* the specifications for soap powder or detergent, *(c)* the specification for batteries, in particular the problems with mercury and cadmium, *(d)* aerosol spray, *(e)* liquid containers and *(f)* standards for shopping carrier bags.

Mr. Baldry: The European Commission issued its proposed regulation for a Community award scheme for an eco-label on 11 February. The proposal will be discussed at the Environment Council on 18 March.

No proposals have yet been made for the criteria against which specific product groups would be assessed for the award of an eco-label under the scheme. Under the proposed regulation, criteria would be determined on the basis of an assessment of the impact of a product on the environment over the whole of its life-cycle, and would aim for high standards of environmental protection.

Greenwich

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the effect on the SSA for Greenwich if at the time of the last census Thamesmead tenants had already left the public sector and if the present numbers of children with lone parents had been present then.

Mr. Key: The information necessary to answer this question is not available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the reasons why the spread of sports grounds and undeveloped land in the borough of Greenwich leads, through the ward weighted density calculation, to reduced social services provision for the frail elderly and children at risk.

Mr. Key: Ward-weighted density is not an indicator used in the standard spending assessment for personal social services for the elderly or for children. The level of provision of social services in Greenwich is, in any case, a matter of discretion for the borough.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the borough of Greenwich might be expected to spend on *(a)* social services and *(b)* other services if the assessment per head for Lewisham and for Wandsworth were used.

Mr. Key: It is for the borough of Greenwich to decide how much to spend on each service. SSAs are calculated to reflect the social and demographic characteristics of the individual authority concerned. Thus Lewisham's SSA would not be appropriate for Greenwich. The following table shows what the 1991-92 personal social services and all other services SSA elements for Greenwich would be if its SSA per adult for each service was the same as that of Lewisham and Wandsworth.

SSA element for Greenwich 1991-92

	Personal social services £ *million*	*All other services* £ *million*
Greenwich's actual position	32·165	33·031
With same per adult sum as for Lewisham	41·191	41·054
With same per adult sum as for Wandsworth	43·559	52·095

Nitrogen Oxide (Monitoring)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has in respect of the number of nitrogen oxide monitoring stations in each of the OECD countries.

Mr. Baldry: No central records are kept of the numbers of nitrogen oxide monitoring stations in each of the OECD countries. Within Europe, nitrogen oxide monitoring data are compiled by the chemical co-ordinating centre of the UN ECE EMEP programme at the Norwegian Institute for Air Research. Of the 108 EMEP monitoring stations operated by the 28 European countries, 25 stations reported nitrogen oxide monitoring data in 1985.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which regulations concerning waste disposal will be in operation after 1992.

Mr. Baldry: The present statutory controls on waste disposal, contained in part I of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and the regulations made under that Act, will continue in force until repealed and replaced by part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. I hope to announce a timetable for the implementation of part II of the 1990 Act shortly.

Radioactive Discharge

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his present policy in respect of the use of as low as reasonably achievable and best practical means guidelines to determine acceptable radioactive discharge levels to the marine environment.

Mr. Baldry: The Government's policy is to keep radiation exposures as low as reasonably achievable (ALARA), taking account of economic and social factors. Operators discharging radioactivity to the marine environment are required not only to comply with any numerical limits laid down by the regulatory authorities, but are also placed under an obligation to use the best practicable means (BPM) to limit further the amount of radioactivity discharged.

Recycling

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the reserve fund for innovative recycling projects was established; how many projects were funded through it; where these projects were located; and what was the cost to the fund of each project.

Mr. Baldry: There is no such fund specifically related to recycling projects. However, under the environmental technology innovation scheme (ETIS), launched in October last year, and the environmental grant fund, launched in December last year, assistance can be given to suitable innovative recycling projects. At present no offers of grant have been made in relation to recycling projects under these schemes which, with some exceptions in the case of ETIS, are not open to public sector bodies.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what powers there are to penalise councillors who fail to pay their community charge.

Mr. Key: None.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider extending the grounds for exemption from the poll tax to include severe physical handicap.

Mr. Key: Our review of local government finance is considering all aspects of the community charge. Under the present arrangements people with disabilities may be helped by the community charge benefit disability and severe disability premiums.

Mr. Dixon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the effect on the poll tax for 1991-92 in South Tyneside if Government grants were the same as in 1978-79 in real terms.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 8 March 1991]:* Since 1 April 1990, in contrast to previous arrangements, revenue support grant has been paid to the receiving authority for each area in support jointly of its own expenditure and that of the precepting authorities in the area. For this reason it is not possible to make direct comparisons at the individual authority level between the new grant system and previous systems. Also it is inappropriate to apply the national percentage rate of grant to individual authorities, since in both old and new systems grant is paid at different rates to different authorities, reflecting differences in their local needs and resources.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the level of Government grants for 1990-91 per head of population in Wakefield metropolitan district council;

(2) what would be the effect on the poll tax for 1991-92 in Wakefield metropolitan district council if Government grants were the same as in 1978-79 in real terms;

(3) what grant per poll tax payer is received by Wakefield metropolitan district council.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 11 March 1991]:* Government grants, consisting of revenue support grant, special grants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge benefit grant and transitional relief grant, were £208 per head of population and £271 per head of relevant population in Wakefield in 1990-91.

Since 1 April 1990, in contrast to previous arrangements, revenue support grant has been paid to the receiving authority for each area in support jointly of its own expenditure and that of the precepting authorities in the area. For this reason it is not possible to make direct comparisons at the individual authority level between the new grant system and previous systems. Also it is inappropriate to apply the national percentage rate of grant to individual authorities, since in both old and new systems grant is paid at different rates to different authorities, reflecting differences in their local needs and resources.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the average domestic rate bill in each local authority in England which would be necessary to yield the same revenue as his estimate of the yield of the community charge in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* I am arranging for the information for 1990-91 to be placed in the Library of the House. Information for 1991-92 will not be available until authorities inform the Department of their budgets.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the effect on the poll tax for 1991-92 in *(a)* Salford, *(b)* Wigan and *(c)* Bolton if Government grants were the same as in 1978-79 in real terms.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the effect on the poll tax for 1991-92 in Bradford if Government grants were the same as in 1978-79 in real terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* Since 1 April 1990, in contrast to previous arrangements, revenue support grant has been paid to the receiving authority for each area in support jointly of its own expenditure and that of the precepting authorities in the area. For this reason it is not possible to make direct comparisons at the individual authority level between the new grant system and previous systems. Also it is inappropriate to apply the national percentage rate of grant to individual authorities, since in both old and new systems grant is paid at different rates to different authorities, reflecting differences in their local needs and resources.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grant per poll tax payer is received by Maidstone and Faversham.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* Government grants, consisting of revenue support grant, special grants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge benefit grant and transitional relief grant are, per head of relevant population in 1990-91, £206 in Maidstone and £231 in Swale.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the percentage of total budgeted council expenditure which is paid for by poll tax in *(a)* Waltham Forest, *(b)* Wandsworth and *(c)* Westminster in 1991-92.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 13 March 1991]:* Income from community charges, together with revenue support grant and receipts from the non-domestic rates pool, finances the spending of each charging authority and the appropriate precepting authorities. It is not possible to attribute a proportion of an individual authority's spending to any particular source of income.

Ladies' Lavatories

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue a planning guidance circular concerning the standards to be met in the provision of ladies' lavatory facilities in buildings open to the public.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so: this is not a concern of the land-use planning system. However, the Building Regulations 1985 and the technical guidance associated with them lay down requirements for the provision of sanitary conveniences and washing facilities in new buildings in England and Wales.

Dog Control

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government intend to bring into effect the new provisions on dog control contained in the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Baldry: The dog control provisions in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 provide for new duties to be placed on district and London borough authorities to collect and detain stray dogs, and to enforce the existing requirement that dogs should wear a collar and

identification tag in a public place. We propose to bring these new measures into effect on 1 April 1992. My Department will consult local authorities on a draft circular in the summer, and will publish draft regulations in the autumn.

My officials are holding discussions with the local authority associations and other interested bodies about the additional resource implications of implementing the new duties and powers. I have been most impressed by the initiatives and enthusiasm shown by the many authorities which already employ dog wardens. I would encourage others to follow their example by similarly exercising their existing powers to the full.

Cash Limits

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any changes to announce to his Department's cash limits for 1990-91.

Mr. Heseltine: Yes. I propose to make the following changes:

(i) The non-voted cash limit for DOE/OES will be increased by £2,110,000 from £58,705,000 to £60,815,000. This results from the provision of additional supplementary credit approvals to enable local authorities to raise finance to fulfil their obligations to contribute part of the cost of certain roads built by the Commission for the New Towns and new town development corporations in England. The increase will be wholly offset by counterbalancing new town receipts (see (iii) (b) below).

(ii) The non-voted cash limit DOE/LACAP will be increased by £500,000 from £2,785,170,000 to £2,785,670,000. This results from the provision of additional supplementary credit approvals to enable Peterborough DC to raise finance to purchase housing stock from the Commission for the New Towns. This increase is also wholly offset by counter-balancing new town receipts (see (iii) (b) below).

(iii) The non-voted cash limit for DOE/NT (New Towns) will be increased by £222,390,000 from minus £525,370,000 to minus £302,980,000. This net increase is the result of the following individual changes:

(a) an increase of £225,000,000, reflecting the effect on receipts of the present state of the property market;

(b) reductions of £2,110,000 and £500,000 respectively resulting from additional receipts from local authorities financed by the cash limit increases described in (i) and (ii) above.

(iv) The External Finance Limit for Letchworth Garden City Corporation will be increased by £4,120,000 from minus £4,000,000 to £120,000. This reflects changes in the Corporation's financing profile as a result of the downturn in the property market.

These changes are within the forecast outturn for the planning total published on 1 February in the statistical supplement to the 1990 autumn statement.

Community Charge (Gulf Postings)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure that service personnel and civilians posted to the Gulf are reimbursed in respect of any liability to the community charge during their absence.

Mr. Heseltine: I told the House on 19 February that the Government had concluded that service personnel and associated civilians posted to the Gulf should not have to bear the cost of the community charge during the period of their posting and that we would consider in the light of the case of Bradford MBC *v.* Anderton how this could be achieved.

The Government have decided to establish a compensation scheme, to be operated by the Ministry of Defence, under which service personnel and civilians posted to the Gulf will be reimbursed for any community charge liability incurred in the period of their absence. The scheme will apply to all uniformed service personnel, including reservists; to civilians employed by the Ministry of Defence, including the merchant seamen of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary; to merchant seamen on ships chartered by the Ministry of Defence; and to certain employees of defence contractors supporting the British armed forces in the Gulf. The scheme will be retrospective to the initial deployment in August 1990. Compensation will cease when an individual returns to Great Britain, except for personnel who are wounded where it will continue until they leave hospital or convalescent home.

I have already announced separate proposals to compensate local authorities which lose significant amounts of income in respect of those service personnel whose liability for the community charge ceases as a consequence of posting to the Gulf.

My Department will shortly be issuing to local authorities further guidance about the implications of the Anderton judgment for the community charge liability of service personnel.

Action for Cities

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what projects have been funded in inner cities under the action for cities initiative; and if he will list the factories and local businesses which have received funds under action for cities.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* A wide range of projects have been supported under the action for cities initiative, with Government expenditure input totalling over £10 billion since 1988. More detailed information is available in Government publications such as "Action for Cities", "Progress on Cities" and "People in Cities", and in the annual reports recently published by each Government Department. Factories and businesses receive specific help through various programmes and bodies; the main ones are listed below:

Programmes
- Urban programme
- City grant
- Enterprise allowance scheme
- Enterprise initiative
- Loan guarantee scheme
- Regional enterprise grants
- Regional selective assistance

Bodies or agencies
- Urban development corporations
- English estates
- Small firms centres
- Task forces
- City action teams

If my hon. Friend requires any further information, perhaps he could write to me.

Direct Labour Organisations

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will commission a report into the accounting procedures adopted by local authority direct labour organisations.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 13 March 1991]:* The procedures which authorities are required to follow in accounting for their direct labour organisations are

prescribed in section 10 of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 and section 9 of the Local Government Act 1988. Under those Acts authorities are required to secure that the financial objectives prescribed by my right hon. Friend are met, and to submit copies of their annual reports to their auditor and to my right hon. Friend.

We have no plans at present to commission a study of accounting procedures under this legislation.

EMPLOYMENT

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of workplaces for civil servants in his Department; what proportion of the total number have an on-site nursery facility; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide a holiday play scheme; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide after-school child care facilities; what charges are made for use of any facility; what the net cost has been for the provision of these facilities; and what estimate he can make of any future expenditure.

Mr. Jackson: The Employment Department Group has approximately 2,000 workplaces for civil servants, many of which are small local offices comprising 10 to 30 staff; at present we have one on-site nursery facility running in Bootle; 28 workplaces provide holiday play schemes; there are no after-school child care facilities provided at present. All parts of the group are actively pursuing initiatives to increase child care provision. The Department will continue to consider sympathetically proposals for child care facilities and, where possible, will provide practical help where there is evidence of sufficient demand to make it financially viable. Staff who wish to take advantage of play schemes and nurseries are required to contribute to running costs. Central records are not kept concerning individual costs involved and could not be obtained without incurring a disproportionate cost; any future estimate of expenditure again cannot be gathered without incurring disproportionate costs. The diversity of workplaces within the group and their relative size often means that workplace provision is not viable. In some locations the Department is working with other Government Departments and outside industry to take child care provision forward. At present there are about seven schemes under consideration in this category.

Apex Trust (Youth Project)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received about the threatened closure of the Apex Trust's youth project; what funding his Department provides to this project; how many people have been trained at the project since it was first established; how many people are currently being trained by the project; what alternative training places would be provided if the project was closed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My Department has a national employment training (ET) contract with the Apex Trust which runs between 28 May 1990 and 31 March 1991, and is for 1,477 places at a unit cost of £52 for each trainee week delivered which gives Apex an earning capacity of £3·38 million.

The Apex Trust's training centre in York has been operating since 1985, initially offering community programme and since September 1988 delivering ET. Figures supplied by the Apex Trust show that since the launch of ET in September 1988 250 trainees have trained at the centre, and that there are currently 37 trainees in training. North Yorkshire TEC has offered the Apex Trust a rundown contract between 1 April and the end of November to enable existing trainees to complete their training.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Veterinary Laboratories

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the 28 veterinary laboratories that were operational in 1979 and in 1991, and those that will be operational in 1995.

Mr. Gummer: The changes in the structure of the veterinary investigation service since 1979 are the result of two very thorough and carefully considered reviews on the operation of the service. These reviews were designed to produce significant improvements in the quality, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the service and to reflect changes in national requirements and methods of operation of the veterinary investigation service. Advances in diagnostic technology, automated analytical equipment, information technology and improvements in road transport systems mean that a larger proportion of services provided by the veterinary investigation service can now be carried out more efficiently in the reduced number of locations. It is important to have an efficient veterinary investigation service which is well equipped to meet our national needs over the years ahead.

The 28 veterinary laboratories within the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that were operational in 1979 consisted of 25 veterinary investigation centres located at Aberystwyth, Bangor, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Carmarthen, Chester, Gloucester, Leeds, Lincoln, Liverpool, Newcastle, Northampton, Norwich, Penrith, Reading, Shrewsbury, Starcross, Sutton Bonington, Thirsk, Truro, Weybridge, Winchester, Worcester and Wye, and the three central laboratories comprising the central veterinary laboratories at Weybridge, Lasswade (Edinburgh) and the cattle breeding centre at Shinfield.

There are 21 veterinary laboratories operational in 1991 consisting of 19 veterinary investigation centres located at Aberystwyth, Bangor, Bristol, Cambridge, Carmarthen, Lincoln, Newcastle, Norwich, Penrith, Preston, Reading, Shrewsbury, Starcross, Sutton Bonington, Thirsk, Truro, Winchester, Worcester and Wye and the two central laboratories comprising the central veterinary laboratories at Weybridge and Lasswade (Edinburgh).

It is expected that there will be 15 veterinary laboratories operational in 1995 consisting of 13 veterinary investigation centres located at Aberystwyth, Bristol, Carmarthen, Newcastle, Penrith, Preston, Shrewsbury, Starcross, Sutton Bonington, Thirsk, Winchester and the two new veterinary investigation centres to be built, one at Bury St. Edmunds and the other in Warwickshire and the two central laboratories comprising the central veterinary laboratories at Weybridge and Lasswade (Edinburgh).

Irradiation Plants

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields, 11 March, *Official Report*, column 400, how many inquiries he has received regarding the licensing of irradiation plants; if he will list the companies making the inquiries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I do not believe it would be appropriate to list companies making inquiries about irradiation licences, some of which may have been purely exploratory. Details of each licence granted will be published in the London and Edinburgh *Gazettes* as required by the Food (Control of Irradiation) Regulations 1990.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields, 11 March, *Official Report*, columns 400-1 whether he intends to set up a new committee to consider applications for licences for irradiation plants in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I can see no case for a new committee. The committee of which full details were given in my answer to the hon. Member for South Shields on 11 March at column *400-01* has been in existence only since 1 January. Moreover, this group was specifically constituted so as to be able to give authoritative advice on all considerations relevant to the granting of a licence.

Agricultural Inspections

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list for each year since 1986 the number of holdings visited by agricultural wage inspectors as (i) test inspections and (ii) inspections arising from complaints; how many underpayments were discovered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The number of holdings visited by the agricultural wages inspectors is as follows:

	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
(i) test-inspections	2,791	2,817	2,017	1,891
(ii) inspections arising from complaints	140	114	120	80
(iii) number of under-payments discovered	70	110	56	55

Note: Statistics for 1990 are not yet available.

Agricultural wages inspectors are located in all the Department's divisional offices to follow up complaints and enforce the relevant legislation.

Milk

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the milk quota attaches to the land on which the milk is currently produced or to the land on which it was produced during the last five years.

Mr. Curry: Milk quota is allocated to a producer for use on his or her holding. European Community regulations prescribe that where an entire holding is transferred by sale, lease or inheritance all quota must pass to the transferee. Where part of a holding is transferred quota must be apportioned in accordance with areas used for milk production. The term "areas used for milk production" is not defined in EC regulations and in the case of a quota transfer it is for the parties concerned to agree on an apportionment. Where they fail to agree, the Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1989 provide for an independent arbitrator to be appointed to decide the matter. An arbitrator is required to base his award on the pattern of milk production in the preceding five years.

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the definitions of a holding used by EC countries for the purpose of milk quotas.

Mr. Curry: The definition of "holding" prescribed in European Community Regulation 857/84 Article 12(d) is as follows:

"all the production units operated by the producer and located within the geographical territory of the Community".

This regulation is applicable throughout the Community. For the purposes of the regional allocation of wholesale quota a clarification of the term was necessary, so the Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1989 qualify the above definition as follows:

"holding has the meaning assigned to it by Article 12(d) of Council Regulation 857/84, but in relation to any region, it means the division of the holding in that region".

EC Surplus Food Scheme

Mr. Madden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reply has been sent to Anthony Clipsom, area organiser of the Bradford metropolitan council for voluntary service, to his letter, dated 1 March, sent to his Department in Reading, concerning the EC surplus food scheme 1991.

Mr. Curry: The closing date for the receipt of applications from organisations wishing to participate in the 1991 scheme is 22 March.

The detailed arrangements mentioned by the hon. Member can be finalised only after all the applications have been examined following the closing date. The intervention board will be replying to Mr. Clipsom shortly along those lines.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, with reference to the EC surplus food scheme 1991, under what criteria groups forming consortia will have their separate bids conflated; if smaller groups, involved in consortia, will be able to claim expenses for collecting and re-distributing food from central points; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The closing date for the receipt of applications from organisations wishing to participate in the 1991 scheme is 22 March.

The detailed arrangements mentioned by the hon. Member can be finalised only after all the applications have been examined following the closing date.

Animal Waste

Mr. Meale: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards European Community directive 90/667/EEC and specifically to the exemption that allows high-risk animal waste material to be used by hunt kennels and maggot farms; and what assessment he has made of the impact of this provision on human or animal health.

Mr. Gummer: I welcome the fact that the directive includes provisions to permit the continuation of operations of this kind. It will be essential for such establishments to be subject to controls that safeguard human and animal health.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on the recommendation of the report of the Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (part II) that the use of pithing rods in abattoirs should be banned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the Government's response to the Committee's recommendations, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Emergency Food Stocks

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 30 January, *Official Report*, column *545*, if he will give the reasons for the high costs of losses to the emergency food stocks in 1989-90 when set against the average of the preceding years from 1979-80; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Details of the stock losses for 1989-90 are published in the Appropriation Accounts 1989-90, volume 3. The higher incidence of losses resulted from a disposal in that year of an accumulation of downgraded stocks.

Tributyltin

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a statement on the presence of tributyltin in the North sea;

(2) what recent assessment he has made of the implications for the marine environment of the presence of tributyltin in the North sea.

Mr. Curry: The Department began a programme to measure tributyltin (TBT) levels in water, fish and shellfish in 1982. Since 1987 the Department, jointly with the Department of the Environment, has commissioned a more intensive research and monitoring programme to assess the efficacy of control measures introduced in 1986 and 1987. This work has been focused on certain estuaries where contamination was highest. The results show that TBT levels are declining generally and affected populations of marine species are recovering. Levels in the most severely contaminated areas have declined by between six and tenfold since 1986 as a direct result of the controls applied.

The levels of TBT in the mouths of estuaries away from pleasure craft activity have always been low, and concentrations in the open waters of the North sea are still lower. Levels are below both the quality standard required to protect marine species and the limit of detection of the most sensitive analytical techniques available.

Sewage Sludge

Mr. Simon Burns: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether a programme has been drawn up for termination of the sea disposal of sewage sludge.

Mr. Gummer: All bodies in the United Kingdom currently licensed to dispose of sewage sludge at sea have reported their plans to introduce alternative methods of disposal. Timetabling and the choice of appropriate method of disposal will depend on local circumstances. All licence holders have carefully considered whether beneficial use of sludge in their area would be practicable, and a number have plans for beneficial re-use of sludge. There are proposals for spreading sludge on agricultural land, for composting sludge for agricultural use and for the production of dry granules for production of fertilisers or peat substitutes.

For most of the sludge sewage undertakers are pursuing the option of incineration. Their judgment takes account of the priority which they must give to the guarantee of a disposal outlet, the present lack of assured markets for high volumes of sludge-derived products, the distance of major treatment works from land on which sludge can be used and the environmental disadvantages of transporting sludge through urban areas. While pursuing incineration at this stage a number of the undertakers intend to keep open the option of adopting beneficial uses of sludge in the future. A beneficial by-product of incineration in some cases will be the generation of power.

On current plans the Ministry will be terminating the first licences for sea disposal by the end of 1993, with further licences terminating in 1995. In the main these cases are those where re-use of sludge is planned. The introduction of incinerators will be subject to approval through the planning system and to appropriate timescales for construction; undertakers currently envisage the commissioning of most incinerators in the period 1997-98.

The success of this important initiative depends on public recognition of the need for alternative methods of disposal. Those who have sought an end to disposal at sea have a duty to support alternatives, and to accept that there may be increased costs. The costs to water consumers of the proposed programme of measures are for determination between the sewerage undertakers and, in England and Wales, the Office of Water Services, in Scotland the Scottish Office and in Northern Ireland the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland).

Foodstuffs (Import Levies)

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will show in table form, for each year since 1965-66, the total import duties and levies on foodstuffs as a whole, imported into the United Kingdom, and separately for the following categories: *(a)* cereals, *(b)* meat including livestock destined for consumption, *(c)* dairy products and *(d)* other items.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

I regret that the information is not available in the form requested and could not in any way be provided for the full period requested except at disproportionate costs.

The tables show the levy and duty for both foodstuffs and non-foodstuffs from the four most recent years in each case. Separate figures distinguishing between foodstuffs and non-foodstuffs are not available.

Agricultural levies

	Established in calendar years: 1987 £000	1988 £000	1989 £000	1990 £000
Cereals	84,310	62,601	47,392	74,838
Meat (beef, veal and pigmeat)	6,065	6,019	5,458	1,806
Dairy products	17,218	21,883	28,458	11,156
Other	107,360	88,047	54,174	39,362
TOTAL	214,953	178,550	135,482	127,162

Note: Amounts are made available to the Commission two months after the month in which they are established.

Import duties

	Financial years 1986-87 £000	1987-88 £000	1988-89 £000	1989-90 £000
[1]Cereals (Chapter 11—products of the milling industry)	222	256	302	232
Meat (Chapter 2—including edible offal but excluding livestock)	9,848	12,475	14,600	15,668
Dairy products (Chapter 4—including eggs, honey and other edible products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified)	2,991	3,011	2,898	2,668
TOTAL	13,061	15,742	17,800	18,568

[1] No import duty was collected on unprocessed cereal grains (Chapter 10) most of which are liable to levy only.

Notes: Figures for livestock and other items of foodstuff are not available.
These figures are not directly comparable with those for levy. Import duty is summarised by tariff chapters only and these include items not subject to levy and exclude related foodstuffs in other tariff chapters.

SCOTLAND

Health Service Pay

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when discussions will commence on the establishment of arrangements for local pay determination for health service employees in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The objective of introducing progressively greater flexibility in pay in order to relate pay to local labour markets and to reward individual performance is already being pursued in the Whitley councils.

Fish

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has considered a ban on the sale of wild brown trout in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. Purchase, sale or export of brown trout of less than 8 inches in length, or between 1 September and 31 March of brown trout of any size, is already prohibited by section 2 of the Trout (Scotland) Act 1933.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many commercial fishing engines operate in freshwater lakes and rivers in Scotland which have as target species *(a)* salmon, *(b)* sea trout, *(c)* wild brown trout and *(d)* coarse fish by species; and what quantities of each such species were taken by such engines in (i) 1990, (ii) 1985, (iii) 1980 and (iv) 1970.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In Scotland the only methods of fishing for salmon and sea trout allowed in inland waters are net and coble or rod and line. There are appoximately 70 net and coble fisheries currently operating in Scotland. The total numbers of salmon and sea trout caught by this net and coble are shown in the table:

	Salmon and grilse	Sea trout
[1]1989	93,256	45,133
1985	82,033	50,547
1980	106,275	97,850
1970	187,480	102,170

[1] Figures for 1990 will not be available until later this year.

Figures for wild brown trout or coarse fresh water fish catches in Scotland are not obtained or held centrally.

Legal System

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list the total payments from legal aid funds and payments per head of the population in Scotland over the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is shown in the table.

Year	Legal Aid expenditure £	Payment per head of population £
1985 86	41,479,000	8·07
1986-87	47,454,000	9·27
1987-88	47,723,000	9·33
1988-89	58,169,000	11·42
1989-90	58,959,000	11·58

Voluntary Organisations

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the main funding headings which are used in providing grants to voluntary organisations and the changes that have taken place over the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Annex D of the report of the Efficiency Scrutiny of Government Funding of the Voluntary Sector, a copy of which is in the Library, contains a list of Government grant schemes for voluntary organisations current in 1987-88 and 1988-89. Details of changes over the previous five years are not readily available.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in a table under the relevant headings all funding given to voluntary organisations in the most recent year for which figures are available and for the previous four years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer to the answers given by my right hon. Friend the then Prime Minister, on 11 May 1990 at cols. *254-55*, 16 May 1989 at cols. *120-21*, 14 April 1988 at cols. *217-19* and 2 March 1987 at cols. *462-63*. Details for 1989-90 will be announced shortly.

Health Service

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what reduction in income Greater Glasgow health board will face during 1991-92 because of share parity adjustment; and what further such parity adjustment reduction may be anticipated for 1991-93.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Greater Glasgow health board was allocated £536·073 million for revenue expenditure purposes in 1991-92, an increase in base allocation of 7·6 per cent. over the 1990-91 level. This is £13 million less than would have been allocated to them if the national average increase had been applied. The £13 million was redistributed among the other 14 health boards to achieve a more equitable distribution of resources.

No decisions have yet been taken on allocations for 1992-93.

Tourism

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total value to the Scottish economy of tourism in each of the past 15 years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Figures for 1990 are not yet available. Information for the period 1975-89 is set out in the table.

	£ million
1975	355
1976	367
1977	498
1978	523
1979	590
1980	659
1981	718
1982	760
1983	897
1984	1,423
1985	1,421
1986	1,576
1987	1,894
1988	1,594
1989	1,773

Note: Figures are compiled from the International Passenger Survey (for overseas visitors) and the British Tourism Survey, the National Survey of Tourism in Scotland and the United Kingdom Tourism Survey (for domestic visitors for the years 1975-83, 1984-88 and 1989 respectively). Because of differences in the domestic surveys, figures for the period 1975-83 are not directly comparable with those for 1984-89.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when his Department last undertook a survey either directly or in conjunction with the Scottish tourist board of the impact of tourism on the Scottish economy.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Scottish tourist board, as the agency with statutory responsibility for promoting and developing the Scottish tourism industry, undertakes annual surveys into the volume and value of tourism in Scotland.

GP Funding

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made towards the establishment of general practitioner funding in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am much encouraged by the level of interest in fundholding expressed by GPs in Scotland. I fully expect four fundholders to come into being on 1 April 1991, with a further five candidates later this year.

There are clear signs that many more GPs are interested in what fundholding can offer them. In particular I am aware that a number of practices with less than the minimum patient list size (currently 9,000) would welcome the opportunity to participate in the scheme. I therefore intend to establish a limited number of pilot sites, involving individual practices, to assess the potential for such a development. I shall also be considering the scope for other developments, such as extending the range of services covered by a fund.

Smokies

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of food poisoning have been attributed to the consumption of smokies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 15 February 1991]:* There have been no recorded cases of food poisoning attributed to the consumption of smoked haddock. Fish hygiene proposals are under discussion in the EC, and we have made every effort to ensure that the final measure will be practical and realistic: there is no reason to believe that the proposed measure threatens in any way the future of the fish smoking industry.

Forestry Commission

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all land currently owned by the Forestry Commission which it is planning to sell; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 7 March 1991]:* The Forestry Commission's disposals programme will continue until the end of the century, and the selection of properties for sale will accordingly be staged over that period. Advance notification of areas being considered for disposal is given in the *Estates Gazette* in respect of all woodlands of more than 5 hectares, together with any other land having a known conservation, recreation or amenity interest. Copies of the *Estates Gazette* are to be found in the Library.

The following forest areas are at present being offered for sale on the open market:

County/region	Name	Area hectares
England		
Avon	Camerton Wood	19
Cornwall	Dryworks Wood	4
Cornwall	Hay Wood	54
Cornwall	Headweir	5
Cornwall	Penanced Derrys	7
Cornwall	Treworgy	17
Devon	Blagdon Wood	16
Devon	Brownsham	70
Devon	Deershill	11
Devon	Fyldon	13
Devon	Heasley	4
Devon	Higher Mines	2
Devon	Mount	9
Devon	Never Be Good	9
Devon	Pulsworthy	3
Devon	Squirrel	14
Devon	Trago Mills	2
Dorset	Moors Valley	1
Durham	Stanley Cottage Plantation	31
Durham	Stanley Moss Plantation	32
Hampshire	Bordean Estate, Fishers Copse	28
Hampshire	Lower Rowborough Copse	8
Hampshire	Roke Mead Copse	9
Hampshire	Whitefield Wood	35
Northumberland	Corbies Crags Wood	54
North Yorkshire	Gateforth East (Part)	11
North Yorkshire	Gateforth West	47
North Yorkshire	Seaton Ross	33
North Yorkshire	Sutton Wood	24
Shropshire	Coed Detton	14
Shropshire	Long Mynd	25
Somerset	Balls Wood	2
Somerset	Barrow Copse	3
Somerset	Barrow Wood	13
Somerset	Churches Wood	6
Somerset	Fry's Wood	24
Somerset	High Bitcombe	30
Somerset	Lower Bitcombe	18
Somerset	Pound Copse	6
South Yorkshire	Bagger Wood	28
South Yorkshire	Green Springs Wood	12
South Yorkshire	Lower Lee Wood	5
South Yorkshire	Upper Lee Wood	3
South Yorkshire	Walker Wood	6
West Sussex	Down Copse	6
West Yorkshire	Black Carr Plantation	20
Scotland		
Borders	Menzion	1,113
Central	Lendrick	46
Dumfries and Galloway	Glaik Wood	63
Dumfries and Galloway	Knockinaam Wood	30
Dumfries and Galloway	Lochnaw Estate	116
Grampian	Glasslaw	54
Grampian	Hillend Moss	16
Grampian	Hillhead	12
Grampian	Knock Hill Wood	56
Highland	Brin Wood	69
Highland	Clashnagrave	12
Highland	Dirriemore	4
Strathclyde	Daljarrock Wood	52
Strathclyde	Ferns	2
Strathclyde	Finnery	29
Strathclyde	Islay	1,300
Strathclyde	Millhouse	3
Strathclyde	Thornwood	2
Strathclyde	Watermeetings Plantation	731
Wales		
Clwyd	Coed y Garreg	22
Dyfed	Allt Cefnrhyddan	9
Dyfed	Allt Fawr	7
Dyfed	Allt Ffos Colic	18
Dyfed	Allt Goch	29
Dyfed	Bwlch Newydd	8
Dyfed	Cilfowyr	5
Dyfed	Cnwch yr Arian	65
Dyfed	Coed Cwmgloyne	24
Dyfed	Coed Ffridd Cwmere	20
Dyfed	Coed Pant y Gasseg	3
Dyfed	Coed Penrhiw	77
Dyfed	Coed Rhyd Tir	16
Dyfed	Crugiau Wood	22
Dyfed	Cwm Cynfelin	8
Dyfed	Cwmeilath and Cwmmarlais	8
Dyfed	Fforest	22
Dyfed	Ffynon Lefrith	25
Dyfed	Gallt Gareg y Fran	5
Dyfed	Gallt y Cribin	7
Dyfed	Glanteifi Wood	4
Dyfed	Goitre Wen	7
Dyfed	Gorsfarm Wood	28
Dyfed	Letterston Moor	15
Dyfed	Lower Scourfield	13
Dyfed	Maestwynog	12
Dyfed	Musland and Lower Broadmoor	10
Dyfed	Pencwm Fawr	9
Dyfed	Penhill Wood	4
Dyfed	Rams Wood	26
Dyfed	Tanyrallt	6
Dyfed	Troserch Wood	35
Dyfed	Ty Cerrig and Bylchau Duon	108
Dyfed	Ty Isha	16
Dyfed	Waun Baglan	26
Gwent	Gorrashill	8
Gwent	Llanfoist	10
Gwent	Lords Grove	38
Gwent	Luggas Wood and Young's Grove	15
Gwent	Nant y Coy	10
Gwent	Ty Vree (Cook's Wood)	5
Gwynedd	Carrog Wood	28
Gwynedd	Coed Dyfi	17
Gwynedd	Mynydd Gefn Amlwch	23
Powys	Bryn Glessy	19
Powys	Castle Wood	3
Powys	Clog Fawr	13
Powys	Coed Mawr	15
Powys	Coed Neuadd	9
Powys	Coed Tyllys	12
Powys	Cwmbach and Cwmcoch	44
Powys	Dingle Wood	6
Powys	Great Wood	9
Powys	Penclawdd	7
Powys	Trawscoed	6
Powys	Tyle Clydach	5
Powys	Tyle Crwn	28
West Glamorgan	Craig Ynysgollen	10
West Glamorgan	Gelli Gaer	33

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a list of all land which was owned by the Forestry Commission and which has been sold since 1980 giving *(a)* the area of land sold, *(b)* to whom it was sold, *(c)* the year it was sold, *(d)* how much money the Forestry Commission received over the sale and *(e)* the type of woodland or other type of countryside.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 7 March 1991]:* The Forestry Commission is preparing a list of the areas of forest land which it has sold since 1980. This will incorporate information provided in answer to previous questions. I shall arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Details of sales of land other than forest land are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

DEFENCE

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of workplaces for civil servants in his Department; what proportion of the total number have an on-site nursery facility; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide a holiday play scheme; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide after-school child care facilities; what charges are made for use of any facility; what the net cost has been for the provision of these facilities; and what estimate he can make of any future expenditure.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There are some 750 locations throughout the United Kingdom employing MOD civil servants, most of which have less than 200 members of staff. The Department has full-time nurseries in central London and in Farnborough. A number of holiday play schemes have been set up in several different locations.

The charges for parents for places in the London nursery are either £45 or £55 per week according to the grade of the parent. The charge at Farnborough is £40 per week. Further child care projects are under consideration. The funding of these projects will depend upon their assessed cost-effectiveness when seen against other demands on resources.

The Gulf

Sir Antony Buck: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish an appraisal of the role of helicopters in the recent action in the Gulf with relation to support of the 1st Armoured Division in particular and of alliance forces in general.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are considering the outcome of the campaign and the conclusions to be drawn from it, but it is too early to say how the results of this work might be made public.

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many United Kingdom registered merchant ships were used by Her Majesty's Government in connection with the Gulf conflict; and how many were chartered from overseas fleets.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: To date, five British and 107 foreign flagged vessels have been chartered in support of the Gulf conflict. A number of these vessels have undertaken more than one voyage.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what have been the costs so far to public funds of the chartering of vessels to convey stores and equipment to the Gulf; what has been the cost to the Government of their freight agent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The cost to date of chartering vessels to carry stores and equipment to the Gulf is £74 million. It would not be appropriate to disclose details of the Government freight agent's remuneration: it is fixed by contract and is not affected by the cost of vessels taken up by the Ministry of Defence.

"Options for Change"

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications of "Options For Change" for the security policy for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On 8 November 1990, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland published a statement on the Government's security policy in Northern Ireland. The statement makes it clear that the armed forces will continue to support the RUC, with all the resources necessary, to ensure the defeat of terrorism; "Options for Change" will not alter this policy.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the further studies on aircraft noise mentioned in his answer to the hon. Member for Ryedale of 17 May 1990, *Official Report*, column *518*, are now complete; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have now received reports on noise levels generated by aircraft operating at low level and on the review of available information on any possible relationship between aircraft noise and hearing loss. Copies of these reports have been placed in the Library of the House.

The report of the review of available information on the possible relationship between aircraft noise and hearing loss indicates that the risk of hearing loss as a result of exposure to overflight noise is small, even after daily occurrences over as long a period as 40 years, while the risk of hearing loss due to a single overflight can be regarded as infinitesimal. The report also concludes that occasional brief exposure to noise levels as high as 125 dB(A) should produce no lasting effect on hearing and that there is a small margin of safety at that level.

The report on noise levels generated by aircraft operating at low level has established that, at the speeds flown in the United Kingdom low-flying system, none of the RAF aircraft from which measurements were taken produced noise levels in excess of 125 dB(A).

The report of the study of noise sources within and around aircraft is expected shortly. My Department's low-flying noise panel continues to co-ordinate work in this field and ensures that the findings of research are taken into account in the management of low flying and in the design of future aircraft.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 15 March 1991

ENVIRONMENT

Child Care

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of workplaces for civil servants in his Department; what proportion of the total number have an on-site nursery facility; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide a holiday play scheme; how many and what proportion of workplaces provide after-school child care facilities; what charges are made for use of any facility; what the net cost has been for the provision of these facilities; and what estimate he can make of any future expenditure.

Mr. Heseltine: There are five headquarters offices and 17 other offices in central London. In addition, my Department has nine main regional offices, most of which are shared with other Government Departments, as well as over 50 offices throughout the country, including property holdings and my Department's three agencies, but excluding PSA Services.

None of these offices has an on-site nursery or provides after school child care facilities. A number of interdepartmental holiday playschemes are in operation in Westminster, Birmingham, Bedford, Bristol, Nottingham, Newcastle and Manchester. These are all open to the Department's staff and parents have been charged up to £5 per day per child for the use of the facilities. The Department will also be participating in a proposed interdepartmental nursery scheme in Westminster.

Expenditure in 1990-91 is estimated at £10,000. Future expenditure is difficult to estimate. Many factors are involved, including joint funding arrangements, demand, value for money of individual schemes and other departmental priorities.

Primates

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning the number of wild-caught primates imported into the United Kingdom in the last three years; and for what purposes these animals are used.

Mr. Baldry: In the three years to 31 December 1990, 11,428 live specimens of wild-caught primates were imported. Of these, 9,588 were imported for scientific or educational purposes; 1,766 for trade; and 74 for exhibition or breeding.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set up a committee of inquiry into the matter of waste disposal.

Mr. Baldry: A committee of inquiry is not required. There have been a number of Select Committee inquiries into waste disposal in recent years and a full Government review of waste management policies culminated in the passing of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. That Act will be implemented with a full programme of supporting advice and guidance about which there will be continuing consultation.

River Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent assessment he has made of the presence of *(a)* heavy metals and *(b)* polychlorinated biphenyls in river eels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The National Rivers Authority is currently undertaking a monitoring programme for contaminants in river eels. Results are expected later this year.

Purchasing and Distribution

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people in his Department are wholly or substantially involved in purchasing stores and distribution activities.

Mr. Heseltine: In 1989-90, some 180 people in the central administration of my Department were whollyt or substantially involved in these activities. For the PSA, because of the nature of its business, all of the 14,140 staff supported the purchasing activity to a greater or lesser extent.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the full annual cost, including overheads, of his Department's purchasing activity.

Mr. Heseltine: The staff cost, including overheads, of the purchasing activity in the central administration of my Department in 1989-90 was £1·5 million. For the PSA, all expenditure on staffing of some £390 million was associated with purchasing.

Domestic Waste

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to increase the amount of domestic waste subject to incineration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Incineration can be a viable alternative to landfill as a method of disposing of waste, provided proper standards are observed. The higher standards that landfill sites will be required to meet under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and the potential for energy generation from municipal waste incinerators, will also make incineration a more viable option financially. However, the final decision on the type of facility that is most appropriate in any area must lie with the waste disposal authority.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that there exist adequate facilities for incineration of domestic waste in compliance with the EC directive on large combustion plants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: It is for waste disposal authorities to ensure there are adequate facilities—including incinerators—and they will need to take this into account in preparing their

waste disposal plans. Air emissions from existing municipal waste incinerators are covered by EC directive 89/429. The Government have allocated £62 million over the next three years to local authorities for works necessary to upgrade such incinerators to meet these standards.

Emergency Alarms

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all methods of Government funding available to local government that would enable them to purchase emergency alarm systems for elderly and disabled people.

Sir George Young: There is no single source of funding for the purchase of emergency alarm systems by local authorities. In most cases, it will be a matter for the local authority to decide the priority it places on alarms in relation to other demands and within available resources.

Government support for such purposes may be provided through one of the following routes—the usable part of capital receipts and credit approvals; minor works assistance under section 131 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989; urban programme; revenue support grant; housing revenue accounts.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the grades and salary scales of officers in the pollution inspectorate;

(2) what staff complement is considered necessary to enable his Department to discharge its duties in the field of pollution inspection; and how many vacancies currently exist for pollution inspectors.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside gave the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) on 24 January, *Official Report*, column *269*. To meet its increased responsibilities for integrated pollution control under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's staff complement has been authorised to expand from 233 to over 300 by 1 April 1992 and may thereafter need to increase up to around 400 when integrated pollution control is in full operation.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution currently has 14 vacancies for pollution inspectors. These vacancies, and the authorised new posts, will be filled from the recent recruitment exercise which produced 38 successful applicants.

The grades and current national rates of pay for pollution inspectors are listed below.

Grade	*Minimum of scale* £	*Maximum of scale* £	*Maximum of performance range points* £
Assistant pollution inspector (HPTO)	18,195	19,681	n/a
Pollution inspector (SPTO)	20,059	26,121	31,150
Principal pollution inspector (grade 7)	24,997	29,809	35,451
Superintending pollution inspector (grade 6)	27,229	35,451	41,681

Grade	*Minimum of scale* £	*Maximum of scale* £	*Maximum of performance range points* £
National rates of pay for pollution inspectors will increase from 1 April 1991 to:			
	21,905	29,809	35,451

Consequential increases for more senior inspector grades are currently under discussion with staff representatives.

Saltley Renewal Area

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which roads were visited by the Minister for Housing and Planning during his visit to the Saltley renewal area on 26 February; and which residents' associations were invited to meet him.

Sir George Young: I visited the following roads in the south Saltley renewal area—Bowyer road, Hartopp road, Parkfield road, Couchman road, Alderson road, Ludlow road and Alum Rock road.

I had a full day in Birmingham on 26 February 1991. I visited a hostel for the homeless, saw two public sector estates as well as the south Saltley renewal area, and went to two recent housing association developments. I was unable to meet representatives of all the local associations, but I met a large number of tenants and residents during the day and I enjoyed my visit to the home of two residents in south Saltley.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement about progress in the privatisation of the Crown Suppliers' vehicle hire and maintenance business.

Sir George Young: The Government have not been able to reach agreement with the only bidder about acceptable terms for the sale of the Crown Suppliers vehicle hire and maintenance business.

There is little justification for retaining in Government a business which provides services commonly provided by other suppliers. Furthermore, the workshops are unprofitable and future profits from vehicle hire are uncertain. Consequently the Government have decided to close the business. Every effort will be made to find alternative civil service posts for the staff but some redundancies are inevitable. The trade unions are being consulted about the implications for their members.

We are urgently considering the interests of customers of the business with a view to proposing alternative arrangements to meet their continuing requirements.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Invalid Care Allowance Unit

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to review the establishment at the invalid care allowance unit.

Mr. Scott: We intend to increase the staffing level at the invalid care allowance unit from 358 in 1990-91 to 400 in 1991-92.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average time between the date on which an application for invalid care allowance is received and the first payment is made to a successful claimant.

Mr. Scott: Based on the year to 31 January 1991, the average time between the date on which an application to invalid care allowance is received and the first payment is made to a successful claimant is 47·5 days, which includes an average of nine days to cover payment preparation and dispatch processes after the claim has been cleared in the unit.

Emergency Alarms

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what income support arrangements exist to enable individuals to purchase or rent emergency alarm systems.

Miss Widdecombe: There is no specific provision in the income support scheme to help meet the cost of purchasing emergency alarm systems. However, where the eligible rent or eligible housing costs of an elderly, sick or disabled person include an inescapable service charge for an emergency alarm system, help with that charge can be provided through housing benefit or income support respectively.

Quality Assessment Surveys

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *612*, if he will send the hon. Member for Oldham, West a copy of the survey by Research Surveys of Great Britain when he places copies in the Library.

Miss Widdecombe: Yes. I will do so as soon as the report is available.

Multiple Births

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will consider the level of child benefit for the first child where multiple births occur; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Child benefit provides a worthwhile contribution towards the costs of bringing up children, but it has never been intended to meet those costs in full. The higher rate of £8·25 from this April for the eldest eligible child in each family at any one time recognises that, at all income levels, families with children face additional costs compared with other families. It is therefore the presence of any one child rather than the number of children which is significant in bringing about that difference in expenditure. The standard rate of £7·25 will of course be paid for all children who do not attract the higher rate. A mother whose first children are twins for example will get a total of £15·50 child benefit a week.

Disability Working Allowance

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many additional claimants would qualify for the disability working allowance if the functional test were applied for initial claims for those not receiving a qualifying benefit; and if he will estimate the numbers and net cost in each category for *(a)* claimants working in receipt of no benefit, *(b)* claimants working in receipt of income support and earnings, *(c)* claimants working and receiving housing benefit and/or community charge benefit, *(d)* claimants not working in receipt of income support without the disability premium, *(e)* claimants not working in receipt of unemployment benefit with no income support addition, *(f)* people not working and receiving no benefit and *(g)* people receiving family credit.

Mr. Scott: Estimates of the number of people who might claim disability working allowance (DWA) can be only tentative since they depend on assumptions about how availability of the benefit might influence behaviour. We do not believe that the test of functional disability as proposed would be a suitable alternative to the requirement to be or to have been receiving a long-term incapacity or disability benefit. However, our best estimate is that if claimants were able to qualify by satisfying the test of functional disability alone, the DWA case load would be increased by about 200,000 and the cost by roughly £200 million net of other benefit savings. It is not possible to estimate with confidence the numbers or net cost in the categories (a) to (g).

Care Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list his estimate of the numbers of claimants in receipt of income support payments towards the cost of *(a)* residential care homes and *(b)* nursing homes for each of the last 10 years.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) on 16 November 1990 at column *238*.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps are taken by local benefit offices to ascertain whether income support claimants in receipt of payments towards the cost of nursing home care are *(a)* in need of nursing care and *(b)* in receipt of nursing care.

Miss Widdecombe: The level of income support payable depends on the type of care the nursing home is providing for the claimant. The adjudication officer must be satisfied that the home is recognised by the registration authority as able to provide a level of care and that the resident is receiving such care. We have no evidence to suggest that residents of nursing homes do not need to be there.

Disabled People

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 16 January, *Official Report*, column 535, giving figures on the hours worked by people with disabilities, if he will indicate the source of his statistics; and whether these figures have been used in determining the likely take-up of the proposed disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: The information to which the hon. Member refers was obtained from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys disability surveys. Estimates of the cost and case load of the disability working allowance have been largely based on data from these surveys.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Tertiary College (Truro)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to make a decision on the proposed establishment of a tertiary college in Truro.

Mr. Fallon: The Secretary of State has before him a proposal significantly to change the character of Richard Lander school, published on 1 November 1990, which relates to the establishment of the proposed tertiary college. Our aim is to decide such proposals within five months from the date of publication. The establishment of the college itself does not require a decision by the Secretary of State.

Welsh Registry, University of Wales

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) on what basis the recently announced 15·47 per cent. increase in funds allocated to the Welsh Registry, university of Wales, for the year 1991-92 was calculated;

(2) what performance indicators he intends to use to ensure that the £3·7 million allocated to the Welsh Registry, university of Wales, for the year 1991-92, will provide value for money.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The distribution of funds to individual institutions and the monitoring of related performance are, under the Education Reform Act 1988, matters for the Universities Funding Council.

University of Wales

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy in regard to the development of the university of Wales and its constituent colleges in the light of the likely economic and cultural needs of the people of Wales into the next century.

Mr. Alan Howarth: It is for each institution to plan its own development in the light of its perception both of national and other demands and of its abilities to respond to these, consistent with its general mission. The distribution of public funding in support of these plans is a matter for the Universities Funding Council.

Assisted Places

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he intends to introduce a new scheme for assisted places; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: The assisted places scheme has been in operation since 1981 and has provided the opportunity for many thousands of youngsters from families on lower incomes to benefit from the education provided by good independent schools. There will be 35,000 places available in the scheme by the mid-1990s, following the admission of new schools to the scheme this academic year, many in the north of England.

We have no plans to introduce any new scheme.

WALES

Voluntary Organisations

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the main funding headings which are used in providing grants to voluntary organisations and any changes that have taken place over the last five years;

(2) if he will publish in a table under the relevant headings all funding given to voluntary organisations in the most recent year for which figures are available and for the previous four years.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply given to her on 14 March by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Foxes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide a table of moneys allocated to Welsh fox destruction clubs since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: No moneys have been allocated to Welsh fox destruction societies since 1979.

Health Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in the health authority area in Powys are awaiting surgery.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Under existing arrangements, information is collected about the number of people waiting for treatment at hospitals but not about their area of residence. From 1 April 1991, waiting lists become the responsibility of the health authorities of the patient's area of residence and, in time, published information will reflect this.

EMPLOYMENT

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which of his Ministers has been given responsibility for energy use by his Department; and what is his brief regarding energy efficiency.

Mr. Forth: The Minister responsible for energy use is Viscount Ullswater, a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State.

He has a dual role—

(1) As the departmental representative on the ministerial group on energy efficiency, which is chaired by the Secretary of State for Energy, he contributes to the implementation of the Government's policy to promote energy awareness and efficiency throughout the public and private sectors of the economy.

(2) As the Minister responsible for this Department's energy strategy he oversees the implementation of the strategy, the main objective of which is to reduce energy use by 15 per cent. over the next five years. He encourages energy awareness and efficiency in those areas of the economy where the Department has a sponsoring role—training and enterprise, tourism and small firms. He, with other Ministers in the Department of Employment, promotes energy awareness and efficiency at appropriate occasions during official visits and speeches.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the chairman of Barclays, Lloyds, National Westminster, Royal Bank of Scotland and the Midland banks to discuss their involvement in the loan guarantee scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I meet or correspond with senior banking representatives on a regular basis to discuss their general services to small firms, including their involvement in the loan guarantee scheme. I have also met the small firms sub-committee of the Committee of London and Scottish Bankers.

Between June 1981 and March 1991, more than 27,900 guarantees have been issued under the scheme, corresponding to lending of £891 million. The scheme continues to have a significant role in assisting small firms that cannot otherwise raise finance for viable business activities.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of loan guarantee schemes granted by *(a)* Barclays, *(b)* Lloyds, *(c)* National Westminster, *(d)* Royal Bank of Scotland and *(e)* the Midland banks in each of the last three years.

Mr. Forth: The number of guarantees issued for each of the banks is as follows:

	1988	*1989*	*1990*
Barclays	586	625	640
Lloyds	352	370	263
National Westminster	430	1,127	1,387
Royal Bank of Scotland	61	74	69
Midland	375	521	1,087

HOME DEPARTMENT

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proposals he has received for the provision of suitable alternative accommodation for remand prisoners in Greater Manchester;

(2) for how many prisoners on remand provision has been made for them to held in police cells in Greater Manchester for each month over 12 months; and if he will give the figures individually for Stockport, Cheadle Hulme and Denton police stations.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Vigorous efforts continue to be made to reduce further the number of prisoners held in police cells. This will be greatly assisted by the opening of an additional 140 refurbished places at Manchester prison this summer and by other new accommodation which is shortly to be brought into use in the north of England.

Emergency arrangements for the use of police cells when sufficient accommodation is not available in prison service establishments, and the use of cells in individual police stations, is a matter for the chief officer of the force concerned. Prison service management liaises closely with the police on the provision of accommodation, and the police are reimbursed for the additional expenditure they sustain.

Terrorism

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will name the three people who, according to Lord Colville's report on the operation in 1990 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (table 3) in 1988 were charged following detention and/or examination on account of their involvement in international terrorism; their country of origin; and the terrorist organisation or activity in which they are suspected to have been involved;

(2) if he will name the seven people who, according to Lord Colville's report on the operation in 1990 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Table 9) in 1990 were charged following detention and/or examination on account of their involvement in international terrorism; their country of origin; and the terrorist organisation or activity in which they are suspected to have been involved.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: It is not the practice to disclose the names of those who are detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act or the nature of their suspected involvement in terrorism. Of the three people who were suspected of involvement in international terrorism and charged with criminal offences following detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1988, one was born in Austria, one in Italy and one in the United Kingdom. Of the seven such people who were so charged following examination or detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1990, two were born in Egypt and one each in Brazil, India, Kenya, Pakistan and the United Kingdom.

Escapees

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to his answers to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West on 6 March, which of the six persons who absconded were on drugs-related offences and which owed money to the courts.

Mrs. Angela Rumbold: The six women concerned had all been convicted of drug offences. Of these, one was ordered to pay costs of £450 which is still owed to the court. None of the other women are known to have been in debt to the courts.

Ethnic Minorities (Attacks)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what specific guidance he has given since 15 January to chief police officers regarding attacks on Muslims and other ethnic minorities and their properties; if he plans to give any further guidance in the immediate future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Decisions about the deployment of officers and other operational matters are solely the responsibility of individual chief officers. It would therefore be inappropriate for specific guidance to be issued to chief officers about attacks on Muslims and other ethnic minorities and their properties.

All chief officers are aware of the continuing need to respond to racially motivated incidents as a priority. Close links are maintained between the Government and the Association of Chief Police Officers on community and race relations issues through regular discussions. These meetings have been used in recent months to ensure that all

developments and tensions relating to British Muslims during the Gulf crisis have been closely monitored by police forces. The Government will continue to issue guidance as appropriate on the response by the police and other agencies in tackling these unacceptable crimes.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the annual expenditure by his Department on electoral registration per London borough for each financial year since 1987-88.

Mr. Kenneth Baker *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* Financial provision for local authority expenditure on electoral registration is made as part of the revenue support grant. Decisions about the amount spent on electoral registration rest with individual authorities.

Iraqi Nationals

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Iraqi nationals have *(a)* permanent residence, *(b)* exceptional leave to remain, *(c)* student status and *(d)* political asylum, as of the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 12 March 1991]:* It is estimated from the latest labour force surveys and immigration control data that, at present, some 7,000 Iraqis are usually resident in the United Kingdom, including students. In addition, some 1,300 Iraqis have been granted exceptional leave since 1983, and about 200 Iraqis have political asylum.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Share Ownership

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the approximate cost to the Exchequer in a full tax year of introducing a quoted company individual share ownership allowance on the first *(a)* £1,000, *(b)* £2,000 and *(c)* £5,000 of taxable income if (i) 50 per cent., (ii) 75 per cent. and (iii) 100 per cent. of taxpayers with sufficient taxable income used such an allowance to invest in new shares in quoted companies; and how much finance would be available to quoted companies as a result.

Mr. Maude: On the stated assumptions, estimates relating to 1990-91 are as follows:

Cost of income tax relief

£ billion

	Percentage take-up		
Tax allowance £	*50 per cent.*	*75 per cent.*	*100 per cent.*
1,000	3·1	4·6	6·2
2,000	5·6	8·4	11·2
5,000	9·9	14·9	19·8

Amount of investment

£ billion

	Percentage take-up		
Tax allowance £	*50 per cent.*	*75 per cent.*	*100 per cent.*
1,000	11·9	17·9	23·8
2,000	21·4	32·1	42·8
5,000	37·3	55·9	74·5

Corporation Tax

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the estimated effect on receipts of corporation tax over the next five financial years of replacing the existing capital expenditure allowance rates by rates of *(a)* year one 40 per cent., year two 40 per cent. and year three 20 per cent., *(b)* year one 33⅓ per cent., year two 33⅓ per cent. and year three 33⅓ per cent. and *(c)* the accounting rate of depreciation used in a company's accounts.

Mr. Maude: The effect would depend on a number of factors, including the levels of capital expenditure qualifying for allowances, which would be influenced by a change in the rates, and the extent to which companies would be able to set any increases in allowances against profits for tax purposes.

Mortgages

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what level could mortgage interest relief be raised, at no net cost, if higher rate mortgage and relief were abolished.

Mr. Maude: The mortgage interest relief limit could be raised to about £37,000 on the basis of the 1990-91 figures if relief were restricted to the basic rate. The estimate excludes behavioural effects.

Pensions

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the annual cost of allowing taxpayers to offset contributions to an approved pension plan against higher rates of tax in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Maude: About £350 million at 1990-91 levels.

Capital Taxation

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the reduction in annual liability to *(a)* capital gains tax and *(b)* capital transfer tax in 1990-91 and 1991-92 as against the 1978-79 indexed regime, specifying in each case the total and average reduction per taxpayer and the number of taxpayers in each year.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 February 1991]:* I regret the delay in replying. Latest available estimates for capital transfer/inheritance tax for 1990-91 and for 1991-92, based on the 1990-91 regime with statutory indexation, are as follows:

	Estimate
Reduction, compared with indexed 1978-79 regime in:	
Total liability (£ million):	
1990-91	690
1991-92	730
Average liability[1] (£):	
1990-91	9,600
1991-92	10,300
Taxpayer numbers (thousands)	
Indexed regime:	
1990-91	72
1991-92	70

	Estimate
Present regime:	
1990-91	23
1991-92	22

[1] The reduction in the average liability is calculated using estimated numbers of taxpayers under the indexed 1978-79 regime.

These estimates are based on the estimated value of taxable estates passing on death in 1990-91 and 1991-92 under existing rules and make no allowance for any impact which the indexed 1978-79 tax rate would have on the level of taxable estates.

The methodology used to compare the indexed 1978-79 capitals gains tax regime with the current regime has been examined. A number of major modelling assumptions have to be made for this comparison since, in 1978-79, tax was charged on nominal gains with gains accruing prior to 6 April 1965 being ignored whereas, under the current regime, the charge applies to gains after allowing for indexation and ignoring gains accruing prior to 31 March 1982. I regret that the conclusion reached is that it is not possible to provide sufficiently reliable estimates of the difference between the two regimes.

Latest available estimates of taxpayer numbers for capital gains tax for the present regime, excluding gains realised by companies and included in assessments to corporation tax, are:

	Thousands
1990-91 liabilities	110
1991-92 liabilities	95

HEALTH

Health Service Staff

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on staff shortages and turnover rates among ancillary, nursing, administrative, clerical, professional and technical staff in the health service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The available information is:

Staff group	Per cent. Vacancy levels[1]	Turnover rates[2]
Ancillary	not known	32·7
Nursing and midwifery	2·9	15·6
Administrative and clerical	not known	20·2
Professions allied to medicine	4·2	21·6

[1] Vacancies of three months or more on 31 March 1990 as a percentage of funded establishments.

[2] Calculated as numbers leaving health authorities year ended 31 March 1990 as a percentage of staff in post at 30 September 1989. Leavers include those moving from one region to another.

Purchasing and Distribution

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many people in his Department are wholly or substantially involved in purchasing stores and distribution activities;

(2) what is the full annual cost, including overheads, of his Department's purchasing activity.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department keeps no records of those employed on purchasing stores as opposed to services, or of those exclusively involved in distribution activities. Similarly, the management arrangements for the Department which involve devolved responsibilities in line with the financial management initiative means that it is not possible without incurring disproportionate costs to ascertain the costs of the Department's purchasing activity.

Sleeping Rough (Hypothermia)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the figures for deaths due to hypothermia while sleeping rough, for each year since 1979, in *(a)* Greater London and *(b)* England and Wales.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is readily available for the years 1986-90, but for the earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The table shows, for each year from 1986, the number of deaths registered with any mention of hypothermia recorded on the death certificate and where, in addition, the deceased was recorded as being of no fixed abode, or information on their usual residence was not known at time of registration.

Area	Year 1986	1987	1988	1989	[1]1990
England and Wales	10	12	8	9	6
Greater London	7	6	4	3	4

[1] Provisional.

Homeless People

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the deaths reported in England and Wales during the cold weather period ending 15 February were of homeless people.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Residential Homes

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to ensure that before patients are discharged to private sector residential or nursing homes the financial consequences and the right of patients to choose to remain in the care of the national health service are explained and that patients and their relatives are not unreasonably pressured to leave national health service care.

Mr. Dorrell: The booklet of good practice guidance accompanying circular HC(89)5, "Discharge of Patients from Hospital", a copy of which is available in the Library, stated that arrangements for discharge to alternative care should be made in good time and be acceptable to patients and/or their carers. Information should be given in writing before the transfer as to whether the health authority would pay the fees under a contractual arrangement. No national health service patient should be placed in a private nursing or residential care home against his or her wishes if that means that he or she or a relative will be personally responsible for the home's charges. At the same time, authorities are not expected to keep patients in hospital when there is no clinical need to do so.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what research has been carried out into the proportion

of residents in *(a)* local authority homes, *(b)* voluntary homes, *(c)* private residential homes, *(d)* private nursing homes and *(e)* private homes with joint registration who have been drawn from the immediate locality of the home concerned;

(2) what research he has undertaken into the client satisfaction of residents of care homes;

(3) what research he has undertaken into life expectancy in respect of inmates of residential care homes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has funded research projects on various aspects of the residential care and nursing home sectors over the past five years at a number of universities, notably at the personal social services research unit, University of Kent and the social policy research unit and centre for health economic, University of York. A project by the Policy Studies Institute, funded by the Department, on "Services for Elderly People—Choice, Participation and Satisfaction" is due for completion this summer.

We are not aware of research bearing directly on life expectancy of residents in homes or on the proportion of residents drawn from the immediate locality.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to the number of different codes of practice published by organisations or associations of care home managers or owners recognised by his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has endorsed the working party report, "Home Life", published in 1984, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Information about codes of practice published by the various care home associations is not collected routinely by the Department.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is given by his Department as to the maximum number of residents who are relatives of a private care or nursing home owner or staff member and in receipt of board, accommodation and personal care, who are permitted to reside in the home concerned in the part of the building which is registered over and above the number of beds for which the home is registered.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None. Part I of the Registered Homes Act 1984 requires that adequate accommodation is provided for the residents of residential care homes. If relatives of the proprietor or staff of a home are accommodated, the accommodation available for use by other residents must continue to meet their needs. Part II of the Registered Homes Act requires that sufficient and suitable accommodation and services are provided to any patient in a nursing home.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by each registration authority the number of registered homes in the following categories *(a)* local authority homes, *(b)* voluntary homes, *(c)* private residential homes, *(d)* private nursing homes and *(e)* private homes with joint registration; and how many of these homes were purpose built.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information about the number of residential care homes by registration authority is contained in table 1 of "Residential Accommodation for Elderly People and Younger Physically Handicapped People: All Residents in Local Authority, Voluntary and Private Homes Year Ending 31 March 1989 England" and, "Residential Accommodation for Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped People: Number of Local Authority, Voluntary and Private Homes and Places at 31 March 1989 England". Copies are in the Library.

Information about the number of private nursing homes and dual registered homes by registration authority is contained in, "Private Hospitals, Homes and Clinics Registered Under Section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984, Annual Summary Booklet 1988/89", which is also in the Library.

Information about the number of homes that are purpose built is not collected centrally.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list which organisations or associations of care home managers or owners are recognised by his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department does not accord a preferential status or recognition to any particular care home organisations or associations.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is given to registration authorities with regard to the provision of written details of terms and conditions of care provision to residents in care and nursing homes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: "Home Life—a code of practice for residential care", which has been endorsed by the Department and commended to registration authorities, a copy of which is available in the Library, recommends that residents should be given a written statement of the terms on which accommodation is being offered before their admission to a residential care home.

We expect further guidance to be developed as part of the Department's caring in homes initiative.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance he gives to registration authorities with regard to the obligations of old and new owners of private care of nursing homes on their sale or transfer.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Residential Care Home Regulations 1984 require a person registered in respect of a residential care home to notify the next of kin of any intention to terminate the arrangements for the accommodation of a resident. The code of practice "Home Life", a copy of which is available in the Library, also recommends that residents are directly advised of any change of owner. New owners must seek registration under the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is given to registration authorities with regard to the contents of complaints procedures within private or voluntary residential or nursing homes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Residential Care Home Regulations 1984 require registered persons to advise residents of residential care homes in writing of their internal complaints procedures and also of the name and address of the registration authority to whom complaints may be directed. They must also ensure that complaints are fully investigated. The code of practice, "Home Life", a copy of which is available in the Library, suggests that

complaints may cover any subject and that their handling should be recorded. The National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts handbook on registration and inspection of nursing homes gives specific advice about handling complaints.

Baby Milk

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy with regard to the World Health Organisation/UNICEF code of marketing of breast-milk substitutes (WHA 34.22).

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) on 4 March, at column *24*.

Maternity Cases

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by national health service region *(a)* for 1980 and *(b)* for the most recent year, the hospitals in England which had consultant obstetric or general practitioner maternity beds giving the numbers of beds of each type in each hospital.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 22 February 1991]:* The information requested has been placed in the Library. Due to changes in the type of information collected, the data for the years concerned are not strictly comparable. The data for 1980 identify the beds available in the type of unit concerned. Since 1987, the bed type has been classified according to clinical responsibility—by consultant, general practitioner or for joint use. In addition, many of the individual sites were not open during one or other of the years in question. While there has been an overall reduction in the number of beds over the period, this has been accompanied by a significant reduction in the average length of stay of approximately 30 per cent.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Exports

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total sum expended by the EC on export refunds for food and wine from free market and intervention stocks in respect of the export of food and wine to *(a)* central and east Europe and the Soviet Union and *(b)* the rest of the world, in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and if he will include the payments in respect of food aid within these totals.

Mr. Curry: It is not possible to provide figures showing EC expenditure on export refunds broken down by destination. The table gives the total expenditure on export refunds and the amount within that attributable to food aid for 1990.

Export refunds 1990 by commodity (£ million)

Commodity	*Total export refunds*	*Export refunds for food aid*
Cereals	1,742·2	39·3
Rice	26·7	6·4
Sugar	647·2	2·0
Olive oil	95·0	1·0
Oilseeds	0·7	—
Fresh fruit and vegetables	46·7	—
Processed fruit and vegetables	9·5	—
Wine	38·1	—
Tobacco	43·1	—
Milk and milk products	1,356·6	11·0
Beef	773·6	—
Pigmeat	121·3	—
Eggs and poultry	124·4	—
Processed goods	356·5	—
Total	5,381·4	59·6

Agricultural Exports

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total value of exports of *(a)* cereals and *(b)* other agricultural products in each year since 1979 in actual and constant prices; and what is the percentage increase in each case in constant prices, showing 1979 as 100.

Mr. Curry: The readily available information is given in the table in which the volume indices (1985 = 100) indicate movements at constant prices.

United Kingdom Exports

	Cereals[1]	*Cereals and cereal preparations*		*Total SITC Section 0*[2]	
	Value	*Value*	*Volume index*	*Value*	*Volume index*
	£ million	*£ million*	*1985 = 100*	*£ million*	*1985 = 100*
1979	96·8	264·4	43·8	1,745·2	67·9
1980	274·1	455·7	69·4	2,050·8	76·0
1981	475·6	697·8	102·3	2,338·5	82·3
1982	531·4	773·9	105·1	2,508·3	83·3
1983	465·7	740·9	89·9	2,754·6	89·9
1984	711·0	992·7	116·8	3,114·8	97·9
1985	539·3	833·0	100·0	3,252·4	100·0
1986	881·6	1,177·5	145·6	3,745·8	114·3
1987	524·2	831·2	114·3	3,730·3	118·7
1988	352·0	674·8	103·6	3,458·2	116·3
1989	579·1	951·6	134·7	4,228·8	132·0
1990	616·5	1,045·5	140·6	4,324·6	129·6

[1] Excluding rice.
[2] Defined on page xvii of the December 1990 Business Monitor MM20 of Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom as 'food and live animals'. It includes cereals and cereals preparations.
Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and CSO.

Wheat

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average price of common wheat received by the producer in the United Kingdom, Germany and France *(a)* in national currency and *(b)* converted to £ sterling at the market rates prevailing on the latest date for which this information is available.

Mr. Curry: The national averages of market prices provided by the Commission of the European Communities for the week ending Saturday 23 February 1991, converted to pound sterling using spot rate values for 22 February, are set out in the table.

	Breadmaking wheat		Feed wheat	
	National currency per tonne	£ per tonne	National currency per tonne	£ per tonne
United Kingdom (£)	137	137	126	126
Germany (DM)	391	134	381	130
France (FF)	1,276	128	n./a.	n./a.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average on-farm selling price of wheat in the United Kingdom for each of the years from 1979 to 1990 in actual and real terms, and also at constant prices, showing the 1979 price as 100.

Mr. Curry: Average prices received by cereal producers are shown in the following table together with the all-items retail prices index. Average prices in real terms have been derived by dividing the average prices by the RPI and re-expressing with 1979 = 100. It is not meaningful to refer to prices "at constant prices".

Calendar year	Average price (£ per tonne)	Retail Price Index (1985 = 100)	Average prices in real terms (1979 = 100)
1979	95·9	59·9	100·0
1980	99·3	70·7	87·7
1981	108·9	79·1	86·0
1982	113·7	85·9	82·7
1983	124·8	89·8	86·8
1984	114·6	94·3	75·9
1985	112·2	100·0	70·1
[1]1986	111·1	103·4	67·1
1987	112·1	107·7	65·0
1988	105·1	113·0	58·1
1989	104·7	121·8	53·7
[2]1990	109·5	133·3	51·3

[1] From 1986, the prices quoted are net of co-responsibility levy.
[2] Forecast.

Green Currencies

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many differing green currency rates are operated throughout the European Economic Community.

Mr. Curry: There are currently 33 green rates in force in the European Community.

Food Prices

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average price paid to producers for *(a)* wheat, *(b)* beef, *(c)* milk, *(d)* eggs and *(e)* pork in 1960, 1979, 1980 and 1990, respectively, in actual prices, at constant 1960 prices and at constant 1990 prices.

Mr. Curry: Average prices received by producers are given in the table. The prices quoted for 1960 have been derived from various sources and are not necessarily consistent with those provided for later years. These are inclusive of subsidies and exclusive of corresponding levies as shown in tables within section 5 of "Agriculture in the United Kingdom 1990". It is not meaningful to refer to prices "at constant prices" but prices "in real terms" may be derived by dividing actual prices by a general index of prices. The all-items retail prices index is provided for the specified years.

	1960	1979	1980	1990 (forecast)
Wheat (£ per tonne)	21·00	95·90	99·30	109·50
Beef (p per kg dcw.)	32·00	130·00	137·00	180·00
Milk (p per litre)	3·07	11·55	12·77	19·23
Eggs (p per dozen)	18·30	38·90	44·20	58·00
Pigmeat (p per kg dcw.)	25·00	78·00	84·00	108·00
Retail Price Index (1985 = 100)	13·20	59·90	70·70	133·30

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will show the average price to the consumer of *(a)* a pint of milk, *(b)* a 2 lb loaf of bread and *(c)* a pint of beer in 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1990; and if he will also show the percentage increase between 1980 and 1990 in each case.

Mr. Curry: The table gives the available information.

Description		Price
		(pence per pint)
a. Retail price of milk 1960-90		
1960	milk	[1]3·3
1970	milk, ordinary	[2]4·7
1980	milk, ordinary	[2]16·5
1990	milk, pasteurised	[2]30·5
Percentage change 1980 to 1990[3]		+86
		(pence per loaf)
b. Retail price of bread (unsliced) 1960-90		
1960	white wheat bread 1½ lb	[1]4·8
1970	white unwrapped loaf 1½ lb	[2]8·8
1980	white unwrapped loaf 800 g	[2]36·6
1990	white unwrapped loaf 800 g	[2]65·2
Percentage change 1980 to 1990[3]		+70
		(pence per pint)
c. Retail price of beer 1960-90		
1960	beer, bottled	[1]9·3
1970	beer, bottled	[2]14·4
1980	beer, bottled and canned	[2]55·1
1990	(i) draught bitter	[2]108·7
	(ii) draught lager	[2]121·6
Percentage change 1980 to 1990[3]		+132

[1] Price based on mid October.
[2] Price based on annual average.
[3] The percentage change between 1980 and 1990 is based on the index for each item, rather than the average price. This takes into account the fact that the specification of the item may have changed over the period.
Source: Retail prices index.

Wool

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the guarantee price for the 1991 wool clip.

Mr. Gummer: Together with the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales, and for Northern Ireland, I have reviewed the state of the wool market and the prospects for the 1991 clip. 1990-91 has been a very difficult year for the wool industry. Market conditions have continued to deteriorate and worldwide stocks of wool have built up to record levels. At home wool sales have been depressed by a slowdown in the property market with a consequent reduction in the demand for the furnishings and carpets which normally absorb quantities of British wool. Other factors, including the continued absence of China, a major buyer, and the decisions of Australia and New Zealand to abandon market price support for the present have further contributed to the depressed market situation worldwide. Currently the average market prices being achieved in the United Kingdom are well below the 1990 clip guaranteed price of 125p/kg. For 1991 the prospects remain uncertain.

Ministers have also had to take account of the Government's announced intention to end the wool guarantee and of the need for the industry to prepare for a smooth transition to market prices. In the light of this review, and taking account of current market conditions, it has been decided to set the guarantee at 120p/kg for the 1991 clip year—a reduction of 5p/kg on the 1990 guaranteed price. This constitutes a further step towards actual market prices and towards the ending of the guarantee.

SCOTLAND

Economic Assistance (Dumbarton)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what economic assistance Dumbarton constituency has received since 1985; and if he will list the amounts and types of grant involved.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is shown in the table:

	£'000s
Regional selective assistance	843·3
Regional enterprise grants[1]	84·8
Regional development grants[2]	4,959·4
Scottish Development Agency	3,092·0
Scottish Tourist Board	1,362·6

[1] Regional enterprise grants were introduced on 1 April 1988.
[2] Regional development grants were closed to new applications on 31 March 1988.

RENAVAL Programme

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in the implementation of the RENAVAL community programme in Strathclyde.

Mr. Allan Stewart: A programme of measures under the RENAVAL community programme was submitted, on behalf of Strathclyde, to the European Commission on 18 December 1990. The Commission's decision is still awaited.

Homicide

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of homicide remain unsolved in the period 1970 to the latest date for which figures are recorded; how many of these remain open; and what guidance his officials give to police forces on the advisability of continuing with investigations of unsolved homicides.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 March 1991]:* Twenty-four cases initially classified as homicide remain unsolved from the period 1978 to 1989. Comparable figures for years before 1978 are not available. The initial classification of homicide may subsequently be altered, for example as a result of decisions on charges taken in the course of judicial proceedings or if death proves to have been the result of an accident.

The investigation of any crime is an operational matter for the chief constable, in consultation with the procurator fiscal, who has the right to direct the police in this regard. Unsolved homicides always remain open and the police are always ready to investigate further any case which has not been cleared up.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Soviet Union (Loans)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much has been loaned to the Soviet Union by British banks for each year since 1985; and if he will give details of each loan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Details of individual loans are not available, but total outstanding claims against the Soviet Union of UK-registered banks are given in table 15 of the Bank of England's quarterly report, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Burma

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relations with Burma.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We welcomed the free elections in Burma in May 1990 and deplore the continuing failure of the Burmese military authorities to respond to the people's clearly expressed will. We have repeatedly called on the Burmese authorities to release political detainees and to end violations of human rights. We shall continue to take every opportunity to make our views known to the Burmese authorities, along with fellow EC members and other like minded states.

The Gulf

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the companies employed on behalf of his Department to give advice, or to undertake other work on public relations and similar matters, during the Gulf crisis; if he will indicate the amount of money spent on remuneration for the companies involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 28 January, at column *377*.

Council of Europe, Madrid

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Madrid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: An extraordinary meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe was held in Madrid on 21 February. The United Kingdom was represented by my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

A copy of the conclusions of the Chair are being placed in the Library of the House.

Cocom

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the decision to postpone a recent meeting of Cocom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The most recent meeting of COCOM was held on 27 to 28 February at executive committee level. This was originally planned to be a high level meeting, but since some outstanding technical issues in the exercise to reform the COCOM controls remained, the high level meeting was postponed until the new "core list" of controls is ready for implementation.

The executive committee meeting made much progress towards solving the problems. Work continues in order to resolve the remaining issues rapidly.

Europe

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment has been made of the intentions of the Soviet Union to comply with the conventional forces in Europe treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We and our NATO allies continue to press the Soviet Union to comply fully with the treaty. We do not accept the Soviet claim that treaty limited equipment resubordinated to naval command is excluded from the scope of the treaty. We are also seeking Soviet clarification of their intentions as regards the large numbers of equipment currently being stockpiled east of the Urals. This Soviet action, while not illegal under the treaty, is a cause for concern in that it creates a potentially threatening stockpile just outside the area of application.

Israel

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government still support United Nations resolution 242; what action he has taken in the past 24 months to enforce compliance with that resolution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We continue actively to support UN Security Council resolution 242 as the basis for a comprehensive settlement of the Arab/Israel dispute.

Albania

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent talks have taken place with a view to restoring diplomatic relations with Albania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: British and Albanian officials met in Rome on 5 and 6 November and in Geneva on 18 and 19 December to discuss outstanding bilateral issues, including the possible restoration of diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and Albania.

Iraq

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to provide food aid and medical support for the people of Sulaimaniya, Arbil and Kirkuk in Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The International Committee of the Red Cross and United Nations agencies are making an assessment of requirements for humanitarian assistance throughout Iraq. We have already made a contribution of £2·5 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross for its work in the Gulf area.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the use of chemical weapons against Iraqi minority groups and others within Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no evidence that chemical weapons have been used in the current disturbances. We have made very plain to the Iraqis that we would view any use of such weapons very seriously indeed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of the Government on providing help to opposition forces in Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not for us, but for the people of Iraq to choose the Government of their country, although we would have no regrets at the disappearance of Saddam Hussein's regime. We shall maintain our contacts with Iraqi opposition groups.

Israel

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received about the curfews imposed on the occupied territories by the Israelis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A number of human rights organisations and charities, honourable Members and the public have made representations about the curfews imposed by the Israelis. We welcome the relaxation of the curfews since the end of the conflict.

Food Aid

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from which EC budget the 350 million ecu of food aid for the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and Romania will be paid; from which budget the United Kingdom's contribution will be paid; and in what proportion.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The 250 mecu food aid for the USSR will be funded from savings in the 1990 agriculture budget. Of the 100 mecu assistance for Romania and Bulgaria, 70 mecu will be funded from savings in the 1990 agriculture budget and from the 1991 budget, 20 mecu for medical assistance from the Poland Hungary Aid for

Reconstruction of the Economy budget and 10 mecu from savings being realised in the EC food aid budget because of low world food prices. The volume of food aid to developing countries will not be affected. The United Kingdom share of these amounts will form part of our contribution to Community own resources in line with all other EC budget expenditure.

DEFENCE

Gulf Casualties

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the Government's policy regarding the funding of any adaptations to injured armed forces personnel's homes and any specialist equipment needs they may have because of injuries received in the course of their duties.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Given the demands of service life, individuals are unlikely to remain in the armed forces if their injuries are such that they require specially adapted housing or specialist equipment. Those who are medically discharged because of injuries attributable to service are entitled to the benefits of the armed forces pension scheme and the war pension scheme. Local authorities have the main responsibility for providing any necessary financial assistance to adapt accommodation for disabled people including ex-service personnel who would also be eligible for assistance from the services' charitable organisations.

Hunting

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what services are provided to hunts that are issued licences to hunt on Ministry of Defence land.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The licences issued to hunt on Ministry of Defence land do not include the provision of any services.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the procedure by which hunts may obtain a licence to hunt on Ministry of Defence land.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A hunt may obtain a licence to hunt on Ministry of Defence land by applying to the local defence land agent or the officer commanding the relevant establishment. If the application is approved, the defence land agent will discuss the terms of the licence with the hunt.

HMS Endurance

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the hydrographic output of HMS Endurance in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what other source of Antarctic expertise is available to the Hydrographic Office.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During the 1989-90 deployment to Antarctica and the south Atlantic, HMS Endurance completed the following hydrographic surveys:

a. Gull harbour (Falkland Islands),
b. Husvik harbour (South Georgia),
c. Neumayer channel to Butler passage (Antarctic peninsula), and
d. Antarctic sound northern part (Antarctic peninsula).

In addition, her helicopters carried out 24 aerial photographic sorties in South Georgia, South Orkney, the Antarctic sound, James Ross island and Anvers island.

Some other national hydrographic offices, notably Argentina, the United States of America, the USSR, Chile, Brazil and Spain, carry out occasional hydrographic surveys in the vicinity of the Antarctic peninsula, and the results are received in the form of published nautical charts. Other information such as passage depth soundings and aerial photography is obtained from the British antarctic survey.

Antarctic

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what military presence is maintained in the Antarctic; and what military presence is maintained by other Antarctic treaty signatory states.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: HMS Endurance deploys to Antarctica each austral summer. Three United Kingdom service personnel also assist the British Antarctic Survey with the servicing of aircraft.

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current peacetime role of HMS Endurance; what other naval vessels have been identified which could fulfil that role; and what information he has on the extent to which her capabilities are replicated by the new British Antarctic Survey vessel James Clark Ross.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) on 6 March 1991, at column *224*, on the duties carried out by HMS Endurance. Consideration is currently being given to the requirement for a replacement vessel, but no decision has yet been taken. Full account will be taken of the capabilities of vessels operated by the British Antarctic Survey.

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the meteorological output of HMS Endurance in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what other source of Antarctic expertise is available to the Meteorological Office.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Whilst maintaining a presence in the British Antarctic Territory, HMS Endurance makes contributions to climate data records maintained by the Meteorological Office. During the 1989-90 season, HMS Endurance was in or near Antarctic waters for 100 days, during which time 350 sets of observations were logged and later sent to the Meteorological Office.

Weather observations are also made in the Antarctic by a network of stations operated by international agencies, including the British Antarctic Survey. Real time data from these stations are sent to the Meteorological Office through the World Meteorological Organisation's global telecommunications network. Combined with climatological data, this information is used in weather forecasting and climate prediction work.

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the costs of HMS Endurance are allowed for in his Department's latest long-term costings.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to give details of the contents of long-term costings.

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the annual running costs of HMS Endurance, in manpower and other terms; what is the current *(a)* service and *(b)* civilian complement; and what costs are borne on his Department's vote.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The approximate annual running costs of HMS Endurance are £2·4 million, excluding maintenance and refit. The current complement is 142, all of whom are service personnel. The entire cost of running HMS Endurance is met by the Ministry of Defence.

Procurement Executive

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has yet reached a decision on the future of the three airfields owned by the Procurement Executive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I hope to be in a position to make an announcement shortly.

Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve

The Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether "Options for Change" will include the role of the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve and an assessment of the impact on traditional recruitment patterns.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The future, size, role and structure of the Territorial Army are being examined under "Options for Change". However, the Territorial Army will continue to play an essential part in national defence and we do not envisage any changes to the basis of existing recruitment patterns.

The Gulf

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service women deployed in the Gulf have applied for maternity leave.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No service women applied for maternity leave while deployed in the Gulf. However, two service women in the Army were returned from the Gulf when they were found to be pregnant. One is now on maternity leave.

WE177

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, when making the decision over a WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb replacement, he intends to also consider a WE177 nuclear depth bomb replacement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I can confirm that our future requirement for nuclear depth bombs is under consideration, but no decisions are expected to be taken in the near future.

HMS Renown

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it is intended to decommission HMS Renown in the next 12 months.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Shackleton Crash (South Harris)

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps have been taken to implement the recommendations of the report into loss of life in the RAF Shackleton crash on South Harris in 1990; and whether the full review of operating practices to be implemented with additional staff inspections will be carried out in all heavy aircraft squadrons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All the recommendations in the board of inquiry's report have been implemented, including the full review of the Shackleton squadron's operating practices. Similar reviews have not been carried out in other RAF squadrons, but lessons learnt from the Shackleton accident and review are being applied more widely across the RAF, where appropriate.

Signals Unit, Woolwich

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current demand for the services carried out by the special signals unit at RAF Woolwich Arsenal.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The work of SSU Woolwich continues to constitute an important part of the tasks carried out by the RAF Signals organisation.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff are currently employed at the special signals unit at RAF Woolwich Arsenal.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: SSU Woolwich currently employs some 180 industrial and non-industrial civilian staff.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce a decision about the future of the special signals unit at RAF Woolwich Arsenal.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to the hon. Member.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Northern Region

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will list his Department's support for companies in the Northern region for *(a)* exports and *(b)* preparations for the single European market, since 1987.

Mr. Leigh: Under the enterprise initiative, my Department provides a wide range of assistance to companies. In conjunction with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, we are able to offer exporters access to market information facilities and a range of services designed to meet precisely the requirements of business. Our single market campaign has resulted in over 95 per cent. of businesses being aware of the implications of the single market and up-to-date advice and information is freely available to companies who wish to find out more about specific measures. Through the consultancy initiative, assistance may be available to companies that wish to use consultants to help prepare certain strategic areas of their business for the opportunities offered by exporting and the single market. The schemes operate throughout the United Kingdom, and separate figures are not readily available for take-up in the northern region.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which of his Ministers has been given responsibility for energy use by his Department; and what is his brief regarding energy efficiency.

Mr. Leigh: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has himself assumed responsibility for the Department's overall role in following up last year's Environment White paper, "This Common Inheritance". My noble Friend the Minister for Industry has responsibility for the promotion to business of the importance for competitiveness of environmental factors, including attention to energy efficiency and for energy management in the Department. On the latter, his brief is to achieve a saving of 15 per cent. in the Department's energy bill over the next five years.

Oil Spill Recovery Equipment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has carried out any assessment of the total world market for oil spill recovery equipment and technology and of where the United Kingdom ranks in that market.

Mr. Leigh: No such study has been undertaken by my Department. However, one of my Department's executive agencies, Warren Spring laboratory, offers advice and expertise on oil spill clean up to the public and the private sectors. As far as specific opportunities are concerned, I see it as primarily for companies in this sector to assess these themselves and respond accordingly. Clearly, in the present situation the opportunities are significant.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give for each year since 1979 *(a)* the United Kingdom share of world trade in manufactured goods and *(b)* United Kingdom companies' share of domestic consumption in manufactured goods.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom's share of main manufacturing countries' exports of manufactured goods is published by the Central Statistical Office in table E1 of "The Monthly Review of External Statistics".

Information on non-United Kingdom based companies' share of domestic consumption in manufactured goods up to 1987 is published in table 12·2 of the CSO's "Annual Abstract of Statistics". Data for more recent periods are available in table 15.10 of the CSO's "Monthly Digest of Statistics". Figures for 1989 and 1990 are not available because of lack of data on principal product sales, but estimates based on available data suggest United Kingdom-based companies' share of consumption of manufactured goods is 62 to 63 per cent. in 1989 and 1990.

All publications referred to in this answer are held in the Library of the House.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 187**

SESSION 1990–91

4th March—15th March 1991

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

A1-M1 link
Road construction 251-2w

A8
280-1

A13
Public participation in planning 8w
Road works 8w

A34
427w

A44
Road works 644w

A77
Road works 206w

A259
655

Abbott, Ms Diane
Debates etc.
Armed forces, Ethnic minorities (14:03:91) 1260-5, 1272, 1273
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1120-1
Questions
Business statements 463, 1102

Aberdeen
575-6w

Abortion
322w
Greater London 321w
Human Fertilisation & Embryology Act 1990 265-6w

Absent parents
1-2w, 6-7, 15-6, 75-8w, 414w

Absent voting
British residents abroad 267w
Press advertising 336w

Access funds
Expenditure 512w

Access to buildings
Houses 129

Access to countryside
Forests 278w
Water & sewerage companies 57-8w, 468-9w

Accident & emergency departments
King's College Hospital 126

Accounting
Dept of Social Security 663w
Direct labour departments 674-5w

Achondroplasia
Medical treatments 119w, 497w
Scotland 460w

Acid rain
101w

Acquittals
Shoplifting 268-9w

Adams, Mrs Irene
Questions
Housing support grants, Scotland 269-70

Additional pensions
State earnings related pension scheme 173w, 411-2w

Adjudication officers
171-2w, 175-6w, 283w

Adley, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 983-5, 992
Railway Re-openings (Tribunal) Bill, 1R (06:03:91) 284
Questions
British Rail, Buy British 652
Railway Reopenings (Tribunal) Bill 1990/91 134

Adley, Mr Robert—continued
Road traffic, Greater London 452

Administrative costs
Cold weather payments 664w
Community charge 647w
Exceptional needs payments 283-4w
Planning appeals 55w

Adult education
793
Bury 442w

Adult training
382w

Advertising
Baby milks 24w
Cold weather payments 534-5w
Family credit 414-5w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 199-200w

Advertising codes of practice
Mobility allowance 248-9w
Tobacco advertising 347-8w

Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service
382w, 559w

Advisory services
Incontinence 22w

Age Concern
21-2w

Age of criminal responsibility
480w

Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R* (08:03:91) 641

Agricultural & Food Research Council
445-6w

Agricultural land
Radioactivity 464-6w

Agricultural production
Cereals 257-8w, 395-6w

Agricultural products
Exports 706w

Agricultural research
EC action (04:03:91) 110

Agricultural workers
Pay 677w

Agriculture
EC budget 567w

Agriculture & Forestry (Financial Provisions) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Ref to 2R Com (04:03:91) 20

AIDS
Disease control 119w

Aids for handicapped
Disabled workers 379w

Air accidents
Shackleton aircraft 715-6w

Air Europe
Company liquidations 671-5
Manchester Airport 673

Air force bases
Procurement Executive 715w

Air pollution
Benzene 55w

Air pollution control
Codes of practice 242w
Cost benefit analysis 52-3w
Petrol pumps 55w
Smoke & chimney gases 384w

Air pollution monitoring
Wales 14-5w

Air routes
British Airways 660
Competition 662
Ministerial statements (11:03:91) 676-83
USA (11:03:91) 676-83

Air traffic
Ministerial statements (05:03:91) 149-62
RAF Northolt 308w

Air traffic control
RAF Northolt 308w

Air transport
661
EC internal trade 661

Air travel
Compensation 673-4

Aircraft
Insurance 252w

Aircraft noise
688w
Ealing 308w

Aircraft (Noise Restriction) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (08:03:91) 641

Airlines
EC transport policy 654-5
Heathrow Airport 655

Aitken, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc.
Court of Auditors, EC budget (13:03:91) 1053-7
Questions
Channel tunnel 655

Alarms
Government grants to local authorities 691w
Income support 691w
Joint financing 496w

Albania
Diplomatic relations 711-2w
Gold 434w

Alcoholic drinks duties
Tax yields 373-4w

Alcoholism
Death 560-1w

Alexander, Mr Richard
Questions
Bicycles, Lighting 421w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Immigrant detainees 447

Ali Arabi Trading
225w

Alison, Rt Hon Michael, Second Church Estates Commissioner
Questions
Archbishop of Canterbury, Pay 13-4
Church buildings, Handicapped 12-3
Church schools, School administration 13
Redundant Churches Fund, Finance 14

Allason, Mr Rupert
Debates etc.
Business statements (12:03:91) 810
Community charge (13:03:91) 984
Questions
Charity Commission, Finance 11w
Police cautions, Departmental circulars 12w
Property Services Agency, Offices 54w
Security Service Commissioner, Annual reports 276w
Security Service Tribunal, Complaints 276w

Allen, Mr Graham
Questions
Basford Hall College of Further Education, Nursery nurses 168w
Child benefit, Index linking 456

Allen, Mr Graham—continued
Cold weather payments, Social security claims 281-2w
Disabled workers, Dept of Education & Science 188w
Disabled workers, Dept of Employment 167-8w
Disabled workers, Dept of Energy 169w
Disabled workers, Dept of Health 154w
Disabled workers, Dept of Social Security 175w
Disabled workers, Dept of the Environment 195w
Disabled workers, Dept of Trade & Industry 250w
Disabled workers, Dept of Transport 149w
Disabled workers, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 202w
Disabled workers, Home Office 158w
Disabled workers, Ministry of Defence 226w
Legislation 32-4w
Management consultants, Dept of Social Security 73-6w
Mortgage relief 31w
Pension books 284w
Pensioners, Personal income 6
Pensioners, Social security benefits 284w
Police, Nottingham 268w
Quota of disabled workers, Crown immunity 282w, 381w
Residential care, Housing benefits 282w
Social Fund, Budgeting 284-6w
Social Fund, Debt collection 413w
Social security benefits, Administrative delays 413-4w
Social Security Benefits Agency, House of Commons questions 79w
Social security finance, National insurance contributions 446-8w
Social security payments 446w
Social security recipients, Transitional arrangements 284w
Social services, Research 327-8w
State earnings related pension scheme, Costs 667w
Tax allowances, Personal pensions 633w

Alternative energy
Non-fossil fuel obligation 102-3w

Alternative medicine
Drug industry 125
Licensing 124-5

Alton, Mr David
Questions
Hospital beds, Liverpool Health Authority 261w
Hospital beds, Northern Ireland 656w
Kurdistan, Self-determination of states 931-2
Ophthalmology, Hospital beds 492w
Planning permission, Local government land 295w
Police, Merseyside 268w
Racial discrimination, Publishing 507w
St Paul's Eye Hospital Liverpool, Hospital closures 490-1w
Wavertree School, Construction 42w

Aluminium
Water supply 65-6w, 205w

Ambulance services
Scotland 219-20w, 611w

American Airlines
(11:03:91) 676-83

Amess, Mr David
Debates etc.
Lotteries (14:03:91) 1214-5
Timesharing, Consumer protection (14:03:91) 1154-6
Questions
Buy British 1093-4

Ammunition
B52 bombers 329w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 329w

Amnesty International
446-7

Amos, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 679
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 161
Questions
Alcoholism, Death 560-1w
Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising, Annual reports 347w
Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising, Public appointments 349w
Family credit 8
Health Promotion Research Trust, Research finance 347w
Lorries, Licensing 503-5w
Lorries, Road tax 503-4w
Police, Northumberland 269w
Smoking, Children 347w
Smoking, Dept of Education & Science 339w
Smoking, Dept of Employment 384w
Smoking, Dept of Energy 358w
Smoking, Dept of Health 350w
Smoking, Dept of Social Security 413w
Smoking, Dept of the Environment 368w
Smoking, Dept of Trade & Industry 541w
Smoking, Dept of Transport 422w
Smoking, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 361w
Smoking, Home Office 336w
Smoking, House of Commons staff 14-5
Smoking, Lung cancer 346w
Smoking, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 398w
Smoking, Ministry of Defence 410w
Smoking, Northern Ireland Office 392w
Smoking, Office of Arts & Libraries 424w
Smoking, Scottish Office 402w
Smoking, Treasury 437w
Smoking, Welsh Office 356w
Smoking related diseases, Costs 346w
Smoking related diseases, Death 559-60w
Smoking related diseases, Hospital beds 347w
Smoking related diseases, Lost working days 346-7w
Tobacco 348w
Tobacco, Prices 375w
Tobacco advertising 349-50w
Tobacco advertising, Advertising codes of practice 347-8w
Tobacco advertising, Research 348-9w
Tobacco duties, Retail price index 377w
Tobacco duties, Tax rates & bands 374w
Tobacco duties, Tax yields 374-5w
Tobacco industry, Arts sponsorship 424w
Tobacco industry, Dept of Education & Science 338-9w
Tobacco industry, Dept of Health 348w
Tobacco industry, Office of Arts & Libraries 424w
Tobacco industry, Sports sponsorship 335w, 339w

Amphibious vehicles
Marines 1092

Amsterdam
662

An Comunn Gaidhealach
see Comunn Na Gaidhlig

Anaesthetics
Childbirth 491w

Anderson, Mr Donald
Debates etc.
Eastern Europe, EC aid (04:03:91) 82, 86, 103-7
Leasehold housing (08:03:91) 592-3, 595, 618-22
Parliamentary constituencies (08:03:91) 635, 639
USSR, Foreign relations (14:03:91) 1200-4

Angel, Brian
545w

Anglo-Irish Agreement
653w, 1082

Angola
Disaster relief 514w

Animal cruelty
Slaughterhouses 679w

Animal experiments
333w
EC action 511w
Feldberg, Wilhelm 333w
Licensing 333w
Wild animals 334w

Animal feed
Food contamination 104w
Food labelling 104w

Animal housing
Cattle 104w

Animal pests
Birds 69w

Animal products
Hazardous wastes 678-9w

Animal quarantine
Stansted Airport 373w

Animals
Poisoning 182w

Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986
Questions
333w

Antarctic
Armed forces deployment 714w
Environment protection 121w
Hydrography 713-4w
Meteorology 714w

Antarctic Treaty
191w, 714w

Antenatal care
Medical research 491-2w

Antenatal clinics
Manpower 491w

Antifouling paint
Pollution control 505w

Antisemitism
Publishing 501w

Antrim
Private roads 127w, 658-9w
Public sector housing 128w
Road traffic 388-9w

Apartheid
South Africa 927-8

Apex Trust
Employment training 675-6w

Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(11:03:91) 724-57, 759-82

Appropriations in aid
Northern Ireland (11:03:91) 724-57, 759-82

Arbuthnot, Mr James
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 825
Questions
Museums & galleries, Repairs & maintenance 423w
Oil exports, Eastern Europe 301-2w

Archaeology
Wrecks 197w

Archbishop of Canterbury
Pay 13-4

Architecture
Degrees 625w

Area museum councils
423w, 664-5
Finance 664

Argentina
Ministers' visits abroad 170w

Argyll & Clyde Health Board
Hospital waiting lists 218-20w

Armed conflict
Iraq 543w, 712w, 942

Armed forces
BBC External Services 35w
Consolidated Fund debates (14:03:91) 1260-74
Ethnic minorities (14:03:91) 1260-74

Armed forces casualties
Disablement schemes 168w
Housing & handicapped 99w, 713w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 99w, 117-9w, 168w, 248w, 329w, 407w, 410-1w, 439-40w, 713w
Social services 119w

Armed forces civilians
Woolwich Arsenal 716w

Armed forces dependants
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 293-4w
Nuclear weapons tests 223w

Armed forces deployment
Antarctic 714w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 19w, 26w, 222w, 325w, 440w, 452-3
Scotland (11:03:91) 783-90

Armed forces medical services
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 222w

Armed forces recruitment
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 292-4w

Armed forces storage depots
Civil service dispersal 25w

Armed forces strength
Territorial Army 292w, 410w

Armed forces training
1092

Armed forces women
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 715w
Maternity leave 715w

Arms control
Conventional weapons 362w, 630w
Gulf states 325w
Iraq 247-8w

Arms exports
Guided weapons 410w
Walter Somers 440w

Arms trade
203w
Export controls 440w
House of Commons questions 330w
Iraq 121w, 226w, 440w
Middle East 929, 1094
NATO 225w
Overseas aid 513-4w
Trade fairs 571w
UN resolutions 253w

Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Questions
Nursery schools 799-800
Schools & parents, Educational assessment 232w
Special education, School population 625-7w
Teachers, Disabled workers 339-40w

Army
25-6w

Arnold, Mr Jacques
Debates etc.
Civil disorder, India (14:03:91) 1158-9
Community charge (13:03:91) 965
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 180, 219-22
Persian Gulf, Environment protection (15:03:91) 1351, 1358, 1366-9

Arnold, Mr Jacques—continued
Recess motions, Points of order (14:03:91) 1168-9
Questions
Business statements 468
EC environmental policy, Intergovernmental conference 246w
EC Foreign Affairs Council 204-5w
Family credit 9
Health service staff, Pay 122
Middle East, Peace negotiations 940
Network SouthEast, Performance indicators 418-9w

Arrests
Royal Parks Constabulary 366w

Art works
Objects in lieu of tax 461w

Arts
Wales 178w

Arts Council
522w

Arts finance
522w
Association of Artists & Designers in Wales 259w
Community charge 665-6
Greater London Arts 424w
Haymarket Theatre Leicester 666
Local government expenditure 232-4w, 665-6
Northern Ireland 656w
Palace Theatre Southend (14:03:91) 1127-8
Playhouse Theatre Liverpool 96w
Wales 232-4w

Arts sponsorship
Tobacco industry 424w

Arup Research & Development
370w

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Questions
EC internal relations 805

Ashford remand centre
Land use 451-2

Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Questions
Disabled workers 380w
Domestic violence 450
Employment Select Committee, Disablement resettlement officers 489-90w
Fire resistant materials, Babies 62-3w
Fire resistant materials, Health hazards 63w
Fire resistant materials, Poisoning 62w
Hearing aids, NHS charges 641w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces casualties 99w, 117-9w, 168w, 248w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces recruitment 292-4w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Voluntary organisations 292w
Telephone systems, Saudi Arabia 387w
War pensions, Nuclear weapons tests 667w

Ashton, Mr Joseph
Questions
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces casualties 329w

Ashworth Hospital
Medical treatments 494-5w
Public inquiries 494w
Television programmes 495w
Video equipment 494w

Askham Grange Prison
305w

Assisted places scheme
Scotland 213-4w
Wales 695w

Association of Artists & Designers in Wales
Arts finance 259w

Association of Chief Police Officers
Inner city areas 269w

Association of Continence Advisers
21-2w

Association of County Councils
257w

Association of Pharmaceutical Importers
318-9w

Asthma
Steroid drugs 123

Atkins, Mr Robert, Under-Secretary of State, Department of Education & Science (Sport)
Questions
Physical education 446w
Physical education, Curriculum 39w
Tobacco industry, Dept of Education & Science 338-9w
Tobacco industry, Sports sponsorship 339w

Atkinson, Mr David
Questions
Autism, Special schools 337w
Coordinating Committee on Export Controls 711w
Council of Europe 711w
Newspaper press, Distributive trade 384-5w
USSR, Bank loans 710w

Attendance allowance
Children 122-3w
Severe disability premium 123w
Terminal care 75w

Attorney General
Ethnic monitoring 227-8w
Higher civil servants 227-8w
Security marking 149-50w

Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England & Wales
443

Authorised Conveyancing Practitioners Board
Public appointments 150w

Autism
Special schools 337w

Automatic ticketing systems
661-2

AWE Aldermaston
Health physics 408w

B52 bombers
Ammunition 329w
Fire services 331w

Babies
Fire resistant materials 62-3w
Surgery 111w

Baby care units
636-7w

Baby milks
Advertising 24w
Marketing 705w

Bacteria
Power stations 489w

Badgers
564w
Bovine tuberculosis 257w
Nature conservation 242-3w, 522-3w, 571-2w
Scotland 571-2w

Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth, Secretary of State for the Home Department
Debates etc.
Criminal appeals, Ministerial statements (14:03:91) 1109-25
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 21-9, 32-3, 38-9
War Crimes Bill, 1R (06:03:91) 471

Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth—continued
Questions
Boundary Commission for England, Public appointments 84w
Data Protection Act 1984, Fees & charges 158w
Day care of children, Home Office 483w
Disabled workers, Home Office 158w
Electoral register, London boroughs 699w
Ethnic monitoring, Home Office 83w
European Court of Human Rights, Life imprisonment 651w
Higher civil servants, Home Office 81-3w
Hoaxes & false alarms, Sentencing 510w
Independent producers, Television programmes 649-50w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Immigrant detainees 446-7
Metropolitan Police, Finance 334w
Metropolitan Police, Manpower 650-1w
Police, Community charge capping 448-9
Police, Merseyside 268w
Police pensions 306w
Prison escapes, Open prisons 648-9w
Prisoners on remand, Greater Manchester 697w
Public appointments, Home Office 157w
Racial attacks 268w
Road traffic, Greater London 452
Security Service Commissioner, Annual reports 276w
Security Service Tribunal, Complaints 276w
Smoking, Home Office 336w
South Yorkshire Police, Manpower 448
Steroid drugs 444-5
Sunbeam Nursery Croydon, Child care 506-7w
Sunbeam Nursery Croydon, Fees & charges 506w
Terrorism, Prosecutions 698w
Trevi Group 82w

Balance of trade
550w
Engineering industries 60w
Germany 87-8w
Manufactured goods 169w, 538-9w
USA 169w

***Baldry, Mr Tony**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of the Environment*
Debates etc.
Ecolabelling (12:03:91) 918-22
Persian Gulf, Environment protection (15:03:91) 1384-5
Questions
Acid rain 101w
Air pollution control, Cost benefit analysis 52-3w
Air pollution control, Petrol pumps 55w
Benzene, Air pollution 55w
Birds, Nature conservation 57w
British Waterways Bill (HL) 1990/91 54-5w
British Waterways Board, Government grants 53w
British Waterways Board, Houseboats 54w
British Waterways Board, Income 53w
British Waterways Board, Performance indicators 53w
British Waterways Board, Sites of special scientific interest 53w
Domestic wastes, Incinerators 690-1w
Ecolabelling, EC action 188w, 668-9w
Environment, Research finance 240w
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Dogs 672-3w
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Government grants to local authorities 470w
Hazardous wastes, Wath upon Dearne 193w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Manpower 691-2w
Import of live animals, Wild animals 689w
Inland waterways, Freight transport 149w
Inland waterways, Recreation spaces 58w
Land reclamation, Sewage 52w
Magpies 57w

Baldry, Mr Tony—continued
Nitrogen oxides, Pollution monitoring 669-70w
Orimulsion, Ince B power station 313w
Pollution control 297w
Radioactive waste disposal, Seas & oceans 670w
Recycling, Government grants 670w
Recycling, Government grants to local authorities 471-2w
River pollution, Eels 690w
Sewage, Viruses 54w
Sewage, Waste disposal 53-4w
Waste disposal, Fees & charges 245w
Waste disposal, Inquiries 689-90w
Waste disposal, Orders & regulations 670w
Water & sewerage companies, Land acquisition 57-8w
Water pollution, Water sports 58w
Water Research Centre, Deposited papers 245w

Ballycloughan Primary School
School admission 127-9w

Baltic republics of USSR
British embassies 37w
Diplomatic service 37w
EC external relations 544w
Embassies 37-8w
Export promotion 37w

Bananas
Imports 258w
Windward Islands 254w, 563-4w

Bangor Gwynedd
Veterinary Investigation Service 86w

Bank loans
USSR 710w

Bank nurse employment scheme
Scotland 279w

Banking Insurance & Finance Union
382w

Bankruptcy
436w

Banks
Loan guarantee scheme 697w

Banks, Mr Robert
Questions
Crime, North Yorkshire 277w
Pensioners, Owner occupied housing 1-2

Barclay's Bank
697w

Barker, Joseph Arthur Lewis
Prison hospitals 277w
Prisoners' release 277w

Barkestone School
Property transfer 42-3w

Barnes, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Census (Confidentiality) Bill (HL), 3R (04:03:91) 75-6
Electoral register, Community charge register (14:03:91) 1150-2
Northern Ireland, Politics & government (14:03:91) 1310-3, 1318-9
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 307, 323, 325, 326, 328, 331-2, 360, 427-9
Persian Gulf, Environment protection (15:03:91) 1369-73, 1375, 1376-7, 1378
Questions
Business statements 469-70
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Peace negotiations 941
Northern Ireland, Politics & government 1087-8

Barnsley
Local government finance (14:03:91) 1156-8
Social Fund 325w

Barristers
Legal aid 624w

Barron, Mr Kevin
Questions
Community care 110w

Basford Hall College of Further Education
Nursery nurses 168w

Basingstoke Hospital
Patients 558w

Batiste, Mr Spencer
Debates etc.
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 146
Questions
Access funds, Expenditure 512w
Kuwait, British embassies 930
Research finance, Industry 792-3

Battle, Mr John
Questions
Community charge exemptions, Handicapped 45w
Council housing, Homelessness 194-6w
Employment by sector, Leeds 3-4w
Employment level, Leeds 3w, 97w
Exceptional needs payments, Administrative costs 283-4w
Family credit, Social security recipients 72w
Government grants to local authorities, Yorkshire & Humberside 237-40w
Health service ancillary staff, Pay 113w
Homicide, Detection rates 157-8w
Income support, Social security claims 177w
Income support, Social security recipients 176-8w
Income support, Young people 284w
Leeds Development Corporation, Expenditure 244-5w
Mortgage defaulters, Leeds 1w
Mortgage defaulters, York 229w
Mortgage relief, Tax rates & bands 160-1w
NHS finance, Leeds 343w
Pay, Leeds 6w
Redundancy, Leeds 2-4w
Residential care, Operating costs 80w
Social Fund, Leeds 80w, 325-6w
Social security benefits, Research 80w
Social Security Benefits Agency, Redundancy 3
Sri Lanka 544w
Tanks, Defence procurement 292w

BBC
335w, 649-50w

BBC External Services
199-202w
Armed forces 35w
Gulf states 35w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 937
Television 937

Beaumont-Dark, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Eastern Europe, EC aid (04:03:91) 87, 89

Bedding
Fire resistant materials 62-3w

Beer
Measurement 302w

Beggs, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (11:03:91) 740-1, 747-50, 775
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 334
Questions
Electricity tariffs 301w
Gas reserves, Scotland 168-9w
Hydroelectric power, Electricity generation 258-9w
Motor vehicle safety, Secondhand cars 392w
MV Breydon, Shipping accidents 90w
Non-fossil fuel obligation, Northern Ireland 151-2w
Non-fossil fuel obligation, Scotland 459w

Beggs, Mr Roy—continued
Prescriptions, Pharmacists 262w
Tipping of waste, Carrickfergus 266w

Beith, Mr A J
Questions
Company cars, Tax yields 30w
Fire services, Scotland 65w
Ibbs Report 7w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Income tax assessment 93-4w
Mental health services, Northern Regional Health Authority 267-8w
Smoking 15
Smoking, House of Commons catering 15
Smoking, House of Commons staff 14-5
Uniform business rate, Rate increases 667-8w
Uniform business rate, Small businesses 668w
Uniform business rate, Transitional arrangements 668w
VAT repayment, Electricity supply industry 314w

Belgium
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 630w

Bell, Mr Stuart
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1119-20
Questions
Republic of Ireland 654w

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1121
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 146
Questions
Authorised Conveyancing Practitioners' Board, Public appointments 150w
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 1088
Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Legal Education Etc, Public appointments 150-1w
Wool, Guaranteed prices 708-9w

Bellotti, Mr David
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 844-7
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 141-2
Questions
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 246-7w

Benefits Agency
see Social Security Benefits Agency

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Debates etc.
Offshore Installations (General Provisions) Bill, 1R (06:03:91) 471

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Debates etc.
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 679
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1121-2
Census (Confidentiality) Bill (HL), 3R (04:03:91) 73-4, 77
Child abuse, Satanism (14:03:91) 1144-7
Ecolabelling (12:03:91) 915-8, 920-1
Prisoners on remand, Greater Manchester (14:03:91) 1299-304, 1306, 1309
Questions
Business statements 1106-7
Channel tunnel, Greater Manchester 418w
Dockyards, Health physics 408w
Ecolabelling, EC action 668-9w
HMS Renown, Decommissioning 715w
Magistrates, Stockport 642w
Nursery schools, School population 799
Prisoners on remand, Greater Manchester 697w
Trident, Defence expenditure 571w
WE 177 nuclear bomb, Defence procurement 715w

Bennett, Mr Nicholas, Under-Secretary of State for Wales
Questions
Air pollution monitoring, Wales 14-5w
Arts finance, Local government expenditure 232-4w
Children in care, Wales 526w
Common land, Wales 177w
Complaints against local government, Wales 178w
Corlan Housing Association, Inquiries 235-6w
Council housing, South Wales 644w
Council housing, Wales 644w
Dentists, Contracts of employment 457w
District health authorities, Public appointments 643w
Domestic rates, Wales 528w
Family planning clinics, Wales 85w
Foster care, Wales 457w
Health service staff, District health authorities 459w
Hospital beds, War casualties 459w
Hospital waiting lists, Powys 696w
Hospitals, South Glamorgan Health Authority 459w
House condition survey, Merthyr Tydfil 235w
Land acquisition, South Glamorgan Health Authority 459w
Local government revenue, Cynon Valley 646w
Local government staff, Wales 179w
Multiply handicapped, Wales 179w
NHS trusts, Wales 458w, 526w
Operating theatres, Wales 643w
Prosthetics, Wales 179-80w
Psychiatry, Geriatric patients 457w
Public Health Laboratory Service, Food inspection 523w
River Taff, Pollution control 647-8w
Secure accommodation, Wales 86w, 178w
South Glamorgan Health Authority, Finance 458w
Surgery, Family doctors 648w
Surgery, Wales 236w
Swansea Accommodation for the Single Homeless, Government grants 642-3w
Urban planning, Wales 458w
Welsh Water, Water conservation 15w

Benyon, Mr W
Debates etc.
Hare Coursing Bill, 2R order read (15:03:91) 1400

Benzene
55w
Air pollution 55w
Petrol 371w

Benzodiazepines
124

Bermingham, Mr Gerald
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1116-7
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 951-2
Questions
Ashworth Hospital, Medical treatments 494-5w
Ashworth Hospital, Public inquiries 494w
Ashworth Hospital, Television programmes 495w
Ashworth Hospital, Video equipment 494w

Berries & soft fruit
Import controls 69w

Betting & gaming duties
Horse racing 313w

Beverage containers
63-4w

Bicycles
Lighting 421w, 656

Bidwell, Mr Sydney
Questions
Hospital waiting lists 131

Bilateral aid
Central America 295w

Birds
Animal pests 69w
Nature conservation 57w
Pest control 69w
Stansted Airport 373w

Birmingham
571w
Community care grants 9
Housing renewal areas 369w, 692w

Birmingham City Council Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (07:03:91) 439
2R* (14:03:91) 1079

Birmingham six
Bombings 1109-25

Blackburn Hyndburn & Ribble Valley Health Authority
119
Surgery 133

Blackpool
Sea pollution 60w, 244w

Blackwall tunnel
Repairs & maintenance 654
Road traffic 654

Blair, Mr Tony
Questions
Census enumerators, Recruitment 154w, 380-1w
Community charge, Students 47w

Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Questions
Germany, Foreign relations 933

Blood sports
Defence land 330w, 713w
Demonstrations 482w

Blood tests
Cholesterol 345-6w

Bloomsbury Health Authority
Hospital waiting lists 553w

Blunkett, Mr David
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 984, 990-4
Questions
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Public relations 710w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces casualties 407w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces deployment 222w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Community charge exemptions 48-9w, 100-1w
Local government revenue, Capital investment 48-9w, 313-4w
Tyne & Wear Development Corporation, Employment opportunities 364w
Water charges 98w

Boateng, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Eastern Europe, EC aid (04:03:91) 89

Body belts
Prison discipline 271-2w, 274-6w

Bolsover
Government grants to local authorities 517w

Bolton
671-2w

Bomb disposal
Compensation 392w
Northern Ireland 392w

Bomb Hoax Telephone Calls Penalties Review
510w

Bombings
Short Brothers 134

Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Questions
Foreign policy, Parliamentary sovereignty & European Community 935

Borders region
140-6w
Regional planning & development 273

Boscawen, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 880-1

Bottomley, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1004, 1019-20, 1024, 1030
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 176-7
Persian Gulf, Environment protection (15:03:91) 1339, 1360-3
Questions
Business statements 1102-3
Community charge capping, Local government expenditure 100-1w
Electricity distribution, Rathlin Island 655w
Standard spending assessments, Greenwich 669w

Bottomley, Mrs Virginia, Minister of State, Department of Health
Debates etc.
Dental services (15:03:91) 1403-8
Questions
Abortion 322w
Abortion, Greater London 321w
Access to buildings, Houses 129
AIDS, Disease control 119w
Alarms, Joint financing 496w
Antenatal clinics, Manpower 491w
Association of Pharmaceutical Importers 319w
Baby care units 636-7w
Breast cancer, Screening 495w
Cervical cancer, Lasers 112w
Cervical cancer, Screening 121, 263w, 351-2w
Child abuse 344-5w, 641w
Childbirth 322-3w
Childbirth, Statistics 555-6w
Christie Hospital Manchester, NHS trusts 263-4w
Community care 110w, 127-9
Community care, Derbyshire 128
Day centres, Fees & charges 559w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986 128
Disposable syringes, Diabetes 351w
District health authorities, Devon 153w
Doctors, Northern region 493-4w
Drug labelling, EC action 320w
Drugs, Expenditure 109w, 500w
Drugs, Licensing 317w, 344w
Drugs, Parallel imports 317w, 552-3w
Drugs, Patents 114w
Elderly, Residential care 264w
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 120-1, 130-1
Family doctors, Manpower 108w
Family doctors, Performance related pay 642w
Generic prescribing 553w
Health service ancillary staff, Pay 113w, 493w
Health service ancillary staff, Resignations 494w
Health service staff, EC countries 492-3w
Health service staff, North Western Regional Health Authority 555w
Health service staff, Pay 110w
Health service staff, Vacancies 701w
Home helps, Manpower 321w
Hospital waiting lists 152-3w, 316-7w
Hospital waiting lists, Bloomsbury Health Authority 553w
Hospital waiting lists, Leicestershire Health Authority 259-60w
Human Fertilisation & Embryology Act 1990, Abortion 265-6w

Bottomley, Mrs Virginia—continued
Interleukin, Clinical trials 322w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces casualties 119w
Maternity services, Home births 492w
Medicines Control Agency, Accountability 318w
Medicines Control Agency, Administrative delays 318-9w
Medicines Control Agency, Fees & charges 318w
Medicines Control Agency, Parallel imports 318-9w
NHS charges 353-5w
NHS trusts, Bradford 119-20w
North Lincolnshire Health Authority, Contracts for services 120w
Nursing homes, Hospital beds 265w
Nursing homes, Income support 323-4w
Occupational therapists, Local government social services 320w
Ophthalmology, Hospital beds 492w
Paediatrics, Hospital consultants 554w
Pregnancy, Health education 556w
Pregnancy tests, Costs 556w
Prescription drugs, Cost effectiveness 109w
Prescription drugs, Packaging 320w
Prescriptions, Pharmacists 262w
Project 2000, Student grants 496w
Proprietary drugs, Harmonisation of standards 317-8w
Residential care 110w, 703-4w
Residential care, Codes of practice 703-4w
Residential care, Complaints 353w, 704-5w
Residential care, Personnel 703w
Residential care, Privacy 324w
Residential care, Private sector 353w
Residential care, Professional organisations 704w
Residential care, Property transfer 704w
Residential care, Registered homes 353w
Residential care, Research 702-3w
Respite care, Local government social services 320w
RU486, Clinical trials 500w
Screening, Inner city areas 121
Sterilisation, Women 496w
Supra-regional services, Finance 112
Surgery, Safety measures 494w
Vaccination, Children 121

Boundary Commission for England
(08:03:91) 635-40
Public appointments 84w

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
70w, 565-6w
Scotland 611-2w
Wales 525-6w
Waste disposal 525-6w, 611-2w

Bovine tuberculosis
Badgers 257w

Bowden, Mr Andrew
Questions
Nursing homes, Income support 172w
Residential care, Income support 171w

Bowden, Mr Gerald
Debates etc.
Leasehold housing (08:03:91) 581, 594, 601-4
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 418w
Pensioners, Income support 7

Bowis, Mr John
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 962-3, 965-6, 993
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 954
Leasehold housing (08:03:91) 631-2
London Regional Transport (11:03:91) 712-3
Lotteries (14:03:91) 1214, 1215
Museums & galleries (14:03:91) 1244-9, 1251, 1259
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 176

Bowis, Mr John—continued
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 26, 31, 37, 65
Recycling (15:03:91) 1396-7
Questions
Business statements 466
Chelsea-Hackney line, Wandsworth 658
Khmer Rouge, Thailand 938
Local government revenue, Fees & charges 51w
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland 656w
Road construction 147-8w

Bradford
Dept of Social Security local offices 328w
EC free food scheme 678w
Government grants to local authorities 475w
Hospital catering 119-20w
Local government finance 672w
NHS trusts 119-20w

Bradford Health Authority
Hospital admissions 264w

Bradley, Mr Keith
Questions
British Waterways Board, Income 53w
Christie Hospital Manchester, NHS trusts 263-4w
Educational finance, Standard spending assessments 802
Hospital waiting lists 152-3w
Interleukin, Clinical trials 322w

Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Questions
Business statements 467
Iraq, Chemical weapons 942
Tourism, Germany 808

Bray, Dr Jeremy
Debates etc.
Science & Engineering Research Council (14:03:91) 1325
Questions
Loans, Fringe benefits 255-6w
Ministry of Defence, Research finance 468w
North of England Building Society, Trade union recognition 382w
Science & technology policy 801
Science & technology research, Research finance 443w

Brazier, Mr Julian
Questions
Opposition, Accountability 1093

Breast cancer
Screening 495w

Bridges
Railway network 652
River Lea 426-7w

Bristol Channel
HM Coastguard 417w

British Airways
(11:03:91) 676-83
Air routes 660
Scotland 660-1

British Antarctic Survey
714w

British Coal Corporation
431w

British embassies
Baltic republics of USSR 37w
Eastern Europe 122w
Kuwait 930
Military attaches 120w

British Library
Construction 424w
St Pancras 667-8

British Midland Airways
Unfair competition 422w

British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990
Questions
36-7w

British Nuclear Fuels
16-7w, 431w

British Overseas Trade Board
628w

British Racing Commission Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (08:03:91) 642

British Rail
8w, 307-8w, (13:03:91) 1072-8
Buy British 652
Expenditure 251w
Factory closures 251w
Investment 651
Performance indicators 91w
Research finance 91w
Trains 419w

British Railways Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (07:03:91) 439, (14:03:91) 1079

British Railways (No 3) Bill (HL) 1989/90
Debates etc.
2R order read (07:03:91) 439, (14:03:91) 1079

British residents abroad
Absent voting 267w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 248w
Kuwait 248w, 930

British Shipbuilders
169w

"British Shipping"
658-9

British Sky Broadcasting
16

British Steel Corporation
208w, 1096

British Telecom
(05:03:91) 137-48

British Tourist Authority
Government grants 551w

British Trust for Ornithology
57w

British Waterways Bill (HL) 1990/91
Questions
54-5w

British Waterways Board
58w
Dredging 98w
Government grants 53w
Houseboats 54w
Income 53w
Performance indicators 53w
Sites of special scientific interest 53w

Broadcasting
Accountability 10w

Broadcasting Act 1990
Questions
13-4w
Orders & regulations 649-50w

Bromley
Dentists 117w

Brooke, Rt Hon Peter, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 292-5, 308-12, 371-5
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 653w
Devolution, Northern Ireland 1087
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 653-4w, 1088

Brooke, Rt Hon Peter—continued
Northern Ireland, Politics & government 656w, 1087-8
Northern Ireland government 1083-4, 1088-9
Northern Ireland government, Republic of Ireland 1082-4, 1088-9
Republic of Ireland 654w
Republic of Ireland, State visits 1083
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 1086-7

Brown, Mr Gordon
Debates etc.
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 138-40
Questions
Capital transfer tax, Tax allowances 375w

Brown, Mr Michael
Questions
Business statements 1102
Inner cities initiative 627-8w

Brown, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Business expansion scheme 164-5w
Business expansion scheme, Investment 28-30w
Business expansion scheme, Rented housing 95-6w
Capital gains tax 700-1w
Child benefit, Social security benefits rates 536w
Income support, Pregnant women 123w
Income tax, Entertainers 28w
Income tax, Personal tax allowances 94-6w
Income tax, Tax burden 165-6w, 548-9w
Industrial investment 162w
Industrial research, Research finance 163w
Marginal tax rates, Social security benefits 314-5w
Married couples allowance, Costs 95w
Maternity leave 171w
Maternity pay 171w
Mortgage relief 28w
Mortgage relief, Costs 548w
Mortgage relief, Economic regions 161-2w
Mortgage relief, Taxpayers 96w
Oil revenues, North Sea oil 164w
Payroll deduction scheme 29w
Personal equity plans 436-7w
Personal income 166-7w
Personal income, Tax rates & bands 27-8w
Pre-school education 441w
Profit related pay 29w, 437w, 633w
Tax allowances, Health insurance 29-30w
Tax yields, Tax allowances 95w

Brown, Mr Ron
Debates etc.
Business statements (12:03:91) 811-2
Iraq, Overseas aid (06:03:91) 284
Questions
Business statements 469
Exports, Iraq 169w
Israel, Curfews 712w
Libyan Arab Republic, Foreign relations 121w
Security, Northern Ireland 1089-90
Unemployment, Leith 274-5

Browne, Mr John
Questions
Adult education 793

Bruce, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1010-1, 1014
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 169, 210, 216-9, 222, 228
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 143
Questions
Armed forces training 1092
Forestry 279-80
Health service staff, Pay 120
Hoaxes & false alarms, Sentencing 510w
Northern Ireland government 1084

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 978
Deaf, Further education (14:03:91) 1133-6
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 475, 506-11, 547, 562
Questions
Community charge, Scotland 267-8

Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Debates etc.
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 489-92, 508
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 245-6
Questions
Community charge, Grampian 276-7
Exservicemen, Housing 270

Buck, Sir Antony
Questions
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Helicopters 687w
Security, Northern Ireland 1090

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (11:03:91) 725, 750-2
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 170
Questions
European currency unit 807

Budgeting
Family doctors 116w, 684w, (13:03:91) 945-54
Northern Ireland Dept of Economic Development 311w
School administration 341-2w, 442-5w
Social Fund 284-6w

Budgeting loans
325-6w

Building industry
Social security abuse 660w

Building regulations
Fees & charges 127w, 151w, 310w
Northern Ireland 127w, 151w, 310w
Sanitation 672w

Building repairs
Grant maintained schools 798
School buildings 797-9, 803-4

Bulgaria
Foreign relations 36w
State visits 36w

Bullwood Hall Prison
Prison overcrowding 13w

Burns, Mr Simon
Questions
Community relations, Church unity 1085
Foreign policy, Human rights 545w
Maintenance, Children 6-7
Petroleum production 631-2w
Sewage, Waste disposal 679-80w

Bury
Adult education 442w
Child benefit 123w

Bus services
Greater London 423w
Northern Ireland 152w

Buses
Greater London 452

Business
Community relations 655w

Business expansion scheme
164-5w
Investment 28-30w
Rented housing 95-6w
Tax allowances 28-30w

Business motions
(08:03:91) 268, (15:03:91) 1398

Business questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (07:03:91) 464, 467, (12:03:91) 809-12, (14:03:91) 1108

Business statements
457-71, (12:03:91) 809-12, 1097-108

Butler, Mr Chris
Debates etc.
Leasehold housing (08:03:91) 590-3
Questions
Air pollution control, Petrol pumps 55w
Air transport, EC internal trade 661
Benzene, Air pollution 55w
Benzene, Petrol 371w
Cross-Media Ownership Inquiry 428w
Film industry, France 428w
Iraq, War crimes 931
Nuclear physics, Daresbury 801-2

Butter
Food exports 399w

Butterfill, Mr John
Debates etc.
Business statements (12:03:91) 810
Questions
Foreign trade 540w
Local education authorities, Expenditure 341-2w
School administration, Budgeting 444w

Buy British
1093-4
British Rail 652

Buying Agency Trading Fund Order 1991
Debates etc.
(11:03:91) 684

By election writs
Neath (12:03:91) 789

By elections
Ribble Valley 136

Cabinet Office
Higher civil servants 19-20w

Cabora, Mr Richard
Questions
Local government revenue, York 51-2w

Caesarean sections
322-3w, 555-6w

Callaghan, Hugh
(14:03:91) 1109-25

Callaghan, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Hospitals (14:03:91) 1228-31, 1236, 1240

Calling of Members
Speaker's rulings & statements (05:03:91) 146, 162, 233, (06:03:91) 284, (11:03:91) 714, (14:03:91) 1123-4, 1126

Cambodia
Politics & government 942-4

Cambridge
Community charge 47w

Campbell, Mr Menzies
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1113
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 238
Questions
HMS Endurance 224w
HMS Endurance, South Atlantic 224w
Security marking, Attorney General 149-50w
Security marking, Dept of Social Security 172w
Security marking, Dept of Trade & Industry 59-61w
Security marking, Lord Advocate 211w
Security marking, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 104w
Security marking, Ministry of Defence 223w
Security marking, Northern Ireland Office 462w
Security marking, Scottish Office 211-3w

Campbell, Mr Menzies—continued
Security marking, Welsh Office 85w
Steroid drugs 444-5

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates etc.
Sleeping rough, Greater London (04:03:91) 20
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 146
Questions
Business statements 1104
House of Commons stationery, Recycling 17
Iraq, Armed conflict 712w
Iraq, Chemical weapons 712w
Iraq, Overseas aid 712w
Library & Information Services Council (Northern Ireland), Publishing 127w
Library & Information Services Council (Wales), Publishing 180w
Maryport Harbour, Safety standards 564w
NHS, Trade unions 119-20
Parking, Cumbria 420-1w
Pensions, Interest rates 11
Post Office, Personnel 429w
Public Accounts Committee, Next steps initiative 669

Campylobacter
24w

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 372, 381-2, 427
Questions
Forth Valley Health Board, Public appointments 271

Cancer
Exservicemen 667w
Northern Ireland 391w

Cans
Domestic accidents 63-4w
Food contamination 63w

Capital gains tax
700-1w

Capital transfer tax
Tax allowances 375w

Capital value rating
268
Scotland 268

Caravan sites
VAT (14:03:91) 1147-50

Carbon monoxide
10w, 14-5w

Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL) 1988/89
Debates etc.
Order for resuming adjourned consideration read (07:03:91) 439, (14:03:91) 1079

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation
458w

Career structure
Nurses 576w
Social Services Inspectorate 265w

Carlisle, Mr John
Questions
South Africa, Economic sanctions 927

Carlisle, Mr Kenneth, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces
Questions
Aircraft noise 688w
Armed forces storage depots, Civil service dispersal 25w
Day care of children, Ministry of Defence 687w
Defence equipment, Radio engineering 330w
Defence Quality Assurance Directorate, Civil service dispersal 226w

Carlisle, Mr Kenneth—continued
Disabled workers, Ministry of Defence 226w
Dockyards, Health physics 408w
Dockyards, Manpower 103-4w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Civil service 407w
Low flying 331-2w
Procurement Executive, Air force bases 715w
Radio engineering, Glengarry Forest 330w
Security marking, Ministry of Defence 223w
Smoking, Ministry of Defence 410w
War widows' pensions, Remarriage 408-9w

Carnon Consolidated
(06:03:91) 431-8

Carr, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Maiden speeches, Carr, Michael (13:03:91) 980-3
Members' oath & affirmation, Carr, Michael (12:03:91) 812

Carrickfergus
Tipping of waste 266w

Carrington, Mr Matthew
Debates etc.
Leasehold housing (08:03:91) 584, 624-7
Questions
Chelsea-Hackney line, Construction 656-7
Pensioners, Personal income 4

Cars
Discounts 248-9w
Energy consumption 307w
Motor vehicle safety 10w

Cartwright, Mr John
Questions
Alcoholic drinks duties, Tax yields 373-4w
Armed forces storage depots, Civil service dispersal 25w
Electric lighting, Northern Ireland Office 43w
Licensed teachers, Manpower 39-40w
Playing fields, Land acquisition 520w
Property Services Agency, Woolwich Arsenal 299w
Woolwich Arsenal 716w
Woolwich Arsenal, Armed forces civilians 716w

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc.
Court of Auditors, EC budget (13:03:91) 1046, 1056, 1062, 1064-5
Questions
Germany, Foreign relations 542w
Intergovernmental conference 248w, 936
Joint Directorate for Export Promotion, Export promotion 628w
Redditch Borough Council, Contracts for services 100w

Cash limits
Dept of the Environment 673w

Category A prisoners
450-1

Cattewater Reclamation Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (07:03:91) 439, (14:03:91) 1079

Cattle
Animal housing 104w
Northern Ireland 660w
Prices 660w

Census (Confidentiality) Bill (HL) 1990/91
Debates etc.
Rep* & 3R (04:03:91) 72-8
Royal Assent (07:03:91) 439

Census enumerators
Donaghadee 266-7w
Recruitment 154w, 266-7w, 380-1w

Census of population
Disclosure of information 262-3w

Central America
Bilateral aid 295w

Central line
Railway accidents 8w

Central Office of Information Trading Fund Order 1991
Debates etc.
(04:03:91) 20

Cereal substitutes
Food imports 396-7w

Cereals
395w
Agricultural production 257-8w, 395-6w
Co-responsibility levy 395-6w
Food exports 706w, 393-4w
Food imports 395-7w
Food stocks 393-4w

Ceredigion
Fisheries 457w
Primary education 355-6w

Cervical cancer
Administrative delays 351-2w
Lasers 112w
Scotland 215-6w
Screening 121, 263w, 351-2w

CFE Treaty
USSR 711w

Chalker, Rt Hon Lynda, Minister for Overseas Development
Questions
Angola, Disaster relief 514w
Central America, Bilateral aid 295w
Cyprus, Overseas aid 438-9w
Ethiopia, Food aid from UK 439w
European Development Bank, Manpower 160w
European Development Bank, Offices 159-60w
Ghana, Human rights 359w
Ghana, Overseas aid 438w
Iraq, Disaster relief 439w
Iraq, Overseas aid 514w
Overseas aid, Arms trade 513-4w
Palestine, Overseas aid 232w
Peru, Health aid 15w
Somalia 543w
Somalia, Foreign policy 253-4w
South Africa, Apartheid 927-8
South Africa, Economic sanctions 541w, 927-8
South Africa, Foreign relations 541w

Challenger tanks
292w, 411w

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Public appointments 184w

Chancellor of the Exchequer
see Treasury

Channel Three
649-50w

Channel tunnel
655
EC grants & loans 426w
Greater Manchester 418w
Railway freight transport 252w, 634-5w
Railway network 418w
Roads 655
Scotland 634-5w

Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Debates etc.
Palace Theatre Southend, Arts finance (14:03:91) 1127-8
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 824

Charities
Income 276w

Charity Commission
186w
Finance 11w

Cheese
Food hygiene 112w
Food poisoning 112w

Chelsea-Hackney line
Construction 656-7
Wandsworth 658

Chemical weapons
Iraq 712w, 941-2, 1095

Chemicals
Testing 381w

Chernobyl
391w, 464-6w

Cheshire
School admission 105w

Chief Executive Dockyards
103-4w

Child Abduction Act 1984
Questions
82w

Child abuse
344-5w, 641w
Local government functions 805
Satanism (14:03:91) 1144-7

Child benefit
8-9
Bury 123w
Greenock 175w
Index linking 456
Multiple births 693w
Social security benefits rates 536w
Social security recipients 175w

Child care
Scotland 462w
Sunbeam Nursery Croydon 506-7w

Child Care Law in Scotland Review Group
402w, 462w

Child protection registers
344-5w, 641w

Child Support Agency
1-2w
Training 76-7w

Child Support Bill 1990/91
Questions
414w

Childbirth
322-3w
Anaesthetics 491w
Statistics 555-6w

Children
Attendance allowance 122-3w
Hormone treatments 122-3
Maintenance 1-2w, 6-7, 75-8w
Road accidents 89w
Smoking 347w
Vaccination 121
Video recordings 649w

Children Act 1989
Questions
111w, 344-5w

Children & Young Persons Act 1969
Questions
481-2w

"Children Come First White Paper"
77w

Children in care
Parents rights 402w
Scotland 402-3w
Wales 526w

Cholera
Peru 15w

Cholesterol
Blood tests 345-6w

Chope, Mr Christopher, Under-Secretary of State for Transport
Debates etc.
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 225-32

Chope, Mr Christopher—continued
Roads, Greater Manchester (04:03:91) 114-8
Questions
A1-M1 link, Road construction 251-2w
A13, Road works 8w
Bicycles, Lighting 421w, 656
Cars, Energy consumption 307w
Cars, Motor vehicle safety 10w
Channel tunnel 655
Channel tunnel, Roads 655
Cycling, Public footpaths 420w
Dangerous driving 656
Driving tests, Cycling 426w
Exhaust emission controls, Standards specifications 10w
Exhaust emission controls, Tax allowances 660
Lorries, Licensing 503-5w
Lorries, Road tax 503-4w
M1-M62 link, Road construction 422-3w
M4, Road accidents 636w
M4, Road works 420w
M20, Road works 8w
Motor vehicle parts, Standardisation 9w
Motorways, Litter 251w, 503w
Newbury bypass 427w
North Devon link road, Compensation 421w
Parking, Cumbria 420-1w
Priority routes, Civil service manpower 307w
Priority routes, Greater London 426w
Road accidents, Children 89w
Road construction 9w, 147-8w, 419w, 659
Road construction, Northern region 501-4w
Road freight transport, Hungary 634w
Road safety, Personal stereos 422w
Road signs, Harmonisation of standards 9w
Road traffic 9w
Road traffic, Environmental impact assessment 659
Road traffic, Greater London 419w
Road traffic control 635-6
Road traffic control, Greater London 307w
Roads, Expenditure 251w
School transport, Safety belts 7-8w
Snow & ice, Local government functions 101-2w

Chorley
Government grants to local authorities 476w

Christie Hospital Manchester
NHS trusts 263-4w
Public appointments 263-4w

Christmas Island
222w

Church buildings
Handicapped 12-3

Church of England
13, 42-3w

Church schools
School administration 13

Church unity
Community relations 1085
Northern Ireland 1085-6

Churchill, Mr Winston
Questions
Iraq, Chemical weapons 941
Kuwait 542w

City action teams
237-40w, 515w

City grants
245w, 515w
Leeds 519w

City of Westminster
Government grants to local authorities 363w, 1095-6
Standard community charge 363w

City technology colleges
Haberdashers' Aske's School 186-8w
HM Inspectorate of Schools 299-300w
Voluntary schools 337-8w

Citybus
152w

Civil Aviation Authority
(05:03:91) 149-62, 149w, 671-2

Civil disorder
India (14:03:91) 1158-9

Civil proceedings
Community charge 83w, 509-10w

Civil servants
Coleraine 129-30w
International organisations 387-8w
Job security 666-7
Northern Ireland 463-4w
Overseas workers 463-4w
Privatisation 667
South Wales 373w

Civil service
Ethnic monitoring 151w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 407w
Job satisfaction 667-8

Civil service agencies
388w
Departmental responsibilities 522w
Job satisfaction 668-9
Social security 70w

Civil Service College
Equal opportunities 388w

Civil Service Commission
15-6w, 42w, 61w, 113w, 227-8w, 233w

Civil service dispersal
Armed forces storage depots 25w
Defence Quality Assurance Directorate 226w, 668
Dept of Social Security 79w

Civil service manpower
Employment Service 288w
Oil pollution control 367w
Priority routes 307w
Procurement 355w, 357-8w, 445w, 488w, 568w, 629w
Sites of special scientific interest 243w

Civil service redundancies
Export Credits Guarantee Department 666-7
Veterinary Investigation Service 438w

***Clark, Rt Hon Alan**, Minister of State for Defence Procurement*
Questions
Arms trade, Export controls 440w
Arms trade, House of Commons questions 330w
Arms trade, Trade fairs 571w
Defence equipment 224w
Defence equipment, Export licensing 329-30w
Defence procurement 224w
Ethnic monitoring, Ministry of Defence 291w
Guided weapons 409w
Guided weapons, Arms exports 410w
Guided weapons, Defence expenditure 409w
Guided weapons, Defence procurement 409-10w
Higher civil servants, Ministry of Defence 291w
NATO, Arms trade 225w
Public appointments, Ministry of Defence 224w
Space Research Corporation, Exports 225w
Tanks, Defence procurement 292w, 411w
Taylorplan Services, Defence contracts 294w
Trident, Defence expenditure 571w
Walter Somers, Arms exports 440w
Walter Somers, Departmental correspondence 224w

Clark, Dr David
Questions
Agricultural workers, Pay 677w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 566w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Waste disposal 525-6w, 611-2w
Butter, Food exports 399w
Food poisoning 24w
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 278w, 404w
Forestry Commission, Land ownership & tenure 278-9w
Forestry Commission, Scotland 684-6w
Institute of Food Research, Construction 340w, 625w
Irradiated food, Food imports 398w
Irradiated food, Licensing 398w, 677w
London Zoo 244w
London Zoo, Finance 244w
Slaughterhouses, EC countries 437w
Slaughterhouses, Inspections 68-9w
Veterinary Investigation Service, Civil service redundancies 438w
Veterinary services, Government laboratories 676w

Clark, Dr Michael
Debates etc.
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 477, 494, 501-6
Questions
NHS, Per capita costs 110w
Pensioners, Wealth 70-1w

***Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth**, Secretary of State for Education & Science*
Questions
Adult education 793
City technology colleges, Voluntary schools 337-8w
Educational finance 793-4, 802-3
Educational finance, Standard spending assessments 442w, 791, 802
English education, Educational standards 803
Grant maintained schools, Capital investment 301w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Annual reports 41-2w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, City technology colleges 299-300w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Public appointments 42w
School administration, Local government expenditure 794
School administration, Manpower 792
School buildings 795
Sports Council, Government grants 343w
Teachers, Pay settlements 336-7w

Clarke, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 976, 985-8
Questions
British Airways, Scotland 660-1
M8, Road construction 573-4w
Road works, Lanarkshire 280-1
Unemployment, Scotland 455

Clay, Mr Bob
Questions
Family income 125-6w

Clelland, Mr David
Questions
Government grants to local authorities, Wandsworth 517w
Tanks, Defence procurement 411w

Clinical trials
Interleukin 322w
RU486 500w

Clinical wastes
516w

Clitheroe
Cold weather payments 124w
Community charge 132-3

Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Questions
Angola, Disaster relief 514w
Central America, Bilateral aid 295w
Community charge, Administrative costs 647w
Community charge exemptions, Handicapped 670-1w
Eastern Europe, Food aid from EC 712-3w
Iraq, Overseas aid 514w
Local government revenue, Capital investment 645-7w
Local government revenue, Cynon Valley 646w

Coal mining
Licensing 431w
Mine safety 432w
Wales 180-2w

Coastal protection
River Dun 465w, 657w

Coccidiostat
70w

"Code of Practice on Time Off for Trade Union Duties & Activities"
(04:03:91) 110

Codes of practice
Air pollution control 242w
Environmental Protection Act 1990 470w
Integrated pollution control 242w
Residential care 703-4w

Coffee
386w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 61-2w

Cohen, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 156
Census (Confidentiality) Bill (HL), 3R (04:03:91) 74-5
Hare Coursing Bill, 2R order read (08:03:91) 642, (15:03:91) 1400
London Regional Transport (11:03:91) 713, 715-6, 719
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 862-3, 896
Questions
Arms trade, Trade fairs 571w
B52 bombers, Ammunition 329w
B52 bombers, Fire services 331w
Business statements 468
Defence equipment, Radio engineering 330w
Explosives, Transport of hazardous materials 332w
Gulf states, Arms control 325w
Gulf states, Security 324-5w, 571w
Hospitals, Construction 154w
Huckfield, Les, Complaints against police 482w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces deployment 325w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces women 715w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Defence expenditure 329w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Iraq 247w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Prisoners of war 247w, 329w
Kuwait, Constitutions 324w
Local government expenditure, Community charge 672w
Low flying 331-2w
NATO, Warsaw Pact 432w
Oil pollution, Persian Gulf 190w
Radio engineering, Glengarry Forest 330w
RAF Fairford, Fire services 224w, 331w
RAF Upper Heyford, Repairs & maintenance 332w
Transport of hazardous materials, Orders & regulations 332w
US bases, Holy Loch 332w

Cold weather payments
Administrative costs 664w
Advertising 534-5w

Cold weather payments—continued
Clitheroe 124w
Energy prices 663-4w
Expenditure 664w
Northern Ireland 513w
Press advertising 124w
Scotland 665w
Social security claims 11-2, 281-2w
Social security recipients 281-2w
Strathclyde 534-5w

Coleraine
Civil servants 129-30w
Employment level 129-32w
System building 310-2w
Unemployment 131-2w

Colvin, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 682
Questions
Air Europe, Company liquidations 673
Alternative medicine, Licensing 124
Arts finance, Northern Ireland 656w
Energy conservation, Dept of Employment 696w
Energy conservation, Dept of Trade & Industry 717w
Energy conservation, Treasury 632w
Hong Kong 543-4w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces deployment 452-3
Public houses, Tenants 273-4

Comite Europeen de Normalisation
9w

Commencement orders
Companies Act 1989 88w

Commission for Racial Equality
151w, 306w
Redundancy 307w

Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising
348-9w
Annual reports 347w
Public appointments 349w

Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food
679w

Common land
Wales 177w

Community care
110w, 127-9
Derbyshire 128

Community care grants
124w, 325-6w
Birmingham 9
Greenock 173-4w
Port Glasgow 173-4w

Community charge
135-6, 804-8, 1091-3, 1095, (14:03:91) 1161-5
Administrative costs 647w
Arts finance 665-6
Cambridge 47w
Civil proceedings 83w, 509-10w
Clitheroe 132-3
Costs 50w
Councillors 670w
Glasgow 268
Government grants to local authorities 671-2w
Grampian 276-7
Greater London 49-50w
Haringey 1094
Inner London boroughs 133
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 218w, 673-4w
Lambeth 804
Leicestershire 48w
Local authorities 367w
Local government expenditure 672w
Non-payment 670w
Opposition days (13:03:91) 959-1003
Orders & regulations 518-9w

Community charge—continued
Pensioners 2
Public libraries 668
Retail price index 372w
Ribble Valley Borough Council 131-2
Scotland 208-9w, 267-8, 806-7
Students 47w
Transitional relief 209w
Wales 647w
Warrant sales 276-7

Community charge benefits
Exeter 362-3w
Expenditure 371w
Scotland 277

Community charge capping
521w
Local government expenditure 100-1w
Police 448-9
Public libraries 663-4
South Yorkshire Police 448

Community charge exemptions
Exservicemen 45w
Handicapped 45w, 670-1w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 48-9w, 100-1w, 578w
Married women 45w
Scotland 578w

Community charge reduction scheme
48w, 132-3, 362-3w, 367-8w, (13:03:91) 959-1003
Gedling 99-100w
Gloucester 367w
Leicestershire 47-8w
Police housing 474w
Retail price index 371-2w
Rugby 47w
Scotland 208-9w, 371w
Sevenoaks 49w
Wales 312-3w
Wolverhampton 474w

Community charge register
296w
Electoral register (14:03:91) 1150-2
Lancashire 474-5w
Scotland 64w

Community charge review
208w, 267, 670-1w, (13:03:91) 959-1003

Community relations
Business 655w
Church unity 1085
Northern Ireland 655w, 1085

Companies Act 1989
Questions
Commencement orders 88w

Company accounts
Lonrho 627w

Company cars
Tax yields 30w, 632w

Company liquidations
Air Europe 671-5
Scotland 217w

Competition
Air routes 662

"Competition & Choice Telecommunications Policy for the 1990s White Paper"
(05:03:91) 137-48

Complaints
Residential care 353w, 704-5w
Security Service Tribunal 276w

Complaints against local government
Wales 178w

Complaints against police
Huckfield, Les 482w

Comptroller & Auditor General
see National Audit Office

Compulsory purchase
Leeds Development Corporation 193w

Computer applications
Sizewell B 630w

Computer software
EC action 427-8w

Computers in government departments
Social security 71-2w
Social security claims 174w

Computers in National Health Service
Family doctors 559w

Comunn Na Gaidhlig
Government grants 576w

Concessionary fares
Rural areas 662-3

Concessionary television licences
Pensioners 440-2

Conditions of employment
Royal Parks Constabulary 365w

Conflict of interests
Training & enterprise councils 168w

Conservative Party
456

Consolidated Fund debates
(14:03:91) 1170-90
Armed forces (14:03:91) 1260-74
European Economic Community (14:03:91) 1285-98
Hospitals (14:03:91) 1225-43
Lotteries (14:03:91) 1209-24
Museums & galleries (14:03:91) 1244-59
Northern Ireland (14:03:91) 1310-21
Prisoners on remand (14:03:91) 1299-309
Science & Engineering Research Council (14:03:91) 1322-6
Shareholders (14:03:91) 1275-84
Speaker's rulings & statements (07:03:91) 471-2
USSR (14:03:91) 1191-208

Consolidated Fund (No 2) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (11:03:91) 758
2R° & 3R° (14:03:91) 1169

Consolidation Bills
Social security 327w

Constitutions
Kuwait 324w

Consumer protection
Timesharing (14:03:91) 1154-6

Contracts
Training & enterprise councils 383w, 487w

Contracts for services
North Lincolnshire Health Authority 120w
Redditch Borough Council 100w

Contracts of employment
Dentists 117w, 457w, 639-40w
Family doctors 120-1, 130-1, 642w

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
269-70, 280, 280w, 281, 281w, 401w, 455

Conventional weapons
Arms control 362w, 630w

Conway, Mr Derek
Questions
Child benefit, Multiple births 693w
Data Protection Act 1984, Fees & charges 158w
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 120-1
School buildings, Building repairs 798-9

Cook, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 946-7, 954
Questions
Cervical cancer, Screening 263w
Dentists, Contracts of employment 639-40w

Cook, Mr Robin—continued
Family doctors, Budgeting 116w
Family doctors, Performance related pay 642w
Firearms, Foreign tourists 14w
Health insurance, Tax allowances 120
Health services, Expenditure 637w
Health services, Per capita costs 637-8w
King's College Hospital, Accident & emergency departments 126
Local government social services, Expenditure 498-500w
NHS, Land values 261-2w
Personal social services, Local government expenditure 114-6w

Coombs, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 171, 180
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 876-8
Telecommunications industry (14:03:91) 1180-3
Questions
Alternative medicine, Drug industry 125
Business statements 461
Crown Suppliers, Privatisation 692w
Family doctors, Manpower 108w
Ghana, Human rights 359w
Ghana, Overseas aid 438w
Licensing laws 269w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 928-9
Sports Council, Government grants 343w
Student loans, Costs 108w

Coombs, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 200-5, 226-7
Questions
Business statements 467-8
Crime Concern 12w
M4, Road works 420w
Members' facilities, Satellite broadcasting 16
Overseas aid, Arms trade 513-4w
Social Fund 10
Tourism, Northern Ireland 654w

Coordinating Committee on Export Controls
197w, 711w

Copyright Tribunal
13-4w

Corbett, Mr Robin
Questions
Alternative medicine, Licensing 125
Community care grants, Birmingham 9
Concessionary television licences, Pensioners 441-2
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Immigrant detainees 84w
Members' correspondence, Postal services 32w

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc.
Persian Gulf, Environment protection (15:03:91) 1357-8, 1363-6
Questions
Commission for Racial Equality, Redundancy 307w
Electoral register, Ethnic minorities 481w
Electoral register, London boroughs 699w
Electorate, Greater London 562-3w
Ethiopia, Food aid from UK 439w
Export credit guarantees, Iraq 540-1w
Immigrants, Iraq 699w
Immigration applications, Iraq 653w
Immigration controls, Iraq 511w
Iraq, Disaster relief 439w
Iraq, Human rights 433-4w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Defence expenditure 30-1w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Immigrant detainees 481w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Immigration controls 481w
Kurdistan, Foreign policy 433w

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy—continued
Kuwait, Democracy 434w
Palestine, Self-determination of states 940
Political refugees, Immigration applications 510-1w, 652-3w
Political refugees, Immigration rules 481w
Post Office, Disclosure of information 306w

Co-responsibility levy
Cereals 395-6w

Corlan Housing Association
Inquiries 235-6w

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1119
Hostages, Lebanon (14:03:91) 1142-4
Timesharing (14:03:91) 1155
Questions
Business statements 460-1
Hussein, Saddam, Peace negotiations 939
Road construction, Private sector 92-3w

Cornwall
Mining 807
Sewage 53-4w

Corporation tax
Tax yields 700w

Cosmetics
Product safety 537w

Cost benefit analysis
Air pollution control 52-3w

Cost effectiveness
Dept of Education & Science 443-4w
Dept of Employment 488w
Dept of Energy 431w
Dept of Health 556-7w
Dept of Social Security 665-6w
Dept of the Environment 367w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 629w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 569-70w
Prescription drugs 109w
Prime Minister 355w

Cost per student
Higher education 577w, 625w

Council for National Academic Awards
108w

Council house rents
Ealing 476w
Scotland 575-6w

Council house sales
520w

Council house waiting lists
Housing construction 1094

Council housing
520w
Empty housing 99w
Exeter 99w
Homelessness 194-6w
Housing investment programmes 98w
Local government borrowing 574-6w
South Wales 644w
Wales 644w

Council housing finance
Scotland 574-6w

Council of Europe
711w
UK delegations 295w

Council of Ministers
17-8

Council tenants
Rent arrears 191w

Councillors
Community charge 670w

Countryside Council for Wales
236w

County courts
Trials 624w

County Hall
Members' facilities 16-7

Court of Appeal
Criminal appeals 81w, 361w
Sentencing 362w
Trials 361-2w

Court of Auditors
EC budget (11:03:91) 684, (13:03:91) 1045-67

Court orders
111w

Courts (Research) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (08:03:91) 642, (15:03:91) 1400

Cousins, Mr Jim
Questions
Developing countries, Debts 546-7w
Research finance, Industry 800

Cox, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Eastern Europe, EC aid (04:03:91) 95-7
London Regional Transport (11:03:91) 688, 703-7, 721
Questions
Cyprus 198w
Educational finance, Standard spending assessments 442w
Hong Kong, Passports 36w
Loan guarantee scheme, Banks 697w

Crafts Council
Government grants 20w

Credit controls
House purchase 455

Crime
Leicestershire 159w, 270w
North Yorkshire 277w
Strathclyde 215-6w

Crime Concern
12w

Crime prevention
Norwich (05:03:91) 258-64
Street lighting 241-2w
Young offenders 267-8w

Crimes of violence
Prison staff 274-5w

Criminal Appeal Act 1968
Questions
81w

Criminal appeals
Court of Appeal 81w, 361w
Ministerial statements (14:03:91) 1109-25

Criminal injuries compensation
Social security benefits rules 665w

Criminal investigation
Homicide 709-10w

Criminal Justice Act 1988
Questions
270w, 361w

Criminal Justice Bill 1990/91
Questions
510w

Criminal Justice Royal Commission
(14:03:91) 1109-25

Criminal proceedings
Nazi war crimes (07:03:91) 472, (12:03:91) 901-13

Criminal records
Disclosure of information 652w

Crofter Forestry (Scotland) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Money res* (05:03:91) 257

Cross-Media Ownership Inquiry
428w

Crown courts
Trials 624w

Crown immunity
Hospitals 460w, 556w
Quota of disabled workers 282w, 381w

Crown Prosecution Service
149-50w, 227-8w

Crown Suppliers
Privatisation 692w

Crowther, Mr Stan
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 821

Cryer, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1122-3, 1125
Business questions point of order (06:03:91) 470-1
Court of Auditors, EC budget (13:03:91) 1057-8
European Bank of Reconstruction & Development (Immunities & Privileges) Order 1991 (13:03:91) 1070-1
European Economic Community, Cost (14:03:91) 1285-92, 1294
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 949
Prime Ministers, Accountability (12:03:91) 812
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 233
Shareholders (14:03:91) 1278
Questions
Business statements 467, 1107-8
Community charge 1092-3
Government grants to local authorities, Community charge 672w
Government grants to local authorities, Per capita costs 475w
High technology, Export controls 303-4w
Leeds-Bradford railway, Railway electrification 427w
Serviscope, Employers' contributions 535w
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 654w

Cryptosporidia
471w

Cullen Committee
see Piper Alpha Inquiry

Cumbria
Parking 420-1w

Cunliffe, Mr Lawrence
Questions
Health authorities, Finance 125-6

Cunningham, Dr John
Debates etc.
Business questions intervention (14:03:91) 1102
Business statements (12:03:91) 809
Community charge (13:03:91) 969
War Crimes Bill, House of Commons procedure (12:03:91) 904-7
Questions
Business statements 457-60, 1097-100
European Standing Committees 18

Curfews
Israel 712w

Curriculum
History education 107w, 457-8w
Local government staff 624w
Physical education 39w
Pre-school education 799
Wales 645-6w

Currie, Mrs Edwina
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 967-8
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 952

Currie, Mrs Edwina—continued
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 826, 887-9
Questions
Business statements 1100-1
Community care, Derbyshire 128
Community charge capping 521w
Local government expenditure 50-1w
Steroid drugs 445

Curry, Mr David, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture
Debates etc.
Horticulture (07:03:91) 572-6
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 236-9, 254-6
Questions
Agriculture, EC budget 567w
Badgers 564w
Bananas, Imports 258w
Bananas, Windward Islands 254w, 563-4w
Berries & soft fruit, Import controls 69w
Cereals 395w
Cereals, Agricultural production 257-8w
Cereals, Co-responsibility levy 395-6w
Cereals, Food exports 393-4w, 706w
Cereals, Food imports 395-7w
Cereals, Food stocks 393-4w
Cost effectiveness, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 569-70w
Day care of children, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 567-8w
EC free food scheme 678w
EC free food scheme, Bradford 678w
Ethnic monitoring, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 181w
European Parliament Members, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 397-8w
Export restitution, Expenditure 705-6w
Food, EC external trade 564-5w
Food industry 397w
Food stocks, Emergency planning 679w
Foxes, Pest control 570w
Freshwater fishing 566-7w
Green rates 707w
Higher civil servants, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 181w
Intervention stocks 69-70w
Maryport Harbour, Safety standards 564w
Milk, Inflation 708w
Milk, Production quotas 677-8w
Procurement, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 568w
Public appointments, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 182-3w
Security marking, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 104w
Shellfish, Radiation hazards 569w
Slaughterhouses 569w
Slaughterhouses, Animal cruelty 679w
Tributyl tin, Fishing vessels 569w
Tributyl tin, Sea pollution 679w
Trout 568w
Water resources, Somerset 397w, 564w
Wheat, Prices 570w, 706-8w

Custodial treatment
Prisoners on remand 450-1

Customs
Nature conservation 372-3w

Customs & Excise
434-5w

Cycling
Driving tests 426w
Public footpaths 420w

Cymdeithas Arlunwyr a Dylunwyr Yng Nghymru
see Association of Artists & Designers in Wales

Cynon Valley
Local government revenue 646w

Cyprus
198w
Overseas aid 438-9w

Dalai Lama
806

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc.
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 679
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 159
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, War casualties (14:03:91) 1159-61
Oral question time point of order (04:03:91) 19
Persian Gulf, Environment protection (15:03:91) 1335-47, 1351, 1354, 1358-9, 1362, 1369-70, 1371, 1373-4, 1378, 1383, 1389, 1390, 1391, 1395
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 147
Questions
Arms control, Conventional weapons 362w, 630w
Business statements 1101
Customs, Nature conservation 372-3w
Health aid, Middle East 282
House of Commons Select Committees, Kuwait 19
Iraq, Religious buildings 942
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Immigrant detainees 446-7
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Museums & galleries 21w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Social security benefits 3-4
Kuwait, Palestine 629w
Oil pollution control, Civil service manpower 367w
Planning authorities, Waste disposal 613w
Post Office, Relocation of employees 385w
Post Office, Termination of employment 385w
Stansted Airport, Animal quarantine 373w
Tipping of waste, Methane 613w
Tipping of waste, Property development 612-3w
Waste disposal, Local authorities 613w

Dangerous driving
656

Dangerous Vessels (Northern Ireland) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(13:03:91) 955

Daresbury
Nuclear physics 801-2

Darling, Mr Alistair
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 159
Questions
Foreign tourists 478-9w
Hong Kong, Immigration applications 36w
Hong Kong, Passports 36w
Immigrant detainees, National security 14w
Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 479-80w
Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987, Fines 479w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Immigrant detainees 84w
Local radio, Ownership 449-50
M8, Environment protection 205w
Political refugees, EC countries 480w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 510w
Rollerstone camp, Prisoners of war 25w

Dartmoor National Park
369w

Data Protection Act 1984
Questions
Fees & charges 158w

Davies, Mr Quentin
Questions
Science & technology research, Research finance 441w

Davies, Mr Ron
Questions
Animal experiments 333w
Animal experiments, EC action 511w
Animal experiments, Wild animals 334w

Davies, Mr Ron—continued
Animal feed, Food contamination 104w
Animal feed, Food labelling 104w
Badgers 564w
Badgers, Bovine tuberculosis 257w
Badgers, Nature conservation 242-3w, 522-3w, 571-2w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 70w, 565-6w
Cattle, Animal housing 104w
Chemicals, Testing 381w
Cosmetics, Product safety 537w
Foxes, Pest control 69w, 140w, 570w, 696w
Import of live animals, Wild animals 689w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Peace negotiations 542w
Mink, Licensing 399w
Nature conservation, Planning permission 242w
Nature conservation, Wales 334w
Poultry, Food labelling 70w
Public Health Laboratory Service, Food inspection 523w
Salmonella 116w
Salmonella, Disease control 104w
Sheep dipping, Enforcement 257w
Sheep scab 257w
Water resources, Somerset 397w, 564w

Davis, Mr Terry
Questions
Dental Practice Board, Home visits 497-8w
Disposable syringes, Diabetes 351w
General Dental Practitioners' Association 497w
Housing renewal areas, Birmingham 369w, 692w
Roll-on roll-off ships, Safety standards 653
Urban programme, Employment opportunities 369w
Video recordings, Children 649w

Day care of children
Dept of Education & Science 337w
Dept of Employment 675w
Dept of Energy 357w
Dept of Health 492w
Dept of Social Security 663w
Dept of the Environment 689w
Dept of Trade & Industry 538w
Dept of Transport 425w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 359-60w
Government departments 372w
Greater London 388w
Home Office 483w
Inland Revenue 434-5w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 567-8w
Ministry of Defence 687w
Northern Ireland Office 656-7w
Office of Arts & Libraries 425w
Scottish Office 572-3w
Treasury 434-5w
Welsh Office 524-5w

Day centres
Fees & charges 559w

Deaf
Disabled workers 379w
Further education (14:03:91) 1133-6

Deaf Persons (Access to Further & Higher Education & Training) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (08:03:91) 641, (15:03:91) 1399

Dearne Valley
251-2w
Government grants to local authorities 192-3w

Death
Alcoholism 560-1w
Drug abuse 560-1w
Elderly 155-6w
Homelessness 116w, 702w
Lung cancer 346w
Sleeping rough 702w
Smoking related diseases 559-60w

Debt collection
Social Fund 413w
Student loans 41w

Debts
Developing countries 546-7w

Debts written off
Nationalised industries 546w

Deeds of covenant
Tax collection (04:03:91) 110

Deer
Scotland 209w

Defence contracts
Taylorplan Services 294w

Defence equipment
224w
Export licensing 329-30w
Radio engineering 330w

Defence expenditure
Guided weapons 409w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 30-1w, 329w
Trident 571w

Defence industries
Iraq 225-6w
Middle East 226w

Defence land
Blood sports 330w, 713w
Hare coursing 330w

Defence procurement
224w
Guided weapons 409-10w
Tanks 292w, 411w
WE 177 nuclear bomb 715w

Defence Quality Assurance Directorate
Civil service dispersal 226w, 668

Defence review
Northern Ireland 688w
Territorial Army 715w

Deficit grants
Hostels 239w

Degrees
Architecture 625w

Delivery service
692w

Democracy
Kuwait 434w

Demonstrations
Blood sports 482w

Dental Practice Board
497w
Home visits 497-8w

Dental services
(15:03:91) 1401-8

Dentists
Bromley 117w
Contracts of employment 117w, 457w, 639-40w
Wales 457w

Department of Transport (Fees) (Amendment) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(04:03:91) 20

Departmental circulars
Police cautions 12w

Departmental correspondence
European Parliament Members 335w, 346w, 358w, 360w, 373w, 382w, 386w, 397-8w, 402w, 409w, 412w, 422w
Walter Somers 224w

Departmental records
222-3w
Nuclear weapons tests 223w

Departmental responsibilities
Civil service agencies 522w
Kuwait 627w

Deportation
Hassan, Hazem Ali 507w

Deposited papers
Water Research Centre 245w

Dept of Education & Science
Cost effectiveness 443-4w
Day care of children 337w
Disabled workers 188w
Ethnic monitoring 38-9w
Higher civil servants 38w
Procurement 445w
Public appointments 343w
Smoking 339w
Tobacco industry 338-9w

Dept of Employment
Cost effectiveness 488w
Day care of children 675w
Disabled workers 167-8w
Energy conservation 696w
Ethnic monitoring 97w
European Parliament Members 382w
Government achievements 483-6w
Higher civil servants 3-5w
Procurement 488w
Public appointments 167w
Smoking 384w

Dept of Energy
Cost effectiveness 431w
Day care of children 357w
Disabled workers 169w
Ethnic monitoring 16w
European Parliament Members 358w
Higher civil servants 15-6w
Procurement 357-8w
Smoking 358w

Dept of Health
Cost effectiveness 556-7w
Day care of children 492w
Disabled workers 154w
Ethnic monitoring 113w
European Parliament Members 346w
Higher civil servants 113w
Procurement 701-2w
Public appointments 154w
Smoking 350w
Tobacco industry 348w

Dept of Social Security
Accounting 663w
Civil service dispersal 79w
Cost effectiveness 665-6w
Day care of children 663w
Disabled workers 175w
Ethnic monitoring 123w
European Parliament Members 412w
Higher civil servants 124w
Management consultants 73-6w
Procurement 664-5w
Public appointments 173w
Security marking 172w
Smoking 413w

Dept of Social Security local offices
Bradford 328w
Glasgow 328w
Greenock 174w
Home visits 328w
Manpower 174w
Quality control 693w
Social Fund 413w, 534w, 667w

Dept of the Environment
Cash limits 673w
Cost effectiveness 367w
Day care of children 689w
Disabled workers 195w
Environmental policy 101-2w
Ethnic monitoring 190w
Higher civil servants 190-2w
Procurement 690w
Public appointments 191-2w
Smoking 368w

Dept of Trade & Industry
628w
Day care of children 538w
Disabled workers 250w

Dept of Trade & Industry—continued
Energy conservation 717w
Ethnic monitoring 61w
European Parliament Members 386w
Higher civil servants 61w
Public appointments 169w
Security marking 59-61w
Smoking 541w

Dept of Transport
Day care of children 425w
Disabled workers 149w
Ethnic monitoring 90w
European Parliament Members 422w
Higher civil servants 90w
Public appointments 149w
Smoking 422w

Derbyshire
Community care 128

Derelict land
Land reclamation 245w

Derelict land grants
237-40w, 245w, 515w
Nottinghamshire 240w

Detection rates
Greater London 305-6w
Homicide 157-8w

Developing countries
Debts 546-7w

Development Board for Rural Wales
523-4w

Devlin, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 169
Questions
Barker, Joseph Arthur Lewis, Prison hospitals 277w
Barker, Joseph Arthur Lewis, Prisoners' release 277w
Cost effectiveness, Dept of Education & Science 443-4w
Cost effectiveness, Dept of Employment 488w
Cost effectiveness, Dept of Energy 431w
Cost effectiveness, Dept of Health 556-7w
Cost effectiveness, Dept of Social Security 665-6w
Cost effectiveness, Dept of the Environment 367w
Cost effectiveness, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 629w
Cost effectiveness, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 569-70w
Cost effectiveness, Prime Minister 355w
Procurement, Dept of Education & Science 445w
Procurement, Dept of Employment 488w
Procurement, Dept of Energy 357-8w
Procurement, Dept of Health 701-2w
Procurement, Dept of Social Security 664-5w
Procurement, Dept of the Environment 690w
Procurement, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 628-9w
Procurement, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 568w
Procurement, Prime Minister 355w
Tibet 806

Devolution
Northern Ireland 1087

Devon
District health authorities 153w
Training & enterprise councils 382w, 490w

Devon & Cornwall Development Bureau
249-50w

Dewar, Mr Donald
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 972
Questions
Capital value rating 268

Dewar, Mr Donald—continued
NHS trusts, Scotland 279

Diabetes
Disposable syringes 351w

Dickens, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Business statements (12:03:91) 811
Community charge (13:03:91) 960
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 954
Questions
Business statements 1106
Civil servants, Privatisation 667
Northern Ireland government 1089

Dicks, Mr Terry
Debates etc.,
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 678
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 154
London Regional Transport (11:03:91) 685-7, 690, 700
Questions
Air transport 661

Diets
Disability living allowance 417w

Diplomatic relations
Albania 711-2w
Iraq 542w

Diplomatic service
Baltic republics of USSR 37w
United Nations 252w

Dir85/210/EEC
371w

DIR85/337/EEC
56w

Direct labour departments
Accounting 674-5w

Director General of Electricity Supply
103w

Director General of Ship Refitting
Manpower 103-4w

Disability living allowance
Diets 417w

Disability Living Allowance & Disability Working Allowance Bill 1990/91
Questions
Orders & regulations 283w

Disability test
Disability working allowance 693-4w

Disability working allowance
73w, 694w
Disability test 693-4w

Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986
Questions
128

Disabled workers
376-80w
Aids for handicapped 379w
Deaf 379w
Dept of Education & Science 188w
Dept of Employment 167-8w
Dept of Energy 169w
Dept of Health 154w
Dept of Social Security 175w
Dept of the Environment 195w
Dept of Trade & Industry 250w
Dept of Transport 149w
Employment discrimination 380w, 486w
Employment rehabilitation 379-80w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 202w
Higher civil servants 669-70
Home Office 158w
Ministry of Defence 226w
Scotland 211-3w
Special training needs 379w
Teachers 339-40w

Disabled workers—continued
Training & enterprise councils 379w
Working hours 694w

Disablement resettlement officers
Employment Select Committee 489-90w

Disablement schemes
Armed forces casualties 168w

Disaster relief
Angola 514w
Iraq 439w

Disasters
Saudi Arabia 433w

Disclosure of information
Census of population 262-3w
Criminal records 652w
Educational qualifications (13:03:91) 956-8
Environment protection 472w
Genetically modified organisms 470-1w
Maintenance 78w
Post Office 306w

Discounts
Cars 248-9w

Disease control
AIDS 119w
Salmonella 104w, 265w
Silicosis 309-10w

Disposable income
Scotland 211w

Disposable syringes
Diabetes 351w

Distributive trade
Newspaper press 384-5w

District Councils
312-3w

District health authorities
Devon 153w
Health service staff 459w
Public appointments 643w
Wales 643w

District line
656-7

District valuers
145w

Dixon, Mr Don
Questions
Government grants to local authorities, Community charge 671w
Government grants to local authorities, Wandsworth 296w

Dobson, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 476, 481-9, 565
Questions
Electricity tariffs, Price increases 16w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Advertising 199-200w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Government information services 198-202w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Research 201w
MV Cam Spirit 635w
MV Cam Spirit, Inspections 635w
MV Cam Spirit, Offshore safety 635w
MV Cam Spirit, Safety standards 635w
MV Cam Spirit, Shipbuilding 635-6w
Offshore supply vessels, Safety standards 635w
Power stations, Licensing 356-7w
Sizewell B, Nuclear safety 301w

Dockyards
Health physics 408w
Manpower 103-4w

Doctors
Northern region 493-4w

Dogs
Environmental Protection Act 1990 672-3w

Domestic accidents
Cans 63-4w

Domestic Lettings Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (15:03:91) 1399

Domestic rates
Hackney 241w
Local government revenue 671w
Scotland 578-9w
Wales 528w

Domestic violence
450

Domestic wastes
Incinerators 690-1w

Donaghadee
Census enumerators 266-7w

Doncaster task force
627-8w

Doran, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 544-56, 567
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 248-50
Questions
NHS trusts, Hospitals 205w

***Dorrell, Mr Stephen**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health*
Debates etc.
Census (Confidentiality) Bill (HL), 3R (04:03:91) 72, 76-8
Hospitals (14:03:91) 1227, 1232, 1235-43
Questions
Achondroplasia, Medical treatments 119w, 497w
Alcoholism, Death 560-1w
Alternative medicine, Drug industry 125
Alternative medicine, Licensing 124-5
Antenatal care, Medical research 491-2w
Ashworth Hospital, Medical treatments 494-5w
Ashworth Hospital, Public inquiries 494w
Ashworth Hospital, Television programmes 495w
Ashworth Hospital, Video equipment 494w
Baby milks, Advertising 24w
Baby milks, Marketing 705w
Basingstoke Hospital, Patients 558w
Census enumerators, Recruitment 154w
Census of population, Disclosure of information 262-3w
Childbirth, Anaesthetics 491w
Children Act 1989 111w
Cholesterol, Blood tests 345-6w
Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising, Annual reports 347w
Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising, Public appointments 349w
Computers in National Health Service, Family doctors 559w
Cost effectiveness, Dept of Health 556-7w
Day care of children, Dept of Health 492w
Death, Homelessness 116w
Dental Practice Board, Home visits 497-8w
Dentists, Contracts of employment 117w, 639-40w
Disabled workers, Dept of Health 154w
East Cumbria Health Authority, Finance 112w
Elderly, Death 155-6w
Elderly, Personal social services 22-3w
Elderly, Population projection 22w
Electorate, Greater London 562-3w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Health 113w
European Parliament Members, Dept of Health 346w
Food hygiene 345w, 636w
Food hygiene, Conferences 345w

***Dorrell, Mr Stephen**—continued*
Food hygiene, Training 553-4w
Food poisoning 24w
Food poisoning, Cheese 112w
"Food Safety Bill Hygiene Training Consultation Paper" 490w
General Dental Practitioners' Association 497w
Geriatric patients, Hospital beds 558w
Health Promotion Research Trust, Research finance 347w
Health service ancillary staff, Family doctors 119
Health service staff, Pay 110w, 121-2
Health services, Expenditure 637w
Health services, Per capita costs 637-8w
Health services, Rural areas 122
Health services finance 23w
Hearing aids, NHS charges 641w
Hearing aids, Waiting lists 109w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Health 113w
Homelessness, Death 702w
Hospital admissions, Bradford Health Authority 264w
Hospital beds, Liverpool Health Authority 261w
Hospital beds, North Western Regional Health Authority 555w
Hospital closures 351w
Hospital patients, York Health Authority 119w
Hospitals, Construction 154w
Hospitals, Crown immunity 556w
Incontinence, Advisory services 22w
Incontinence, Health services 21-2w
Incontinence, Surveys 21w
Incontinence aids, Residential care 557w
Infant foods, EC action 557w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces casualties 117-8w
Local government social services, Expenditure 498-500w
London Ambulance Service 641w
London Ambulance Service, Industrial disputes 559w
Mental health community care, Government grants to local authorities 350w
Mental health services, Northern Regional Health Authority 260-1w
Mental patients, Hospital discharges 319-20w
Mentally handicapped, Handicapped children 639w
Newham Hospital, Construction 130
NHS, Capital investment 495w
NHS, Expenditure 116w
NHS, Land values 261-2w
NHS, Per capita costs 110w
NHS complaints, Compensation 558w
NHS finance 23w
NHS finance, Leeds 343w
Nurses' homes, Greater London 118w
Obstetrics, Hospital beds 705w
Personal social services, Local government expenditure 114-6w
Pre-payment certificates 127
Prescription charges 127
Prescription charges exemptions, Parkinson's disease 126-7
Primary health care 110-1w
Processed food, Food hygiene 112w
Procurement, Dept of Health 701-2w
Public appointments, Dept of Health 154w
Public Health Laboratory Service, Fees & charges 495-6w
Residential care, Hospital discharges 702w
Road accidents, Fees & charges 493w
St Paul's Eye Hospital Liverpool, Hospital closures 490-1w
Salmonella 116w
Salmonella, Disease control 265w
Sleeping rough, Hypothermia 702w
Smoking, Children 347w
Smoking, Dept of Health 350w
Smoking, Lung cancer 346w
Smoking related diseases, Costs 346w
Smoking related diseases, Death 559-60w

***Dorrell, Mr Stephen**—continued*
Smoking related diseases, Hospital beds 347w
Smoking related diseases, Lost working days 346-7w
Social Services Inspectorate, Career structure 265w
South Yorkshire Ambulance Service, NHS trusts 345w
Surgery, Babies 111w
Tobacco 348w
Tobacco advertising 349-50w
Tobacco advertising, Advertising codes of practice 347-8w
Tobacco advertising, Research 348-9w
Tobacco industry, Dept of Health 348w
Transplant surgery, Liver diseases 109w
Transplant surgery, Special health authorities 496-7w

Douglas, Mr Dick
Questions
Cervical cancer, Lasers 112w
Community charge, Scotland 267, 806-7
Student unions 447w

***Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James**, Under-Secretary of State for Scotland*
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 838
Questions
A77, Road works 206w
Badgers, Nature conservation 571w
Comunn Na Gaidhlig, Government grants 576w
Council housing, Local government borrowing 574-6w
Crime, Strathclyde 215-6w
Environmental policy, Scottish Office 67-8w
Ethnic monitoring, Lord Advocate 315w
Exservicemen, Housing 270
Fire services, Scotland 65w
Fords, Road safety 620w
Higher civil servants, Lord Advocate 315w
Homelessness, Empty housing 266
Homelessness, Greater London 266
Homelessness, Housing 613-9w
Homicide, Criminal investigation 709-10w
Housing, Rural areas 401w
Housing construction, Scotland 270
Housing support grants, Scotland 269-70
Legal aid, Expenditure 682w
Legal aid, Fees & charges 572w
Local government borrowing, Interest charges 575-6w
M8, Environment protection 205w
M8, Road construction 573-4w
M80, Road construction 404w
Mortgage defaulters, Scotland 265, 279-80w
Nature Conservancy Council, Repairs & maintenance 572w
Planning authorities, Waste disposal 613w
Private sector housing, Empty housing 221w
Public sector housing sales, Scotland 140-6w, 206w
Radioactive waste disposal, Conferences 64w
Recycling, Scotland 278w, 577-8w
Regional planning & development, Borders region 273
Rents to mortgages scheme 265-6
Rents to mortgages scheme, Rural areas 575w
Road traffic control, Orders & regulations 400w
Scottish Homes, Capital investment 207-8w
Scottish Homes, Finance 206w
Scottish Homes, Government grants 206-7w, 580w
Scottish Homes, Income 207w
Security marking, Lord Advocate 211w
Sites of special scientific interest, Scotland 68w
Strathclyde Police, Manpower 215w
Tipping of waste, Methane 613w

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James—continued
Tipping of waste, Property development 612-3w
Tourist information, Sign posts 140w
Trials, Scotland 572w
Waste disposal, Local authorities 613w
Water pollution, Pollution control 66-7w
Water supply, Aluminium 65-6w, 205w

Dover, Mr Den
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 989
Questions
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Government grants to local authorities 470w
National House Building Council 386w
Pensioners, Owner occupied housing 1-2
Retail price index, Community charge reduction scheme 371-2w
Structure plans, Land use 476w

Downshire Hospital
Mental health services 389w

Drake Hall Prison
158w, 648-9w, 698w

Dredging
British Waterways Board 98w

Dried milk
Jordan 361w

Drigg
Radioactive waste disposal 369-70w

Drinking Water Inspectorate
469w

Driving offences
Traffic lights 655-6

Driving tests
Cycling 426w

Drug abuse
Death 560-1w
International cooperation 935-6

Drug industry
Alternative medicine 125

Drug labelling
EC action 320w

Drugs
Expenditure 109w, 500w
Licensing 317w, 344w
Parallel imports 317w, 552-3w
Patents 114w

Duffryn Workshops
Factory closures 355w

Duffy, Mr A E P
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 653w
Government grants to local authorities, Per capita costs 475-6w
Government grants to local authorities, Sheffield 363-4w
Northern Ireland government 1083
South Yorkshire Police, Manpower 448

Dumbarton
Regional aid 709w

Dumfries & Galloway Health Board
Finance 271

Dundee
206-7w, 575-6w

Dunn, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Eastern Europe, EC aid (04:03:91) 100
Questions
Area museum councils 423w
Baltic republics of USSR, British embassies 37w
Baltic republics of USSR, Diplomatic service 37w
Baltic republics of USSR, Embassies 37-8w

Dunn, Mr Bob—continued
Baltic republics of USSR, Export promotion 37w
Business statements 462
Community charge reduction scheme, Sevenoaks 49w
Elderly, Personal social services 22-3w
Elderly, Population projection 22w
Electorate, Parliamentary constituencies 269w
M20, Road works 8w
National Association of Governors & Managers, Government grants 40w
Take-home pay, Married men 27w

Dunnachie, Mr Jimmy
Debates etc.
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 214
Questions
Cold weather payments, Energy prices 663-4w
Cold weather payments, Scotland 665w
Comunn Na Gaidhlig, Government grants 576w
Dept of Social Security, Accounting 663w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Glasgow 328w
Feldberg, Wilhelm, Animal experiments 333w
Fertility, Scotland 578w
Health service staff, Pay 681w
Higher education, Educational finance 441w
Housing, Rural areas 401w
Hypothermia, Scotland 402w
Independent Living Fund 326w
Independent Living Fund, Social Security Benefits Agency 326w
London Underground, Safety 426w
Nuclear power stations, Decommissioning 506w
Nurses, Greater Glasgow Health Board 576w
P & O, Industrial disputes 381-2w
RECHAR, Scotland 462w
Rents to mortgages scheme, Rural areas 575w
Science & Engineering Research Council, Research finance 337w
Scottish Enterprise, Personnel 459-60w
Silicosis, Disease control 309-10w
Slaughterhouses, Animal cruelty 679w
Social Fund, Research 284w
Social security benefits rules, Criminal injuries compensation 665w

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Debates etc.
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 170, 174-5, 179, 194, 201, 205-8
Questions
Air Europe, Company liquidations 675
Business statements 462
Heathrow Airport, Airlines 655
Hospital waiting lists 316-7w
School admission, Cheshire 105w

Durant, Sir Anthony
Questions
Pensioners, Income 5

Durants' School Rickmansworth
School closures 108w

Durham, Bishop
13-4

Dyfed
Primary education 355-6w
Unemployment 525-6w

Dykes, Mr Hugh
Debates etc.
Court of Auditors, EC budget (13:03:91) 1053
Questions
EC Trade Marks Office 385w
Free school meals 511-2w
Trade marks, EC law 385w

Dyslexia
Northern Ireland 653w

Ealing
Aircraft noise 308w
Council house rents 476w
Housing revenue accounts 476w

Earnings limits
Employees' contributions 71w

Earnings rules
Social security benefits 125w

East Coast Main Line (Safety) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (07:03:91) 439, (14:03:91) 1079

East Coast railway line
634w

East Cumbria Health Authority
Finance 112w

East Lothian
Homelessness 265

East Sutton Park Prison
158w, 698w

Easter
Recess motions (14:03:91) 1127-69

Eastern Arts Association
(14:03:91) 1127-8

Eastern Europe
British embassies 122w
EC aid (04:03:91) 82-110
Food aid from EC 712-3w
Oil exports 301-2w

Eastham, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 493-501
Questions
Prescription charges 127

EC action
Agricultural research (04:03:91) 110
Animal experiments 511w
Computer software 427-8w
Drug labelling 320w
Ecolabelling 188w, 668-9w, (12:03:91) 915-22
Energy conservation (04:03:91) 110
Infant foods 399w, 557w
Insurance 385w
Nature conservation 364w
Public contracts (11:03:91) 782
Satellite broadcasting 540w

EC Agriculture Council
183w

EC aid
Eastern Europe (04:03:91) 82-110

EC budget
Agriculture 567w
Court of Auditors (11:03:91) 684, (13:03:91) 1045-67

EC Cons Doc 4120/91
(04:03:91) 82-110

EC defence policy
203-4w

EC Draft 7057/90
(04:03:91) 110

EC Draft 8162/90
(11:03:91) 782

EC Draft 10149/90
(04:03:91) 110

EC Draft 10880/90
(04:03:91) 82-110

EC Environment Council
188w

EC environmental policy
Intergovernmental conference 246w

EC external relations
543w, 934
Baltic republics of USSR 544w
Turkey 935

EC external trade
Food 564-5w
Wines 564-5w

EC Foreign Affairs Council
204-5w

EC free food scheme
678w
Bradford 678w

EC grants & loans
64w, 430w
Channel tunnel 426w
Public expenditure 167w
Scotland 64w
Storms 137-9w

EC integration
Intergovernmental conference 203-4w

EC internal relations
805

EC internal trade
Air transport 661
Employment protection 1090-1
Immigration controls 270w

EC law
Environment protection 472w
Nature conservation 236w
Trade marks 385w
Water pollution 472w

EC Scientific Committee on Cosmetology
537w

EC Social Charter
936

EC Trade Marks Office
385w

EC transport policy
Airlines 654-5

Ecolabelling
EC action 188w, 668-9w, (12:03:91) 915-22

Economic & monetary union
807, 1096

Economic Commission for Europe
see UN Economic Commission for Europe

Economic regions
Mortgage relief 161-2w

Economic sanctions
Jordan 361w
South Africa 541w, 927-8

Edinburgh
575-6w

Education
Expenditure 655w
Northern Ireland 655w

Education Act 1981
Questions
342w

Education Provision Bill 1990/91
Questions
793-4

Education (Publication of Examination Results) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (13:03:91) 956-8

Education Reform Act 1988
Questions
802

Education Reform Act 1988 (Application of Section 122 to Institutions in Wales) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(14:03:91) 1126

Education support grants
802

Educational administration
Gloucestershire 340w

Educational advisers
Wales 646w

Educational assessment
796
Primary education 281-2, 400-1w
Schools & parents 232w
Scotland 281-2, 400-1w
Wales 643-4w

Educational finance
793-4, 802-3
Further education colleges 442w
Greater Manchester 802
Higher education 441w
Northern region 511w
School buildings 803-4
Special education 278
Standard spending assessments 442w, 791, 802

Educational qualifications
Disclosure of information (13:03:91) 956-8
Higher education 105-6w
Young people 441w

Educational standards
English education 803
Geography education 106w
Spelling 185-6w

Eels
River pollution 690w

Efficiency scrutinies
Industrial tribunals 98w
Magistrates' courts 443-4
Veterinary Investigation Service 183-4w

Eggar, Mr Tim, Minister of State, Dept of Education & Science
Questions
Adult education, Bury 442w
Architecture, Degrees 625w
Cost effectiveness, Dept of Education & Science 443-4w
Curriculum, Local government staff 624w
Day care of children, Dept of Education & Science 337w
Disabled workers, Dept of Education & Science 188w
Educational assessment 796
Educational qualifications, Young people 441w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Education & Science 38-9w
Further education colleges, Educational finance 442w
Grant maintained schools, Capital investment 230w
Grant maintained schools, Costs 229w
Grant maintained schools, Government grants 229-31w, 444w
Grant maintained schools, Secondary education 444w
Grant maintained schools, Transitional arrangements 230-1w
Haberdashers' Aske's School, City technology colleges 186-8w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Education & Science 38w
Nursery schools 799-800
Nursery schools, School population 442w, 799
Pre-school education 441w
Pre-school education, Curriculum 799
Procurement, Dept of Education & Science 445w
Public appointments, Dept of Education & Science 343w
Pupil records, Schools & parents 793-4, 796
Pupils, Hospitals 796-7
Schools & parents, Educational assessment 232w
Smoking, Dept of Education & Science 339w

Eggar, Mr Tim—continued
Spelling, Educational standards 185-6w
Spelling, Research 185w

Elderly
Death 155-6w
Personal social services 22-3w
Population projection 22w
Residential care 264w

Electoral register
Community charge register (14:03:91) 1150-2
Ethnic minorities 481w
Greater London 275-6w
London boroughs 699w

Electorate
Greater London 562-3w
Parliamentary constituencies 269w

Electric lighting
Northern Ireland Office 43w

Electricians
Professional qualifications 366-7w

Electricity distribution
Rathlin Island 655w

Electricity generation
Costs 431w
Gas tariffs 259w
Hydroelectric power 258-9w
Natural gas 356-7w

Electricity Generators (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(04:03:91) 110

Electricity Industry (Rateable Values) (Amendment) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(12:03:91) 812

Electricity supply industry
Privatisation 314-6w, 460-1w, 506w
Scotland 315-6w, 460-1w
VAT repayment 314w

Electricity tariffs
301w
Price increases 16w

Embassies
Baltic republics of USSR 37-8w

Emergency planning
Food stocks 679w

Emery, Sir Peter
Debates etc.
Parliamentary constituencies (08:03:91) 635-9
Questions
Area museum councils 664-5
Computers in National Health Service, Family doctors 559w

Emigration
USSR 120w, 198w, 358-9w

Employee share ownership trusts
547w

Employees' contributions
71w
Earnings limits 71w

Employers' contributions
Serviscope 535w

Employment by sector
Leeds 3-4w

Employment discrimination
Disabled workers 380w, 486w
Northern Ireland 466-7w

Employment level
Coleraine 129-32w
Leeds 3w, 97w
Northern region 550w

Employment opportunities
Inverclyde enterprise zone 219w
Inverclyde initiative 219w

Employment opportunities—continued
Leeds Development Corporation 59w
Northern Ireland 1091
Northern region 551w
Tyne & Wear Development Corporation 364w
Urban programme 369w

Employment protection
EC internal trade 1090-1
Northern Ireland 1090-1

Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978
Questions
381-2w

Employment Protection (Government Communications Headquarters) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (06:03:91) 286-90

Employment rehabilitation
Disabled workers 379-80w

Employment schemes
Hard core unemployed 6w

Employment Select Committee
380w
Disablement resettlement officers 489-90w

Employment Service
6w, 288w, 489w
Civil service manpower 288w

Employment Service local offices
Handicapped 489w

Employment training
5-6w, 168w, 288-9w, 486-8w
Apex Trust 675-6w
Expenditure 289-90w, 552w
Lanarkshire 455
Leicestershire 489w
Scotland 67w, 278w

Empty housing
Council housing 99w
Homelessness 266
Private sector housing 221w

"Encouraging the Use of Vacant Public Sector Land Consultation Paper"
56w

Energy conservation
Dept of Employment 696w
Dept of Trade & Industry 717w
EC action (04:03:91) 110
Ministerial duties 632w, 696w, 717w
Performance indicators 102w
Street lighting 241w
Treasury 632w

Energy consumption
Cars 307w

Energy prices
Cold weather payments 663-4w

Enfield
Local government constituencies 1094

Engineering industries
Balance of trade 60w
West Germany 60w

English education
Educational standards 803

English Heritage
see Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England

Enterprise initiative
Northern Ireland 1080-1

Entertainers
Income tax 28w

Entertainment services
(14:03:91) 1170-90

Environment
EURATOM Joint Research Centre 240w
Research finance 240w

Environment protection
Antarctic 121w
Disclosure of information 472w
EC law 472w
M8 205w
Northern Ireland 655w
Persian Gulf (15:03:91) 1335-95
Planning permission 56w

Environmental Grant Fund
670w

Environmental health officers
Manpower 473w

Environmental impact assessment
56w, 246w, 370w, 521w, (12:03:91) 816-900, (13:03:91) 923-6
Road traffic 659

Environmental policy
Dept of the Environment 101-2w
Northern Ireland Office 267w
Office of Arts & Libraries 21w
Scottish Office 67-8w

Environmental Protection Act 1990
Questions
195-6w, 242w, 297w, 470-1w
Codes of practice 470w
Dogs 672-3w
Government grants to local authorities 470w

Environmental technology innovation scheme
670w

Environmentally sensitive areas
Wales 85w

Equal opportunities
Civil Service College 388w

Equal Opportunities Commission
151w

Erythropoietin
Kidney patients 272
Tayside Health Board 209-10w

ESOPS
547w

Estate Action
515w, 1094

Estate Agents (Property Misdescriptions) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Instruction to Com & Money res* (12:03:91) 914

Estimates days
London Regional Transport (11:03:91) 685-723

Ethiopia
Food aid from UK 439w

Ethnic minorities
Armed forces (14:03:91) 1260-74
Electoral register 481w
Higher civil servants 3w, 15-6w, 26w, 34w, 38w, 61w, 82-3w, 86w, 90w, 97w, 113w, 124w, 181w, 190w, 227-8w, 233w, 278w, 291w, 315w, 463w

Ethnic monitoring
Attorney General 227-8w
Civil service 151w
Dept of Education & Science 38-9w
Dept of Employment 97w
Dept of Energy 16w
Dept of Health 113w
Dept of Social Security 123w
Dept of the Environment 190w
Dept of Trade & Industry 61w
Dept of Transport 90w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 34w
Home Office 83w
Lord Advocate 315w
Minister for the Civil Service 15w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 181w

Ethnic monitoring—continued
Ministry of Defence 291w
Northern Ireland Office 462-3w
Office of Arts & Libraries 97w
Scottish Office 277-8w
Treasury 26w
Welsh Office 234-5w

EURATOM Joint Research Centre
Environment 240w

European Bank for Reconstruction & Development (Immunities & Privileges) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(05:03:91) 162, (11:03:91) 684, (13:03:91) 1067, 1068-71

European Central Bank
934

European Commission
7-8w, 68-9w, 428w
Ministers' visits abroad 356w

European Committee for Standardisation
see Comite Europeen de Normalisation

European Communities
Scottish Office 210-1w

European Conference of Ministers of Transport
9w

European Convention on Human Rights
(04:03:91) 21-71

European Court of Human Rights
Life imprisonment 651w

European Court of Justice
236w, 243w
Nature conservation 473-4w

European currency unit
807, 934

European Development Bank
(13:03:91) 1068-71
Manpower 160w
Offices 159-60w

European Economic Community
Consolidated Fund debates (14:03:91) 1285-98

European Parliament
203-4w

European Parliament Members
Departmental correspondence 335w, 346w, 358w, 360w, 373w, 382w, 386w, 397-8w, 402w, 409w, 412w, 422w
Dept of Employment 382w
Dept of Energy 358w
Dept of Health 346w
Dept of Social Security 412w
Dept of Trade & Industry 386w
Dept of Transport 422w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 360w
Home Office 335w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 397-8w
Ministry of Defence 409w
Scottish Office 402w
Treasury 373w

European Standing Committees
17-8

Eurotunnel
426w

Evans, Mr David
Debates etc.
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 954
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 330
Questions
Conservative Party 456
EC external relations 934
Health service staff, Pay 121-2

Evans, Mr David—continued
Invalid care allowances, Women 12
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Belgium 630w
Public expenditure, Per capita costs 205w
Security, Northern Ireland 135-8w

Evans, Mr John
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 964

Evennett, Mr David
Debates etc.
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 193-8
Questions
History education, Curriculum 107w
Pupil records, Schools & parents 796

Evidence
Malone, Paul 83-4w

Ewing, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Business statements (12:03:91) 811
Oral questions (06:03:91) 283
Private notice questions (12:03:91) 816
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 145
Questions
Business statements 465-6, 1106

Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc.
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 543-4, 564
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 236-7, 247, 250-1, 255
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway freight transport 634-5w
Charities, Income 276w
Cold weather payments, Social security claims 11-2
Government grants to voluntary organisations 651-2w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Scotland 682-3w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Wales 696w
Health services finance 23w
National income 27w
NHS finance 23w
Petroleum production, EC countries 17-8w
Special education, Educational finance 278
Tourism, Scotland 683-4w
Travel, Expenditure 27w

Ex gratia payments
270w, 274w, 392w, 413-4w
Family credit 391w
Prisoners 275w

Exceptional needs payments
Administrative costs 283-4w

Exchange rates
372w, (08:03:91) 643-50

Exeter
Community charge benefits 362-3w
Council housing 99w

Exeter Health Authority
153w

Exhaust emission controls
Standards specifications 10w
Tax allowances 660

Exhibitions
Paintings 664

Experimental farms
Wales 644w

Explosives
Transport of hazardous materials 332w

Export controls
62w
Arms trade 440w
High technology 303-4w

Export credit guarantees
62w
Iraq 540-1w

Export Credits Guarantee Department
540-1w
Civil service redundancies 666-7
Privatisation 88-9w, 302-3w, 428w

Export initiative
523-4w

Export licensing
Defence equipment 329-30w

Export of Goods (Control) Order 1989
Questions
62w

Export promotion
Baltic republics of USSR 37w
Joint Directorate for Export Promotion 628w

Export restitution
Expenditure 705-6w
Food aid 705-6w

Exservicemen
Cancer 667w
Community charge exemptions 45w
Housing 270
Nuclear weapons tests 222-3w
Scotland 270

Extradition
Republic of Ireland 653-4w, 1088

Facilities agreements
Trade union officials (04:03:91) 110

Facsimile transmission
Unsolicited goods & services 384w

Factory closures
British Rail 251w
Duffryn Workshops 355w
Ravenscraig steelworks 1096
Scottish Agricultural Industries 275

Fair Employment Agency for Northern Ireland
466-7w
Costs 466-7w

Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland
466-7w
Recruitment 139w

Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Debates etc.
Parliamentary constituencies (08:03:91) 638

Fallon, Mr Michael, Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Education & Science
Debates etc.
Science & Engineering Research Council (14:03:91) 1325-6
Questions
Assisted places scheme, Wales 695w
Autism, Special schools 337w
Barkestone School, Property transfer 42-3w
Durants School Rickmansworth, School closures 108w
Educational finance, Northern region 511w
Free school meals 511-2w
Geography education, Educational standards 106w
Grammar schools 443w
Grant maintained schools, Building repairs 798
Handicapped pupils, Multiply handicapped 105w
History education, Curriculum 107w
Lancashire education authority, Manpower 106-7w
Licensed teachers, Manpower 39-40w
Local education authorities, Expenditure 341-2w
National Association of Governors & Managers, Government grants 40w
New Directions 105w
School administration, Budgeting 442-5w
School admission, Age 445w
School admission, Cheshire 105w
School admission, Judgments 793-4

Fallon, Mr Michael—continued
School admission, Torquay 40w
School buildings, Building repairs 797-9, 803-4
School population, Gloucestershire 340w
Schools, Capital investment 797
Special education, Private education 342w
Special education, School population 625-7w
Special schools, Orders & regulations 342w
Teacher training, GCE A level 186w
Teacher training, Reading 442w
Teachers, Disabled workers 339-40w
Teachers, Gloucestershire 340w
Teachers, Norfolk 338w
Tertiary education, Truro 695w
Wavertree School, Construction 42w

False imprisonment
Compensation 270-1w

Family credit
8-9, 415-6w
Advertising 414-5w
Ex gratia payments 391w
Information 665w
Mothers 664w
Northern Ireland 391w
Publicity 281w
Scotland 664-5w
Social security claims 415-8w
Social security recipients 72w, 176-8w, 664-5w

Family doctors
Budgeting 116w, 684w, (13:03:91) 945-54
Computers in National Health Service 559w
Contracts of employment 120-1, 130-1, 642w
Health service ancillary staff 119
Lothian Health Board 279w
Manpower 108w
Ministerial statements (13:03:91) 945-54
Performance related pay 642w
Scotland 684w
Screening 120-1
South West region 130-1
Surgery 648w

Family expenditure survey
415-6w

Family income
125-6w
Opposition days (13:03:91) 1004-44

Family planning clinics
Wales 85w

Farm woodland scheme
279-80

Farr, Sir John
Questions
Architecture, Degrees 625w
Lebanon, Hostages 629w

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Questions
City grants, Leeds 519w
Durants' School Rickmansworth, School closures 108w
Educational finance 793
Leeds Development Corporation, Compulsory purchase 193w
Leeds Development Corporation, Employment opportunities 59w
Leeds Development Corporation, Expenditure 519w
Leeds Development Corporation, Property development 193-4w
Property development, Leeds 519w

Faulds, Mr Andrew
Questions
Business statements 462
Cyprus, Overseas aid 438-9w

Favell, Mr Tony
Questions
Domestic rates, Local government revenue 671w
Domestic rates, Scotland 578-9w

Favell, Mr Tony—continued
Domestic rates, Wales 528w
Hearing aids, Waiting lists 109w
Local government finance 133
Pollution control, Fees & charges 297-9w
Retail price index, Community charge 372w
Water Research Centre, Deposited papers 245w

Fearn, Mr Ronnie
Debates etc.
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 680
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 153
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 174, 198-200
Questions
Air Europe, Company liquidations 672-3
Bridges, Railway network 652
Council house waiting lists, Housing construction 1094
Council tenants, Rent arrears 191w

Feldberg, Wilhelm
Animal experiments 333w

Fertility
Scotland 578w

Field, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 978
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 953
Questions
BBC External Services, Armed forces 35w
BBC External Services, Gulf states 35w
Fossil fuels, Taxation 16w
Further education colleges, Educational finance 442w
Oil pollution control, Equipment 717-8w
Royal Parks Constabulary 365-6w
Royal Parks Constabulary, Arrests 366w
Royal Parks Constabulary, Costs 364-5w
Royal Parks Constabulary, Pay 365w
Royal Parks Constabulary, Police vehicles 365-6w

Field, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1119
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 950
Questions
Church schools, School administration 13
Social Fund 10

Fields, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
USSR, Foreign relations (14:03:91) 1191-200, 1203, 1205-6
Questions
Malone, Paul, Evidence 83-4w

Film industry
France 428w

Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(05:03:91) 162

Fines
Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 479w

Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Leasehold housing (08:03:91) 608, 616, 624
Questions
Metropolitan Police, Special constables 509w

Fire resistant materials
Babies 62-3w
Bedding 62-3w
Health hazards 63w
Poisoning 62w

Fire Service College
Revenue support grant 45w

Fire services
B52 bombers 331w
Pay 507-9w
Pensions 507-9w
RAF Fairford 224w, 331w
Scotland 65w
West Yorkshire 442-3

Fire stations
442

Firearms
Foreign tourists 14w

Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988
Questions
14w

Firearms Consultative Committee
14w

Fish
Food poisoning 684w

Fish conservation
Public petitions (07:03:91) 568

Fishburn, Mr Dudley
Debates etc.
Leasehold housing (08:03:91) 577-86, 632-4
Questions
Bus services, Northern Ireland 152w

Fisher, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
Hospitals (14:03:91) 1242
Museums & galleries (14:03:91) 1249-53, 1254, 1255-6
Questions
Civil service, Job satisfaction 667-8
Public libraries, Community charge capping 663-4

Fisheries
Ceredigion 457w

Fishing vessels
Tributyl tin 569w

Fleet Maintenance & Repair Organisation
103-4w

Flynn, Mr Paul
Questions
Argentina, Ministers' visits abroad 170w
Arms trade, House of Commons questions 330w
Coordinating Committee on Export Controls 197w
Defence equipment, Export licensing 329-30w
Environment, Research finance 240w
Family credit 415-6w
Family credit, Advertising 414-5w
Family credit, Information 665w
Family credit, Social security claims 415-8w
Food hygiene 345w, 636w
Food hygiene, Conferences 345w
Food hygiene, Training 553-4w
"Food Safety Bill Hygiene Training Consultation Paper" 490w
Foreign policy, House of Commons questions 19w
Government achievements, Welsh Office 527w
Houseboats, Security of tenure 54w
Income tax, Tax avoidance 7
International Atomic Energy Agency, UK contributions 430-1w
Iraq, Arms control 247-8w
Iraq, Arms trade 121w
Iraq, Missile technology control regime 248w
Iraq, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 253w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces deployment 19w, 26w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, British residents abroad 248w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Radio 19w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, War casualties 247w, 252-3w

Flynn, Mr Paul—continued
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Waste disposal 293w
Israel, Prisoners 120w
Maintenance, Social security benefits reductions 414w
Military attaches, British embassies 120w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Plutonium 16-7w, 431w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Radioactive wastes 17w, 431-2w
Radioactive Products (Safety) Regulations 1991 62w
Radioactive waste disposal, Conferences 64w
Smoke & chimney gases, Air pollution control 384w
Social Fund, Dept of Social Security local offices 667w
UN resolutions, Arms trade 253w
UNICEF, UK contributions 468w
United Nations, Diplomatic service 252w
United Nations, Middle East 253w
Visas, Iraq 159w

Food
EC external trade 564-5w

Food aid
Export restitution 705-6w

Food aid from EC
Eastern Europe 712-3w

Food aid from UK
Ethiopia 439w
Sudan 439w

Food contamination
Animal feed 104w
Cans 63w

Food exports
Butter 399w
Cereals 393-4w, 706w
USSR 399w

Food hygiene
345w, 636w
Cheese 112w
Conferences 345w
Northern Ireland (04:03:91) 110
Processed food 112w, 280, 399w
Salmon 280
Training 553-4w

Food Hygiene (Amendment) Regulations 1990
Questions
112w

Food imports
Cereal substitutes 396-7w
Cereals 395-7w
Import duties 680-2w
Irradiated food 398w

Food industry
397w

Food inspection
Public Health Laboratory Service 523w
Wales 523w

Food labelling
Animal feed 104w
Poultry 70w

Food poisoning
24w
Cheese 112w
Fish 684w
Scotland 684w

Food Safety Act 1990
Questions
345w

"Food Safety Bill Hygiene Training Consultation Paper"
490w

Food Safety (Northern Ireland) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(04:03:91) 110

Food standards
Fruit juices 183w

Food stocks
Cereals 393-4w
Emergency planning 679w

Fookes, Dame Janet
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 157
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 173

Football Spectators Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (08:03:91) 642

Fords
Road safety 620w
Scotland 620w

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
628w, 706-8w
Advertising 199-200w
Cost effectiveness 629w
Day care of children 359-60w
Disabled workers 202w
Ethnic monitoring 34w
European Parliament Members 360w
Government contracts 121w
Government information services 198-202w
Higher civil servants 34-5w
Procurement 628-9w
Public appointments 201-2w
Public relations 710w
Research 201w
Smoking 361w

Foreign policy
House of Commons questions 19w
Human rights 545w
Kurdistan 433w
Parliamentary sovereignty & European Community 935
Somalia 253-4w

Foreign relations
Bulgaria 36w
Germany 542w, 932-4
Libyan Arab Republic 121w
Middle East 930-1
Myanmar 710w
South Africa 541w

Foreign tourists
478-9w
Firearms 14w

Foreign trade
540w

Forestry
279-80
Highlands of Scotland 280
Scotland 139w, 220-1w
Uplands 139w

Forestry Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (06:03:91) 285
2R* (08:03:91) 642

Forestry Commission
220-1w, 571-2w
Land acquisition 246-7w, 278w, 404w
Land ownership & tenure 278-9w
Scotland 684-6w

Forests
Access to countryside 278w
Planning permission 362w

Formalloys & Metals
Sulphur dioxide 242w

Forman, Mr Nigel
Questions
Electoral register, Greater London 275-6w

Forsyth, Mr Michael, Minister of State for Scotland
Debates etc.
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 247
Questions
Achondroplasia, Scotland 460w

Forsyth, Mr Michael—continued
Ambulance services, Scotland 219-20w, 611w
Assisted places scheme, Scotland 213-4w
Badgers, Nature conservation 571-2w
Bank nurse employment scheme, Scotland 279w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Waste disposal 611-2w
Cervical cancer, Scotland 215-6w
Child care, Scotland 462w
Children in care, Parents rights 402w
Children in care, Scotland 402-3w
Deer, Scotland 209w
Dumfries & Galloway Health Board, Finance 271
Educational assessment, Primary education 281-2, 400-1w
Erythropoietin, Tayside Health Board 209-10w
Family doctors, Budgeting 684w
Family doctors, Lothian Health Board 279w
Fertility, Scotland 578w
Food poisoning, Fish 684w
Forestry, Scotland 139w
Forestry, Uplands 139w
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 246-7w, 278w, 404w
Forestry Commission, Land ownership & tenure 278-9w
Forestry Commission, Scotland 684-6w
Foxes, Pest control 140w
Freshwater fishing, Scotland 681-2w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Scotland 682-3w
Greater Glasgow Health Board 278
Greater Glasgow Health Board, Finance 683w
Health aid, Middle East 282
Health service staff, Pay 681w
Higher education, Cost per student 577w
Hill livestock allowances, Scotland 140w
Hospital waiting lists, Argyll & Clyde Health Board 218-20w
Hospitals, Crown immunity 460w
Hypothermia, Scotland 402w
Intervention stocks, Scotland 403w
Kidney patients, Erythropoietin 272
Lothian Health Board, Finance 279w
Mink, Licensing 399w
NHS trusts, Hospitals 205w
NHS trusts, Scotland 205w, 272-3, 279
Nurses, Greater Glasgow Health Board 576w
Nurses, Scotland 404-8w
Physical education, Scotland 146w
Processed food, Food hygiene 280, 399w
Registered homes, Scotland 219w
School buildings, Repairs & maintenance 269
School population, Scotland 217-8w
Schools, Scotland 140w
Scottish health boards, Pay 578w
Smoking, Scottish Office 402w
Special education, Educational finance 278
Takare, Geriatrics 139w
Trout, Scotland 681w

Forsythe, Mr Clifford
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (11:03:91) 739-41
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 303-5, 330-1
Questions
Irish American Calendar, Government grants 311w
Level crossings, Safety barriers 43w
Private roads, Antrim 127w, 658-9w
Public sector housing, Antrim 128w
Railway accidents, Northern Ireland 266w
Recreation spaces, Housing construction 266w
Retirement pensions, Northern Ireland 513w
Road traffic, Antrim 388-9w
Road traffic, Newtownabbey 388-9w
Small businesses, Northern Ireland 1081

Forsythe, Mr Clifford—continued
Social security abuse, Building industry 660w
Social security abuse, Northern Ireland 659-60w
Social security payments, Northern Ireland 466w
Social security recipients, Northern Ireland 512-3w

Forth, Mr Eric, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment
Questions
Animal experiments, EC action 511w
British Tourist Authority, Government grants 551w
Chemicals, Testing 381w
Energy conservation, Dept of Employment 696w
European Parliament Members, Dept of Employment 382w
Free movement of labour 486w
Genetically modified organisms 308-9w, 371w
Homeworking 5w
Industrial tribunals, Efficiency scrutinies 98w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Tourist industry 549-50w
Legionnaires' disease, Power stations 489w
Loan guarantee scheme, Banks 697w
North of England Building Society, Trade union recognition 382w
P & O, Industrial disputes 381-2w
Procurement, Dept of Employment 488w
Redundancy pay, Administrative delays 5w
Self-employed, Northern region 487w
Silicosis, Disease control 309-10w
Smoking, Dept of Employment 384w
Taylorplan Services, Pay 97w
Tourist industry, Government assistance 550-2w

Forth Valley Health Board
Public appointments 271

Fossil fuels
Pollution control 16w
Taxation 16w

Foster care
Wales 457w

Foulkes, Mr George
Debates etc.
Eastern Europe, EC aid (04:03:91) 87, 91
European Bank of Reconstruction & Development (Immunities & Privileges) Order 1991 (13:03:91) 1069-70
Oversea Superannuation Bill, 3R (04:03:91) 80-1
Questions
BBC External Services, Television 937
Educational assessment, Primary education 400-1w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Government contracts 121w
Hong Kong, Passports 36w
NHS trusts, Scotland 205w

Fox, Sir Marcus
Questions
Employees' contributions, Earnings limits 71w

Foxes
Pest control 69w, 140w, 570w, 696w
Scotland 140w
Wales 696w

France
Film industry 428w

Fraser, Mr John
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 973-4
Leasehold housing (08:03:91) 579, 593-601, 611, 615
Questions
Community charge register 296w
Community charge register, Scotland 64w

Fraser, Mr John—continued
Iraq, Armed conflict 543w
Local government audit, London boroughs 515-6w
Local government borrowing, Lambeth 520w
Local government expenditure, London boroughs 46w
London Regional Transport, Investment 419w
Mortgage defaulters, Lambeth 623-4w
Standard spending assessments, London boroughs 46-7w
Westminster County Court, Leasehold land 361w

Free movement of labour
486w

Free school meals
511-2w

Freeman, Mr Roger, Minister for Public Transport
Debates etc.
British Rail (13:03:91) 1074-8
London Regional Transport (11:03:91) 718-23
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 169-77
Questions
Blackwall tunnel, Repairs & maintenance 654
Bridges, River Lea 426-7w
British Rail, Expenditure 251w
British Rail, Factory closures 251w
British Rail, Performance indicators 91w
British Rail, Trains 419w
Central line, Railway accidents 8w
Channel tunnel, EC grants & loans 426w
Channel tunnel, Greater Manchester 418w
Channel tunnel, Railway freight transport 252w, 634-5w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 418w
Chelsea-Hackney line, Construction 656-7
Chelsea-Hackney line, Wandsworth 658
King's Cross, Railway land 8w
London Regional Transport, Investment 419w
London Underground 422w
London Underground, Railway travel 657-8
London Underground, Safety 426w, 657
Network SouthEast, Performance indicators 418-9w
Northern line, Streatham 657
Public transport, Government grants 421w
Road tolls 419w
Road traffic, Greater London 661-2

Freight transport
Inland waterways 149w

French, Mr Douglas
Questions
Community charge reduction scheme, Gloucester 367w
Curriculum, Local government staff 624w
Direct labour departments, Accounting 674-5w
Grant maintained schools, Government grants 444w
Grant maintained schools, Secondary education 444w
Road safety, Personal stereos 422w
School population, Gloucestershire 340w
Teachers, Gloucestershire 340w

Freshwater fishing
566-7w
Lough Neagh 465w, 658w
Monofilament gill nets 657w
Northern Ireland 465w, 657-8w
River Dun 658w
Scotland 621-2w

Fringe benefits
Loans 255-6w

Fruit juices
Food standards 183w

Fry, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
London Regional Transport (11:03:91) 706
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 183-8

Fuel consumption tests
307w

Funeral payments
124w

Further education
Deaf (14:03:91) 1133-6

Further education colleges
Educational finance 442w

Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Debates etc.
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 250
Questions
Jordan, Dried milk 361w
Kurdistan 929
Surgery, Blackburn Hyndburn & Ribble Valley Health Authority 133

Fyfe Committee
see Scottish Health Service Advisory Council

Galbraith, Mr Sam
Questions
Community charge 807-8
NHS trusts, Scotland 272-3
Road traffic control, Orders & regulations 400w
Sites of special scientific interest, Scotland 68w

Gale, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Eastern Europe, EC aid (04:03:91) 102-3
Questions
Satellite broadcasting, EC action 540w

Galloway, Mr George
Debates etc.
Persian Gulf, Environment protection (15:03:91) 1349-52
Questions
Iraq, Diplomatic relations 542w
Palestine Liberation Organisation, Peace negotiations 939

Gambling
Expenditure 477w

Game
Nature conservation 243-4w

Gaming (Amendment) Bill (HL) 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R* (08:03:91) 641

Gardiner, Sir George
Questions
South Africa, Economic sanctions 928

Garel-Jones, Mr Tristan, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Questions
Baltic republics of USSR, EC external relations 544w
Cyprus 198w
EC external relations 543w, 934
EC Social Charter 936
European Parliament Members, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 360w
Foreign policy, Parliamentary sovereignty & European Community 935
Germany, Foreign relations 542w
Intergovernmental conference 936-7
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Belgium 630w
Israel, UK companies abroad 361w
Jordan, Dried milk 361w
Subsidiarity 543w
Turkey, EC external relations 935
USSR, Emigration 358-9w

Gas fired power stations
Licensing 631w

Gas reserves
Scotland 168-9w

Gas tariffs
Electricity generation 259w

GATT
204-5w

GCE A level
Teacher training 186w

Gedling
Community charge reduction scheme 99-100w

General Dental Practitioners' Association
497w

Generic prescribing
553w

Genetically modified organisms
308-9w, 371w
Disclosure of information 470-1w

Geography education
Educational standards 106w

Geriatric patients
Hospital beds 558w
Psychiatry 457w

Geriatrics
Takare 139w

Germany
Balance of trade 87-8w
Foreign relations 542w, 932-4
Lotteries 477-8w
Tourism 808

Ghana
Human rights 359w
Overseas aid 438w

Gill, Mr Christopher
Debates etc.
Court of Auditors, EC budget (13:03:91) 1059-61
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 951
Questions
Health service staff, Pay 110w
Special education, Private education 342w
Special schools, Orders & regulations 342w
Subsidiarity 543w

Glasgow
Community charge 268
Dept of Social Security local offices 328w
Social security benefits reductions 666w
Unemployment 275

Glengarry Forest
Radio engineering 330w

Global & Technical Management Services
Iraq 202w

Gloucester
Community charge reduction scheme 367w

Gloucestershire
Educational administration 340w
School population 340w
Teachers 340w

Glyn, Sir Alan
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 158

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc.
Calling of Members, Oral questions (06:03:91) 284
Census (Confidentiality) Bill (HL), 3R (04:03:91) 72, 74
Eastern Europe, EC aid (04:03:91) 83
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 388, 408

Godman, Dr Norman A—continued
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 478, 488
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 27, 47, 57
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 251-2
Questions
Ambulance services, Scotland 219-20w
Cervical cancer, Scotland 215-6w
Child benefit, Social security recipients 175w
Cold weather payments, Advertising 534-5w
Community care grants, Greenock 173-4w
Company liquidations, Scotland 217w
Crime, Strathclyde 215-6w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Manpower 174w
European Development Bank, Manpower 160w
European Development Bank, Offices 159-60w
European Parliament Members, Dept of Employment 382w
European Parliament Members, Dept of Energy 358w
European Parliament Members, Dept of Health 346w
European Parliament Members, Dept of Social Security 412w
European Parliament Members, Dept of Trade & Industry 386w
European Parliament Members, Dept of Transport 422w
European Parliament Members, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 360w
European Parliament Members, Home Office 335w
European Parliament Members, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 397-8w
European Parliament Members, Ministry of Defence 409w
European Parliament Members, Scottish Office 402w
European Parliament Members, Treasury 373w
Family credit, Social security recipients 664-5w
Homicide, Criminal investigation 709-10w
Hospital waiting lists, Argyll & Clyde Health Board 218-20w
Income support, Social security claims 666-7w
Inverclyde enterprise zone, Employment opportunities 219w
Inverclyde initiative, Employment opportunities 219w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces casualties 439-40w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Community charge 218w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Community charge exemptions 578w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Immigrant detainees 509w
Medical appeal tribunals, Scotland 175w
Mortgage defaulters, Scotland 279-80w
Redundancy, Greenock 210w
Registered homes, Scotland 219w
School population, Scotland 217-8w
Scottish Homes, Government grants 580w
Scottish Office, Public appointments 580-612w
Social security claims, Computers in government departments 174w
Strathclyde Police, Manpower 215w
Turkey, EC external relations 935

Gold
Albania 434w

Golding, Mrs Llin
Questions
Inland waterways, Freight transport 149w
Project 2000, Student grants 496w

Gordon, Ms Mildred
Debates etc.
London Regional Transport (11:03:91) 713, 715
Questions
Blackwall tunnel, Repairs & maintenance 654

Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1009
Questions
Nurses' homes, Greater London 118w

Gorst, Mr John
Debates etc.
War Crimes Bill, House of Commons procedure (12:03:91) 904, 911
Questions
Immigration appeals 652w

Gould, Mr Bryan
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 959-69, 995
Community charge, Points of order (14:03:91) 1152-4
Questions
Antarctic, Environment protection 121w
Antarctic Treaty 191w
Mortgage defaulters, Repossession orders 295w

Government achievements
Dept of Employment 483-6w
Welsh Office 527-34w

Government assistance to industry
Northern region 716w

Government buildings
Safety glass 296w

Government car service
692w

Government Communications Headquarters
Trade union membership (06:03:91) 286-90

Government contracts
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 121w
Public relations 121w

Government departments
Day care of children 372w

Government grants to local authorities
197w
Alarms 691w
Bolsover 517w
Bradford 475w
Chorley 474w
City of Westminster 363w, 1095-6
Community charge 671-2w
Dearne Valley 192-3w
Environmental Protection Act 1990 470w
Greater London 474w
Greater Manchester 475w
Leeds 237-40w
Maidstone 672w
Mental health community care 350w
Merseyside 475w
Newcastle upon Tyne 517w
Northern Ireland 126w
Per capita costs 474-6w, 517w
Recycling 471-2w
Rotherham 1095-6
Sheffield 363-4w
South Tyneside 296w
Urban areas 515-6w
Wandsworth 296w, 517w
Wolverhampton 517w
Yorkshire & Humberside 237-40w

Government grants to voluntary organisations
651-2w
Scotland 682-3w
Wales 696w

Government information services
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 198-202w

Government laboratories
Veterinary services 676w

Graduates
Licensed teachers 39-40w

Graham, Mr Thomas
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1021-2, 1039
Oral question time intervention (13:03:91) 935
Questions
Community charge exemptions, Exservicemen 45w
Community charge exemptions, Married women 45w
Kurdistan 940-1

Grammar schools
443w

Grampian
Community charge 276-7

Grant, Sir Anthony
Questions
Concessionary television licences, Pensioners 442

Grant, Mr Bernie
Questions
Cars, Energy consumption 307w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 711w
Police & ethnic minorities 698-9w

Grant maintained schools
135
Building repairs 798
Capital investment 230w, 301w
Costs 229w
Government grants 229-31w, 444w
Primary education 444w
Secondary education 444w
Transitional arrangements 230-1w

Grants for education support & training
645-6w

Greater Glasgow Health Board
278
Finance 683w
Hospital waiting lists 218-20w
Nurses 576w
Takare 139w

Greater London
Abortion 321w
Bus services 423w
Buses 452
Community charge 49-50w
Day care of children 388w
Detection rates 305-6w
Electoral register 275-6w
Electorate 562-3w
Government grants to local authorities 474w
Homelessness 266, 663w
Nurses' homes 118w
Priority routes 426w
Public transport (11:03:91) 685-723
Road traffic 419w, 452, 661-2
Road traffic control 307w
Traffic wardens 276w

Greater London Arts
Arts finance 424w

Greater Manchester
Channel tunnel 418w
Educational finance 802
Government grants to local authorities 475w
Homelessness 296w
Prisoners on remand 697w, (14:03:91) 1299-309
Roads (04:03:91) 112-8

Green rates
707w

Greenhouse effect
Treaties 543w

Greenock
580w, 664-5w
Child benefit 175w

Greenock—continued
Community care grants 173-4w
Dept of Social Security local offices 174w
Income support 666-7w
Redundancy 210w
Social security claims 174w

Greenway, Mr Harry
Questions
Air traffic, RAF Northolt 308w
Aircraft noise, Ealing 308w
Archbishop of Canterbury, Pay 13-4
Arts finance 522w
Civil service dispersal, Dept of Social Security 79w
Eastern Europe, British embassies 122w
Heathrow Airport, Night flying 308w
NHS, Expenditure 116w
Official engagements 86w, 247w, 468w
Physical education 446w
Playing fields, Land acquisition 1080
Prison education services 157w
Road traffic, Greater London 419w
Traffic wardens, Greater London 276w

Greenway, Mr John
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1114
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 490, 534-40
Questions
Aircraft noise 688w
Youth courts, Rehabilitation of offenders 446

Greenwich
Playing fields 520w
Standard spending assessments 669w

Gregory, Mr Conal
Debates etc.
House of Commons questions, Prison escapes (14:03:91) 1130
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 231-2
Shareholders (14:03:91) 1275-80, 1284
Tourism (14:03:91) 1136-8
Questions
Air Europe, Company liquidations 674-5
British Rail, Performance indicators 91w
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Dogs 672-3w
Hospital patients, York Health Authority 119w
Psychiatry, Geriatric patients 457w
Railway transport, Investment 652-3
Speed limits, Prosecutions 507w
Tourism, Ministerial duties 808
Tourist taxes 541w

Greyhound Betting Levy Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (08:03:91) 642

Griffiths, Mr Nigel
Questions
Nature Conservancy Council, Repairs & maintenance 572w

Griffiths, Mr Win
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 878-80
Questions
British Waterways Board, Government grants 53w
Sea pollution, Blackpool 60w
Teacher training, Reading 442w
Water & sewerage companies, Land acquisition 57-8w

Griffiths Committee
see Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Legal Education Etc .

Grist, Mr Ian
Questions
Road freight transport, Hungary 634w

Grocott, Mr Bruce
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1123
Community charge (13:03:91) 967, (14:03:91) 1161-5
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 144
Ten minute rule Bills (06:03:91) 289
Questions
Grant maintained schools, Capital investment 230w
Grant maintained schools, Costs 229w
Grant maintained schools, Government grants 229-31w
Grant maintained schools, Transitional arrangements 230-1w

Ground, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 160
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 832, 884-5
Questions
School administration, Budgeting 445w

Grylls, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 144

Guaranteed prices
Wool 708-9w

Guided weapons
409w
Arms exports 410w
Defence expenditure 409w
Defence procurement 409-10w

Guildford Four Inquiry
(14:03:91) 1109-25

Gulf states
Arms control 325w
BBC External Services 35w
Security 324-5w, 571w

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Questions
Agricultural workers, Pay 677w
Animal products, Hazardous wastes 678-9w
Birds, Animal pests 69w
Birds, Pest control 69w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 565-6w
Butter, Food exports 399w
EC Agriculture Council 183w
Irradiated food, Food imports 398w
Irradiated food, Licensing 398w, 677w
Sewage, Waste disposal 679-80w
Slaughterhouses, EC countries 437w
Slaughterhouses, Inspections 68-9w
Smoking, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 398w
Veterinary Investigation Service, Civil service redundancies 438w
Veterinary Investigation Service, Efficiency scrutinies 183-4w
Veterinary services, Government laboratories 676w
Wool, Guaranteed prices 708-9w

Haberdashers' Aske's School
City technology colleges 186-8w

Hackney
Domestic rates 241w
Households 99w
Transitional relief 47w

Hague, Mr William
Questions
Road construction 419w
Yugoslavia, Ministers' visits abroad 544w

Hamilton, Mr Archie, Minister of State for the Armed Forces
Debates etc.
Armed forces, Ethnic minorities (14:03:91) 1269-74

Hamilton, Mr Archie—continued
Armed forces, Scotland (11:03:91) 787-90
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Antarctic 714w
Arms trade, Iraq 226w, 440w
Army 25-6w
B52 bombers, Ammunition 329w
B52 bombers, Fire services 331w
Blood sports, Defence land 330w, 713w
Defence industries, Iraq 225-6w
Defence industries, Middle east 226w
Defence review, Northern Ireland 688w
European Parliament Members, Ministry of Defence 409w
Explosives, Transport of hazardous materials 332w
Gulf states, Security 571w
Hare coursing, Defence land 330w
HMS Endurance 224w, 714w
HMS Endurance, Costs 714-5w
HMS Endurance, Hydrography 713-4w
HMS Endurance, Meteorology 714w
HMS Endurance, South Atlantic 224w
HMS Renown, Decommissioning 715w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces casualties 329w, 407w, 410-1w, 439-40w, 713w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces dependants 293-4w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces deployment 26w, 222w, 440w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces medical services 222w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces recruitment 292-4w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces women 715w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Defence expenditure 329w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Helicopters 103w, 407-8w, 687w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Merchant ships 687-8w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Military aircraft 222w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Postal services 221w, 329w, 440-1w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Prisoners of war 329w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Voluntary organisations 292w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Waste disposal 293w
MFV Antares, Submarines 24w
Nuclear weapons tests, Armed forces dependants 223w
Nuclear weapons tests, Departmental records 223w
Nuclear weapons tests, Exservicemen 222-3w
Nuclear weapons tests, Pollution monitoring 222-3w
RAF Fairford, Fire services 224w, 331w
RAF Upper Heyford, Repairs & maintenance 332w
Rollerstone camp, Prisoners of war 25w
Shackleton aircraft, Air accidents 715-6w
Territorial Army, Armed forces strength 292w, 410w
Territorial Army, Defence review 715w
Transport of hazardous materials, Orders & regulations 332w
US bases, Holy Loch 332w
WE 177 nuclear bomb, Defence procurement 715w
Woolwich Arsenal 716w
Woolwich Arsenal, Armed forces civilians 716w

Hampshire Constabulary
482w

Hampson, Dr Keith
Debates etc.
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 147
Questions
Educational finance 802
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Privatisation 88-9w
Incinerators, Planning permission 516-7w

Handicapped
Church buildings 12-3
Community charge exemptions 45w, 670-1w
Employment Service local offices 489w

Handicapped children
Maintenance 77w
Mentally handicapped 639w

Handicapped drivers
Tax allowances 375w

Handicapped pupils
Multiply handicapped 105w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy, Under-Secretary of State Northern Ireland Office
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (11:03:91) 776-82
Questions
Agricultural land, Radioactivity 464-6w
Building regulations, Fees & charges 310w
Cancer, Northern Ireland 391w
Cattle, Prices 660w
Census enumerators, Recruitment 266-7w
Downshire Hospital, Mental health services 389w
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 466-7w
Environmental policy, Northern Ireland Office 267w
Fair Employment Agency for Northern Ireland, Costs 466-7w
Family credit, Ex gratia payments 391w
Freshwater fishing, Lough Neagh 465w, 658w
Freshwater fishing, Northern Ireland 465w, 657-8w
Freshwater fishing, River Dun 658w
Hospital beds, Northern Ireland 656w
Hospitals, Capital investment 132-4w
Hospitals, Northern Health & Social Services Board 655w
Hospitals, Northern Ireland 135w
Irish American Calendar, Government grants 311w
Local government constituencies, Northern Ireland 311w
Motor vehicle safety, Secondhand cars 392w
Northern Ireland Dept of Economic Development, Budgeting 311w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Housing standards 390w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, System building 310-2w
Pensioners, Income support 391-2w
Pensioners, Northern Ireland 391w
Recreation spaces, Housing construction 266w
Residential care, Expenditure 44w
Retirement pensions, Northern Ireland 513w
River Dun, Coastal protection 465w, 657w
Road traffic, Antrim 388-9w
Road traffic, Newtownabbey 388-9w
Rural areas, Industrial development 390w
Sheep, Prices 660-2w
Smoking, Northern Ireland Office 392w
Social security abuse, Building industry 660w
Social security abuse, Northern Ireland 659-60w
Social security payments, Northern Ireland 466w
Social security recipients, Northern Ireland 512-3w

Hannam, Mr John
Questions
Bicycles, Lighting 656
Community charge benefits, Exeter 362-3w
Council housing, Exeter 99w
Disability working allowance 73w
Disability working allowance, Disability test 693-4w
Police, Manpower 159w

Hard core unemployed
Employment schemes 6w
Wales 643w

Hardy, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 487
Questions
A1-M1 link, Road construction 251-2w
Business statements 462-3
Child abuse 641w
Community charge, Orders & regulations 518-9w
Derelict land, Land reclamation 245w
Environmental health officers, Manpower 473w
Government grants to local authorities, City of Westminster 363w, 1095-6
Government grants to local authorities, Dearne Valley 192-3w
Hazardous wastes, Wath upon Dearne 193w
Public expenditure, EC grants & loans 167w
RECHAR 170w, 192w
RECHAR, South Yorkshire 192w
Standard community charge, City of Westminster 363w
Swinton Station, Railway closures 251w

Hare coursing
Defence land 330w

Hare Coursing Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (08:03:91) 641, (15:03:91) 1400

Hargreaves, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Eastern Europe, EC aid (04:03:91) 85

Hargreaves, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Lotteries (14:03:91) 1209-14, 1218, 1222

Haringey
Community charge 1094

Harman, Ms Harriet
Debates etc.
Hospitals (14:03:91) 1232-5, 1240-1
Lotteries (14:03:91) 1221
Questions
Abortion 322w
Abortion, Greater London 321w
Cervical cancer, Screening 121, 351-2w
Childbirth 322-3w
London Ambulance Service 641w
Obstetrics, Hospital beds 705w
Pregnancy tests, Costs 556w
Pupils, Hospitals 796-7

Harmonisation of standards
Lotteries 477w
Proprietary drugs 317-8w
Road signs 9w

Harris, Mr David
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 161
Questions
HM Coastguard 91-2w, 418w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Merchant ships 687w
New Parliamentary building, House of Commons accommodation 620-2w
Smoking, House of Commons catering 15

Haselhurst, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 678
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 156
Questions
Bus services, Greater London 423w
School buildings, Building repairs 798

Hassan, Hazem Ali
Deportation 507w

Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1111-2, 1121, 1124
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 24, 26, 29-40, 66
Questions
Community charge, Clitheroe 132-3
Manufacturing industries 453-4
Police, Community charge capping 448-9

Hawkins, Mr Christopher
Questions
Mortgage relief 700w

Hayes, Mr Jerry
Debates etc.
Employment Protection (Government Communications Headquarters) Bill, 1R (06:03:91) 289
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1006, 1015, 1022-6
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 949-50
Questions
Court of Appeal, Criminal appeals 81w, 361w
Court of Appeal, Sentencing 362w
Court of Appeal, Trials 361-2w
False imprisonment, Compensation 270-1w
Israel, Peace negotiations 939-40
Prerogative of mercy 81w

Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 153

Haymarket Theatre Leicester
Arts finance 666

Haynes, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1013
Museums & galleries (14:03:91) 1244
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 839
Questions
Council of Europe, UK delegations 295w

Hayward, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 679
Questions
Community charge, Councillors 670w
Guided weapons 409w
Guided weapons, Arms exports 410w
Guided weapons, Defence expenditure 409w
Guided weapons, Defence procurement 409-10w

Hazardous wastes
Animal products 678-9w
Import controls 473w
Wath upon Dearne 193w

Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1035-7
Hospitals (14:03:91) 1225-8, 1239
Questions
Geriatric patients, Hospital beds 558w
Milk, Production quotas 677-8w
Residential care, Hospital discharges 702w
School libraries 423w

Health aid
Middle East 282
Peru 15w

Health & Safety Executive
8w, 309-10w, (07:03:91) 473-567

Health authorities
Finance 125-6

Health education
Pregnancy 556w

Health hazards
Fire resistant materials 63w
Sheep dipping 397w

Health insurance
Pensioners 29-30w
Tax allowances 29-30w, 120

Health physics
AWE Aldermaston 408w
Dockyards 408w

Health Promotion Research Trust
Research finance 347w

Health service ancillary staff
Family doctors 119
Low pay 119-20
Pay 113w, 493w
Resignations 494w
Yorkshire & Humberside 113w

Health service staff
District health authorities 459w
EC countries 492-3w
North Western Regional Health Authority 555w
Pay 110w, 120-2, 681w
Vacancies 701w
Wales 459w

Health services
Expenditure 637w
Incontinence 21-2w
Per capita costs 637-8w
Rural areas 122

Health services finance
23w

Hearing aids
NHS charges 641w
Waiting lists 109w

Heathcoat-Amory, Mr David, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Energy*
Questions
Coal mining, Licensing 431w
Coal mining, Mine safety 432w
Director General of Electricity Supply 103w
Electricity generation, Costs 431w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 506w
Electricity tariffs 301w
Energy conservation, Performance indicators 102w
Fossil fuels, Taxation 16w
Gas fired power stations, Licensing 631w
Gas tariffs, Electricity generation 259w
Hydroelectric power, Electricity generation 258-9w
International Atomic Energy Agency, UK contributions 430-1w
Non-fossil fuel obligation 631w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Plutonium 16-7w, 431w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Radioactive wastes 17w, 431-2w
Nuclear power stations, Decommissioning 506w
Power stations, Land acquisition 505w
Power stations, Land ownership & tenure 505-6w
Power stations, Warwickshire 506w
Sizewell B, Computer applications 630w
Trawsfynydd power station, Nuclear safety 630-1w

Heathrow Airport
(05:03:91) 149-62, (11:03:91) 676-83
Airlines 655
Night flying 308w

Heating
Pensioners 666w

Helicopters
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 103w, 407-8w, 687w

Heliports
Planning permission 471w

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael, *Secretary of State for the Environment*
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 970-5
Questions
Antarctic Treaty 191w

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael—continued
Cost effectiveness, Dept of the Environment 367w
Council house sales 520w
Council housing 520w
Day care of children, Dept of the Environment 689w
Dept of the Environment, Cash limits 673w
Disabled workers, Dept of the Environment 195w
EC environmental policy, Intergovernmental conference 246w
Environmental policy, Dept of the Environment 101-2w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of the Environment 190w
Higher civil servants, Dept of the Environment 190-2w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Community charge 673-4w
Oil pollution, Persian Gulf 189-90w, 297w
Oil pollution control, Civil service manpower 367w
Private rented housing 520w
Procurement, Dept of the Environment 690w
Public appointments, Dept of the Environment 191-2w
Sites of special scientific interest, Planning permission 521w
Smoking, Dept of the Environment 368w

Hicks, Mrs Maureen
Debates etc.
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 181-2
Questions
Community relations, Business 655w
Concessionary television licences, Pensioners 441
Drugs, Expenditure 500w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces deployment 440w
Transitional relief, Wolverhampton 474w

Hicks, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 172
Questions
Dockyards, Manpower 103-4w
EC grants & loans 64w, 430w

Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L
Questions
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Postal services 440-1w

High Court of Justiciary
572w

High Courts & County Courts Jurisdiction Order 1991
Debates etc.
(06:03:91) 285

High technology
Export controls 303-4w

Higher civil servants
Attorney General 227-8w
Cabinet Office 19-20w
Dept of Education & Science 38w
Dept of Employment 3-5w
Dept of Energy 15-6w
Dept of Health 113w
Dept of Social Security 124w
Dept of the Environment 190-2w
Dept of Trade & Industry 61w
Dept of Transport 90w
Disabled workers 669-70
Ethnic minorities 3w, 15-6w, 26w, 34w, 38w, 61w, 82-3w, 86w, 90w, 97w, 113w, 124w, 181w, 190w, 227-8w, 233w, 278w, 291w, 315w, 463w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 34-5w
Home Office 81-3w
Lord Advocate 315w
Minister for the Civil Service 86w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 181w

Higher civil servants—continued
Ministry of Defence 291w
Northern Ireland Office 463w
Office of Arts & Libraries 96-7w
Scottish Office 277-8w
Treasury 26w, 93w
Welsh Office 233-4w

Higher education
Cost per student 577w, 625w
Educational finance 441w
Educational qualifications 105-6w
Northern region 338w
Scotland 577w
University finance 232w

Highland Association
see Comunn Na Gaidhlig

Highlands of Scotland
Forestry 280
School buildings 269

Hill, Mr James
Questions
Sterilisation, Women 496w
Surgery, Safety measures 494w

Hill, Patrick
(14:03:91) 1109-25

Hill livestock allowances
Scotland 140w

Hinchliffe, Mr David
Questions
Birds, Animal pests 69w
Birds, Nature conservation 57w
Birds, Pest control 69w
British Waterways Board, Sites of special scientific interest 53w
Elderly, Residential care 264w
Homeworking 5w
Local government social services, Income support 283w
M1-M62 link, Road construction 422-3w
Magpies 57w
Nature conservation, Game 243-4w
Nursing homes, Hospital beds 265w
Nursing homes, Income support 323-4w
Older workers 6w
Pensions, Low incomes 80w
Railway land, Wakefield 307-8w
Residential care 703-4w
Residential care, Codes of practice 703-4w
Residential care, Complaints 353w, 704-5w
Residential care, Income support 175-6w, 326-7w, 413w, 694w
Residential care, Local government social services 175w
Residential care, Personnel 703w
Residential care, Privacy 324w
Residential care, Private sector 353w
Residential care, Professional organisations 704w
Residential care, Property transfer 704w
Residential care, Registered homes 353w
Residential care, Research 702-3w
Social Services Inspectorate, Career structure 265w

Hind, Mr Kenneth
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1117
Community charge (13:03:91) 968, 988-90
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 953
Questions
Social Fund, Social security benefits rules 71w

Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England
517-8w

History education
Curriculum 107w, 457-8w
Wales 457-8w

HM Coastguard
91-2w, 418w, 427w
Bristol Channel 417w

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
365w

HM Inspectorate of Pollution
242w, 297-9w, 470w
Manpower 691-2w
Pay 691-2w

HM Inspectorate of Schools
401w
Annual reports 41-2w
City technology colleges 299-300w
Public appointments 42w

HMS Endurance
224w, 714w
Costs 714-5w
Hydrography 713-4w
Meteorology 714w
South Atlantic 224w

HMS Renown
Decommissioning 715w

Hoaxes & false alarms
Punishment 132
Sentencing 510w
Telephones 86-7w

Hoey, Miss Kate
Questions
Hospitals, Northern Health & Social Services Board 655w
Hostels, Deficit grants 239w
London Underground, Safety 657
Snow & ice, Local government functions 101-2w

Hogg, Mr Douglas, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Debates etc.
Eastern Europe, EC aid (04:03:91) 82-7, 107-9
Oversea Superannuation Bill, 3R (04:03:91) 81
Questions
Albania, Diplomatic relations 711-2w
Arms trade 203w
Baltic republics of USSR, British embassies 37w
Baltic republics of USSR, Diplomatic service 37w
Baltic republics of USSR, Embassies 37-8w
Baltic republics of USSR, Export promotion 37w
Bulgaria, Foreign relations 36w
Bulgaria, State visits 36w
Coordinating Committee on Export Controls 197w, 711w
Global & Technical Management Services, Iraq 202w
Gulf states, Arms control 325w
Gulf states, Security 324-5w
Iraq, Armed conflict 712w
Iraq, Arms trade 121w
Iraq, Chemical weapons 712w
Iraq, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 253w
Iraq, Overseas aid 712w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces deployment 325w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Hong Kong 197-8w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, War casualties 252-3w
Israel, Curfews 712w
Israel, Lebanon 37w
Israel, Prisoners 120w
Kuwait, Constitutions 324w
Kuwait, Human rights 199w
Libyan Arab Republic, Foreign relations 121w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 711w
Military attaches, British embassies 120w
UN resolutions, Arms trade 253w
United Nations, Middle East 253w
USSR, Bank loans 710w
USSR, CFE Treaty 711w
USSR, Emigration 120w, 198w

Hogg, Mr Norman
Questions
Capital value rating, Scotland 268
M80, Road construction 404w
Training & enterprise councils, Contracts 383w

Holiday play schemes
337w, 357w, 359-60w, 425w, 434-5w, 483w, 492w, 524-5w, 538w, 567-8w, 572-3w, 656-7w, 663w, 675w, 687w, 689w

"Holohoax"
501w

Holt, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Business questions intervention (06:03:91) 459
Community charge (13:03:91) 964
Transfer of questions, Attorney General (06:03:91) 283
Questions
Business statements 468-9
Defence Quality Assurance Directorate, Civil service dispersal 668
Scottish Agricultural Industries, Factory closures 275
Young offenders, School leaving 450

Holy Loch
US bases 332w

Home accident surveillance system
63-4w

Home births
Maternity services 492w

Home helps
Manpower 321w

Home loss payments
(12:03:91) 816-900

Home Office
(14:03:91) 1129-31
Day care of children 483w
Disabled workers 158w
Ethnic monitoring 83w
European Parliament Members 335w
Higher civil servants 81-3w
Public appointments 157w
Smoking 336w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 979, 986, 987
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 204, 210-3, 217-8
Questions
Fords, Road safety 620w
Middle East, Foreign relations 930-1
Mortgage defaulters, Scotland 265

Home visits
328w, 497w
Dental Practice Board 497-8w
Dept of Social Security local offices 328w

Homelessness
236-7w
Council housing 194-6w
Death 116w, 702w
East Lothian 265
Empty housing 266
Greater London 266, 663w
Greater Manchester 296w
Housing 613-9w
Housing investment programmes 98-9w
Mentally disadvantaged 319-20w
Scotland 266, 613-9w
Social security recipients 663w

Homeworkers Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (05:03:91) 162

Homeworking
5w

Homicide
Criminal investigation 709-10w
Detection rates 157-8w

Homicide—continued
Scotland 709-10w
Zimbabwe 545w

Hong Kong
543-4w
Immigration applications 36w, 121-2w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 197-8w, 1094-5
Passports 36-7w

Hood, Mr Jimmy
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1026
Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Bill, 1R (13:03:91) 955
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 143
Questions
Community charge, Scotland 208w

Hook Island (Poole Bay) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (07:03:91) 439, (14:03:91) 1079

Hordern, Sir Peter
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 817

Hormone treatments
Children 122-3

Horse racing
Betting & gaming duties 313w

Horticulture
(07:03:91) 569-76

Hospital admissions
Bradford Health Authority 264w

Hospital beds
Geriatric patients 558w
Liverpool Health Authority 261w
Maternity services 705w
North Western Regional Health Authority 555w
Northern Ireland 656w
Nursing homes 265w
Obstetrics 705w
Ophthalmology 492w
Smoking related diseases 347w
War casualties 459w

Hospital catering
Bradford 119-20w

Hospital closures
351w
St Paul's Eye Hospital Liverpool 490-1w

Hospital consultants
Paediatrics 554w

Hospital discharges
Mental patients 319-20w
Residential care 702w

Hospital patients
York Health Authority 119w

Hospital waiting lists
131, 152-3w, 316-7w
Argyll & Clyde Health Board 218-20w
Bloomsbury Health Authority 553w
Greater Glasgow Health Board 218-20w
Leicestershire Health Authority 259-60w
Powys 696w
South Manchester Health Authority 152-3w

Hospitals
Capital investment 132-4w
Consolidated Fund debates (14:03:91) 1225-43
Construction 154w
Crown immunity 460w, 556w
NHS trusts 205w
Northern Health & Social Services Board 655w
Northern Ireland 132-5w
Pupils 796-7

Hospitals—continued
Scotland 460w
South Glamorgan Health Authority 459w

Hostages
Income tax assessment 93-4w
Lebanon 545w, 629w, (14:03:91) 1131-3, 1142-4

Hostels
Deficit grants 239w

Hounslow
School administration 445w

House condition survey
Merthyr Tydfil 235w

House of Commons accommodation
31-2w
Millbank 620w
New Parliamentary building 620-2w

House of Commons annunciator system
Speaker's rulings & statements (14:03:91) 1123-4, 1126

House of Commons catering
Smoking 15

House of Commons debates
Orders & regulations 31w

House of Commons Library
14-5

House of Commons questions
Arms trade 330w
Foreign policy 19w
Social Security Benefits Agency 79w

House of Commons Select Committees
Kuwait 19

House of Commons staff
Smoking 14-5

House of Commons standing orders
Private Bills (13:03:91) 923-6

House of Commons stationery
Recycling 17

House purchase
Credit controls 455

Houseboats
British Waterways Board 54w
Security of tenure 54w

Households
Hackney 99w

Houses
Access to buildings 129

Houses in Multiple Occupation (Charges for Registration Scheme) Regulations 1991
Debates etc.
(13:03:91) 955

Housing
Ex-servicemen 270
Homelessness 613-9w
Local government functions 368w
Rural areas 390w, 401w
Scotland 401w
Single homeless 59w

Housing action trusts
Expenditure 473w

Housing & handicapped
Armed forces casualties 99w, 713w

Housing Association Act 1985
Questions
235-6w

Housing Association Consultancy & Advisory Service
235-6w

Housing associations
Wales 235-6w

"Housing Benefit Reviews Final Report"
287w

Housing benefits
Residential care 282w

Housing construction
Council house waiting lists 1094
Recreation spaces 266w
Scotland 270
UK companies abroad 361w

Housing Corporation
59w, 236-7w, 239w

Housing for Wales
235-6w

Housing investment programmes
Council housing 98w
Homelessness 98-9w
Waveney District Council 368w

Housing renewal areas
Birmingham 369w, 692w

Housing revenue accounts
Ealing 476w

Housing standards
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 390w

Housing support grants
Scotland 269-70

Howard, Rt Hon Michael, Secretary of State for Employment
Questions
Public appointments, Dept of Employment 167w

Howarth, Mr Alan, Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science
Questions
Access funds, Expenditure 512w
Council for National Academic Awards 108w
Higher education, Cost per student 625w
Higher education, Educational finance 441w
Higher education, Educational qualifications 105-6w
Higher education, Northern region 338w
Institute of Food Research, Construction 340w, 625w
Nuclear physics, Daresbury 801-2
Research finance, Industry 792-3, 800
Science & Engineering Research Council, Research finance 337w
Science & technology policy 801
Science & technology research, Research finance 441w, 443w, 793, 800
Student grants, Expenditure 512w
Student loans 40-1w
Student loans, Costs 108w
Student loans, Debt collection 41w
Student loans, Student numbers 229w
Student loans, Take-up 40w
Student unions 447w
Universities, Research finance 792
University finance 107-8w
University finance, Higher education 232w
University of Wales 695w
University of Wales, University finance 695w
Welsh Plant Breeding Station 445-6w

Howarth, Mr George
Debates etc.
Leasehold housing (08:03:91) 606-10, 612, 613-4
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 891-4, 898
Questions
Business statements 470
Council house rents, Ealing 476w
Government grants to local authorities, Mail shone 672w
Government grants to local authorities, Per capita costs 474w
Housing revenue accounts, Ealing 476w
South Africa, Foreign relations 541w

Howarth, Mr Gerald
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1120
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 228

Howell, Mr Ralph
Questions
Cereals 395w
Cereals, Agricultural production 257-8w
Cereals, Co-responsibility levy 395-6w
Cereals, Food exports 393-4w, 706w
Cereals, Food imports 395-7w
Cereals, Food stocks 393-4w
Food imports, Import duties 680-2w
Food industry 397w
Green rates 707w
Milk, Inflation 708w
Tax rates & bands, VAT 549-50w
Teachers, Norfolk 338w
Wheat, Prices 570w, 706-8w

Howells, Mr Geraint
Questions
A44, Road works 644w
Experimental farms, Wales 644w
Fisheries, Ceredigion 457w
NHS trusts, Wales 526w
Police, Wales 335-6w
Primary education, Dyfed 355-6w
Unemployment, Dyfed 525-6w
Welsh Plant Breeding Station 445-6w

Howells, Dr Kim
Debates etc.
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 148
Questions
Asthma, Steroid drugs 123
Coal mining, Licensing 431w
Coal mining, Mine safety 432w
Electricity generation, Costs 431w
Exhaust emission controls, Tax allowances 660
Integrated Services Digital Network, Wales 386-7w
Paintings, Exhibitions 664
School buildings, Building repairs 803-4
Surgery, Babies 111w
Telephone exchanges, Wales 387w

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Questions
Community charge 806

Huckfield, Les
Complaints against police 482w

Hughes, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 157
Education (Publication of Examination Results) Bill, Point of order (13:03:91) 958
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 474, 514-21
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 243-5
Questions
NHS trusts, Scotland 272
South Africa, Apartheid 927-8

Hughes, Mr Robert G
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 959-60
Persian Gulf, Environment protection (15:03:91) 1350, 1373-8
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 29
Questions
Local radio 449
Rear seat belts 634w
South Africa, Economic sanctions 541w

Hughes, Mr Roy
Questions
Cholesterol, Blood tests 345-6w
Hazardous wastes, Import controls 473w
Health service ancillary staff, Pay 493w
Health service ancillary staff, Resignations 494w
Health service staff, Vacancies 701w
Waste disposal, Inquiries 689-90w
Waste disposal, Orders & regulations 670w

Hughes, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 971-2
London Regional Transport (11:03:91) 688, 694-8, 701, 702, 704, 708
Persian Gulf, Environment protection (15:03:91) 1355-60
Questions
Animals, Poisoning 182w
Arts finance, Local government expenditure 665-6
Community charge, Costs 50w
Community charge, Greater London 49-50w
Domestic wastes, Incinerators 690-1w
Ecolabelling, EC action 188w
Environment protection, Disclosure of information 472w
Environmental policy, Dept of the Environment 101-2w
Environmental policy, Northern Ireland Office 267w
Environmental policy, Office of Arts & Libraries 21w
Environmental policy, Scottish Office 67-8w
Exhaust emission controls, Standards specifications 10w
Lead free petrol, Surveys 99w
Legionnaires' disease, Power stations 489w
Nitrogen oxides, Pollution monitoring 473w, 669-70w
Oil pollution, Persian Gulf 189w
Planning permission 370w
Planning permission, Forests 362w
Public Health Laboratory Service, Fees & charges 495-6w
Public transport, Government grants 421w
Radioactive waste disposal 369w
Radioactive waste disposal, Drigg 369-70w
Radioactive waste disposal, Seas & oceans 670w
River pollution, Eels 690w
Road traffic, Environmental impact assessment 659
Shellfish, Radiation hazards 569w
Slaughterhouses 569w
Tributyl tin, Fishing vessels 569w
Tributyl tin, Sea pollution 679w
Water supply, Lead 472w

Human Fertilisation & Embryology Act 1990
Questions
Abortion 265-6w

Human rights
Foreign policy 545w
Ghana 359w
India 544w
Iraq 433-4w
Kuwait 199w
Palestine 629w

Humberside
Water pollution 471w

Hungary
Road freight transport 634w

***Hunt, Rt Hon David**, Secretary of State for Wales*
Questions
Badgers, Nature conservation 522-3w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Waste disposal 525-6w
Coal mining, Wales 180-2w
Community charge, Administrative costs 647w
Community charge reduction scheme, Wales 312-3w
Day care of children, Welsh Office 524-5w
Duffryn Workshops, Factory closures 355w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Wales 85w
Ethnic monitoring, Welsh Office 234-5w
European Commission, Ministers' visits abroad 356w
Experimental farms, Wales 644w
Fisheries, Ceredigion 457w
Foxes, Pest control 696w
Government achievements, Welsh Office 527-34w

***Hunt, Rt Hon David**—continued*
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Wales 696w
Hard core unemployed, Wales 643w
Higher civil servants, Welsh Office 233-4w
Local government revenue, Capital investment 645-7w
Nature conservation, EC law 236w
Public appointments, Welsh Office 179w
Security marking, Welsh Office 85w
Shotton steelworks 458w
Small businesses, Wales 523-4w
Smoking, Welsh Office 356w
Unemployment, Dyfed 525-6w
Veterinary Investigation Service, Bangor Gwynedd 86w
Welsh Office, Public appointments 448-58w

Hunt, Sir John
Questions
Dentists, Contracts of employment 117w

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 23, 40
Questions
Basingstoke Hospital, Patients 558w
Criminal records, Disclosure of information 652w
Mentally handicapped, Handicapped children 639w
Sites of special scientific interest, Planning permission 521w
Terrorism, Prosecutions 698w
Zimbabwe, Homicide 545w

Hunter, Robert
(14:03:91) 1109-25

***Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas**, Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs*
Questions
EC Foreign Affairs Council 204-5w
EC integration, Intergovernmental conference 203-4w
European currency unit 934
Germany, Foreign relations 932-4
Hussein, Saddam, Peace negotiations 939
Iraq, Chemical weapons 941-2
Iraq, Religious buildings 942
Iraq, War crimes 931
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Peace negotiations 542w, 941
Israel, Occupied territories 929
Israel, Peace negotiations 542w, 939-40
Kurdistan 929, 940-1
Kurdistan, Self-determination of states 931-2
Kuwait 941-2
Kuwait, British embassies 930
Kuwait, British residents abroad 930
Middle East, Arms trade 929
Middle East, Foreign relations 930-1
Middle East, Peace negotiations 928-9, 938, 940
Middle East, Politics & government 932
Palestine, Self-determination of states 940
Palestine Liberation Organisation, Peace negotiations 932, 939

Hussein, Saddam
454, 928-9
Peace negotiations 939

Hydroelectric power
Electricity generation 258-9w

Hydrography
Antarctic 713-4w
HMS Endurance 713-4w

Hyperion Properties
519w

Hypothermia
Scotland 402w
Sleeping rough 702w

Ibbs Report
7w

Illsley, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 952
Questions
British Rail, Expenditure 251w
British Rail, Factory closures 251w
Prescriptions 122-3
Roads, Expenditure 251w
Social Fund, Barnsley 325w
Social security benefits rates, Water charges 282w
South Yorkshire Ambulance Service, NHS trusts 345w
Thailand, Martial law 937-8
Water charges, Price increases 469w
Water distribution 470w
Water pollution, Humberside 471w

Imitation guns
Retail trade 269w

Immigrant detainees
International law 446-7
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 84w, 446-7, 481w, 509w
Legal representation 447
National security 14w
Scotland 509w

Immigrants
Iraq 699w

Immigration Act 1971
Questions
14w

Immigration appeals
306w, 652w

Immigration applications
Administrative delays 359w
Hong Kong 36w, 121-2w
Indian subcontinent 359w
Iraq 653w
Political refugees 10-1w, 510-1w, 652-3w

Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987
Questions
479-80w
Fines 479w

Immigration controls
EC internal trade 270w
Iraq 511w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 481w

Immigration rules
Political refugees 481w

Implementation Advisory Committee
553w

Import controls
Berries & soft fruit 69w
Hazardous wastes 473w
Private transport 9w

Import duties
570-1w
Food imports 680-2w

Import of live animals
Wild animals 689w

Ince B power station
Orimulsion 313w

Incinerators
Domestic wastes 690-1w
Planning permission 516-7w

Incitement to murder
Mohammed, Omar Bakri 150w

Income
British Waterways Board 53w
Charities 276w
Pensioners 5
Scottish Homes 207w

Income distribution
166w

Income support
78w
Alarms 693w

Income support—continued
Greenock 666-7w
Local government social services 283w
Nursing homes 172w, 323-4w
Pensioners 7, 391-2w
Pregnant women 123w
Residential care 171w, 175-6w, 326-7w, 413w, 694w
Severe disablement allowance 122w
Social security benefits reductions 172-3w, 536w, 666w
Social security claims 177w, 666-7w
Social security recipients 176-8w
Young people 284w, 536w

Income tax
Entertainers 28w
Personal tax allowances 94-6w
Tax avoidance 7
Tax burden 165-6w, 548-9w

Income tax assessment
Hostages 93-4w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 93-4w

Income Tax (Building Societies) (Annual Payments) Regulations 1991
Debates etc.
(04:03:91) 110

Incontinence
Advisory services 22w
Health services 21-2w
Surveys 21w

Incontinence aids
Residential care 557w

Independent Living Fund
326w
Social Security Benefits Agency 326w

Independent producers
Television programmes 649-50w

Independent Television Commission
335w

Index linking
Child benefit 456

India
Civil disorder (14:03:91) 1158-9
Human rights 544w

Indian subcontinent
Immigration applications 359w

Indonesia
Exports 62w

Industrial development
Rural areas 390w
Scotland 220w
Scottish Enterprise 316w

Industrial disputes
London Ambulance Service 559w
P & O 381-2w

Industrial investment
162w, 256w

Industrial research
Research finance 163w

Industrial tribunals
486w
Efficiency scrutinies 98w

Industry
Research finance 792-3, 800

Infant foods
EC action 399w, 557w

Inflation
161-3w
Milk 708w
Pensioners 5

Information
Family credit 665w

Ingram, Mr Adam
Questions
Interest rates, Scotland 211w

Inheritance tax
700-1w

Inland Revenue
Day care of children 434-5w

Inland waterways
Freight transport 149w
Recreation spaces 58w

Inner cities initiative
52w, 627-8w, 674w

Inner city areas
Association of Chief Police Officers 269w
Screening 121

Inner London boroughs
Community charge 133

Input tax
314w

Institute of Food Research
Construction 340w, 625w

Insurance
Aircraft 252w
EC action 385w

Integrated pollution control
471w
Codes of practice 242w

Integrated Services Digital Network
Wales 386-7w

Interest charges
Local government borrowing 575-6w

Interest rates
254w
Pensions 11
Scotland 211w

Intergovernmental conference
248w, 936-7
EC environmental policy 246w
EC integration 203-4w

Interleukin
Clinical trials 322w
Prescriptions 322w

International Atomic Energy Agency
UK contributions 430-1w

International cooperation
Drug abuse 935-6
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 30w

International Court of Justice
434w

International Labour Organisation
381-2w

International law
Immigrant detainees 446-7

International Leisure Group
671-2

International Maritime Organisation
189-90w, 653

International organisations
Civil servants 387-8w

International Red Cross
247w, 439w, 514w

International trade
Manufactured goods 256-7w

International Union for Conservation of Natural Resources
121w

Intervention stocks
69-70w
Scotland 403w

Invalid care allowances
Administrative delays 693w
Manpower 692w

Invalid care allowances—continued
Women 12

Inverclyde
279-80w, 534-5w

Inverclyde enterprise zone
Employment opportunities 219w

Inverclyde initiative
Employment opportunities 219w

Inward
249-50w

IRA
Terrorism 18w

Iraq
Armed conflict 543w, 712w, 942
Arms control 247-8w
Arms trade 121w, 226w, 440w
Chemical weapons 712w, 941-2, 1095
Defence industries 225-6w
Diplomatic relations 542w
Disaster relief 439w
Export credit guarantees 540-1w
Exports 169w
Global & Technical Management Services 202w
Human rights 433-4w
Immigrants 699w
Immigration applications 653w
Immigration controls 511w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 247w
Missile technology control regime 248w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 253w
Overseas aid 514w, 712w
Religious buildings 942
UK companies abroad 628w
Visas 159w
War crimes 931

Iraq-Kuwait conflict
13-4, 19, 25w, 106w, 121w, 199w, 204-5w, 226w, 252-3w, 304w, 459w, 706-8w, 930-1, 934, (14:03:91) 1138-42
Ammunition 329w
Armed forces casualties 99w, 117-9w, 168w, 248w, 329w, 407w, 410-1w, 439-40w, 713w
Armed forces dependants 293-4w
Armed forces deployment 19w, 26w, 222w, 325w, 440w, 452-3
Armed forces medical services 222w
Armed forces recruitment 292-4w
Armed forces women 715w
BBC External Services 937
Belgium 630w
British residents abroad 248w
Civil service 407w
Community charge 218w, 673-4w
Community charge exemptions 48-9w, 100-1w, 578w
Costs 255w
Defence expenditure 30-1w, 329w
Helicopters 103w, 407-8w, 687w
Hong Kong 197-8w, 1094-5
Immigrant detainees 84w, 446-7, 481w, 509w
Immigration controls 481w
Income tax assessment 93-4w
International cooperation 30w
Iraq 247w
Jordan 545-6w
Merchant ships 687-8w
Military aircraft 222w
Military bands 454
Museums & galleries 21w
Peace negotiations 542w, 941
Pollution control 454-5
Postal services 221w, 329w, 440-1w
Prisoners of war 247w, 329w
Private Members' motions (15:03:91) 1335-95
Public relations 710w
Radio 19w
Social security benefits 3-4
Tourist industry 549-50w
Voluntary organisations 292w
War casualties 247w, 252-3w, (14:03:91) 1159-61

Iraq-Kuwait conflict—continued
Waste disposal 293w

Irish American Calendar
Government grants 311w

Iron & steel industry
Scotland 208w
Wales 180-2w

Irradiated food
Food imports 398w
Licensing 398w, 677w

Irvine, Mr Michael
Questions
Grant maintained schools 135

Isle of Harris
715-6w

Israel
Curfews 712w
Lebanon 37w
Occupied territories 432w, 929
Palestine 939-40
Peace negotiations 542w, 939-40
Prisoners 120w
UK companies abroad 361w

Jack, Mr Michael, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security
Questions
Child benefit 8-9
Child benefit, Bury 123w
Child benefit, Social security recipients 175w
Child Support Agency, Training 76-7w
Employees' contributions 71w
Employees' contributions, Earnings limits 71w
European Parliament Members, Dept of Social Security 412w
Family credit 8-9, 415-6w
Family credit, Advertising 414-5w
Family credit, Publicity 281w
Family credit, Social security claims 415-8w
Family credit, Social security recipients 72w
Family income 125-6w
Income support, Pregnant women 123w
Income support, Young people 284w
Income tax, Tax avoidance 7
Maintenance, Children 6-7, 75-8w
Maintenance, Disclosure of information 78w
Maintenance, Handicapped children 77w
Maintenance, Personal income 15-6
Maintenance, Social security benefits reductions 414w
Marginal tax rates, Social security benefits 314-5w
Maternity leave 171w
Maternity pay 171w
One parent families, Social security benefits rules 71w
Pensioners, Social security benefits 284w
Personal pensions, National insurance contributions 170w
Social security finance, National insurance contributions 446-8w
Social security recipients, Unemployed 286-8w
Unemployment benefits, Costs 412w

Jackson, Mr Robert, Under-Secretary of State for Employment
Questions
Apex Trust, Employment training 675-6w
Basford Hall College of Further Education, Nursery nurses 168w
Census enumerators, Recruitment 380-1w
Cost effectiveness, Dept of Employment 488w
Day care of children, Dept of Employment 675w
Disabled workers 376-80w
Disabled workers, Aids for handicapped 379w

Jackson, Mr Robert—continued
Disabled workers, Dept of Employment 167-8w
Disabled workers, Employment discrimination 380w, 486w
Disabled workers, Employment rehabilitation 379-80w
Disabled workers, Special training needs 379w
Employment by sector, Leeds 3-4w
Employment level, Leeds 3w, 97w
Employment level, Northern region 550w
Employment opportunities, Northern region 551w
Employment Select Committee, Disablement resettlement officers 489-90w
Employment Service 288w
Employment Service, Civil service manpower 288w
Employment Service local offices, Handicapped 489w
Employment training, Expenditure 289-90w, 552w
Employment training, Leicestershire 489w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Employment 97w
Government achievements, Dept of Employment 483-6w
Hard core unemployed, Employment schemes 6w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Employment 3-5w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces casualties 168w
Manufacturing industries, Redundancy 287w
Older workers 6w
Pay, Leeds 6w
Quota of disabled workers 380w
Quota of disabled workers, Crown immunity 381w
Redundancy, Leeds 2-4w
Restart programme 488w
Self-employed, Northern region 551-2w
Special training needs 6w
Training, Costs 5w
Training, Expenditure 5w
Training & enterprise councils, Conflict of interests 168w
Training & enterprise councils, Contracts 383w, 487w
Training & enterprise councils, Devon 382w, 490w
Training & enterprise councils, Finance 382-3w, 487w
Training & enterprise councils, Performance indicators 486-7w
Training & enterprise councils, Rochdale 291w
Training & enterprise councils, South Glamorgan 6-7w, 167w, 490w
Youth training, Expenditure 288-90w

Janner, Mr Greville
Questions
Antisemitism, Publishing 501w
Crime, Leicestershire 159w, 270w
Ethnic monitoring, Attorney General 227-8w
Ethnic monitoring, Civil service 151w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Education & Science 38-9w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Employment 97w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Energy 16w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Health 113w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Social Security 123w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of the Environment 190w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Trade & Industry 61w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Transport 90w
Ethnic monitoring, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 34w
Ethnic monitoring, Home Office 83w
Ethnic monitoring, Lord Advocate 315w
Ethnic monitoring, Minister for the Civil Service 15w

Janner, Mr Greville—continued
Ethnic monitoring, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 181w
Ethnic monitoring, Ministry of Defence 291w
Ethnic monitoring, Northern Ireland Office 462-3w
Ethnic monitoring, Office of Arts & Libraries 97w
Ethnic monitoring, Scottish Office 277-8w
Ethnic monitoring, Treasury 26w
Ethnic monitoring, Welsh Office 234-5w
Facsimile transmission, Unsolicited goods & services 384w
Haymarket Theatre Leicester, Arts finance 666
Higher civil servants, Attorney General 227-8w
Higher civil servants, Cabinet Office 19-20w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Education & Science 38w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Employment 3-5w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Energy 15-6w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Health 113w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Social Security 124w
Higher civil servants, Dept of the Environment 190-2w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Trade & Industry 61w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Transport 90w
Higher civil servants, Disabled workers 669-70
Higher civil servants, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 34-5w
Higher civil servants, Home Office 81-3w
Higher civil servants, Lord Advocate 315w
Higher civil servants, Minister for the Civil Service 86w
Higher civil servants, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 181w
Higher civil servants, Ministry of Defence 291w
Higher civil servants, Northern Ireland Office 463w
Higher civil servants, Office of Arts & Libraries 96-7w
Higher civil servants, Scottish Office 277-8w
Higher civil servants, Treasury 26w, 93w
Higher civil servants, Welsh Office 233-4w
Incontinence aids, Residential care 557w
Leicestershire Constabulary, Finance 11-2w
Police, Expenditure 270w
Shoplifting, Acquittals 268-9w

Jessel, Mr Toby
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 159
Questions
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 19
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Military bands 454
Planning permission, Heliports 471w

Job satisfaction
Civil service 667-8
Civil service agencies 668-9

Job security
Civil servants 666-7

Jobclubs
488w

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 892

Johnston, Sir Russell
Debates etc.
Court of Auditors, EC budget (13:03:91) 1057-9
Deaf Persons (Access to Further & Higher Education & Training) Bill, 2R order read (08:03:91) 641

Johnston, Sir Russell—continued
Questions
Germany, Foreign relations 933

Joint Directorate for Export Promotion
Export promotion 628w

Joint financing
Alarms 496w

Joint ventures
(11:03:91) 676-83

Jones, Mr Barry
Questions
Children in care, Wales 526w
Council housing, South Wales 644w
Council housing, Wales 644w
Curriculum, Wales 645-6w
Dentists, Contracts of employment 457w
District health authorities, Public appointments 643w
Educational assessment, Wales 643-4w
European Commission, Ministers' visits abroad 356w
Hard core unemployed, Wales 643w
History education, Curriculum 457-8w
Hospital waiting lists, Powys 696w
NHS trusts, Wales 458w
Operating theatres, Wales 643w
Probation, Wales 509w
Road works, Wales 644w
School libraries, Wales 644-5w
Shotton steelworks 458w
Welsh Office, Public appointments 448-58w

Jones, Mr Gwilym
Questions
Coal mining, Wales 180-2w
Community charge reduction scheme, Wales 312-3w
Corlan Housing Association, Inquiries 235-6w
Secure accommodation, Wales 86w, 178w
Urban planning, Wales 458w

Jones, Mr Ieuan Wyn
Questions
Air pollution control, Cost benefit analysis 52-3w
Air pollution monitoring, Wales 14-5w
Child Support Agency, Training 76-7w
Common land, Wales 177w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Wales 85w
Foster care, Wales 457w
Land reclamation, Sewage 52w
Local government functions 52w
Maintenance, Children 78w
Motor vehicle parts, Standardisation 9w
Road construction 9w
Road safety education, Wales 85w
Road signs, Harmonisation of standards 9w
Road traffic 9w
Social security recipients, Young people 282w
Veterinary Investigation Service, Bangor Gwynedd 86w

Jones, Mr Martyn
Questions
Alarms, Government grants to local authorities 691w
Alarms, Income support 693w
Alarms, Joint financing 496w
Kashmir 201w
Kuwait, Human rights 199w
Residential care 110w

Jones, Mr Robert B
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 829, 838, 852-5
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 36

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Questions
Railway transport, Snow & ice 651-2

Jordan
Dried milk 361w
Economic sanctions 361w

Jordan—continued
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 545-6w

Judgments
School admission 793-4

Juvenile courts
Rehabilitation of offenders 445

K formulae
469w

Kashmir
201w

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Questions
European currency unit 934
Hong Kong, Passports 37w
Middle East, Arms trade 929

Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 960, 963
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1025
Questions
Lancashire education authority, Manpower 106-7w
Occupational pensions 6
School administration, Manpower 792
Social security benefits, Earnings rules 125w

Kennedy, Mr Charles
Questions
Absent voting, British residents abroad 267w
Association of Pharmaceutical Importers 319w
Drugs, Licensing 317w, 344w
Drugs, Parallel imports 317w, 552-3w
Medicines Control Agency, Accountability 318w
Medicines Control Agency, Administrative delays 318-9w
Medicines Control Agency, Fees & charges 318w
Medicines Control Agency, Parallel imports 318-9w
Prescriptions, Pharmacists 262w
Proprietary drugs, Harmonisation of standards 317-8w
Road tolls 419w
School buildings, Repairs & maintenance 269
Tourist information, Sign posts 140w

***Key, Mr Robert**, Under-Secretary of State for the Environment*
Questions
City grants, Leeds 519w
Community charge, Costs 50w
Community charge, Councillors 670w
Community charge, Greater London 49-50w
Community charge, Leicestershire 48w
Community charge, Local authorities 367w
Community charge, Orders & regulations 518-9w
Community charge, Students 47w
Community charge benefits, Exeter 362-3w
Community charge exemptions, Exservicemen 45w
Community charge exemptions, Handicapped 45w, 670-1w
Community charge exemptions, Married women 45w
Community charge reduction scheme 367-8w
Community charge reduction scheme, Gedling 99-100w
Community charge reduction scheme, Gloucester 367w
Community charge reduction scheme, Leicestershire 47-8w
Community charge reduction scheme, Police housing 474w
Community charge reduction scheme, Rugby 47w
Community charge reduction scheme, Sevenoaks 49w

Key, Mr Robert—continued
Community charge register 296w
Community charge register, Lancashire 474-5w
Direct labour departments, Accounting 674-5w
Domestic rates, Hackney 241w
Environmental health officers, Manpower 473w
Fire Service College, Revenue support grant 45w
Government grants to local authorities 197w
Government grants to local authorities, City of Westminster 363w
Government grants to local authorities, Community charge 671-2w
Government grants to local authorities, Dearne Valley 192-3w
Government grants to local authorities, Maidstone 672w
Government grants to local authorities, Per capita costs 474-6w, 517w
Government grants to local authorities, Sheffield 363-4w
Government grants to local authorities, Wandsworth 296w, 517w
Government grants to local authorities, Yorkshire & Humberside 237-40w
Inner cities initiative 52w, 674w
Leeds Development Corporation, Employment opportunities 59w
Leeds Development Corporation, Expenditure 244-5w, 519w
Local government audit, London boroughs 515-6w
Local government borrowing, Lambeth 520w
Local government expenditure 50-1w
Local government expenditure, Community charge 672w
Local government expenditure, London boroughs 46w
Local government finance, EC countries 299-300w
Local government functions 52w
Local government pensions, Widowers' benefits 515w
Local government revenue, Fees & charges 51w
Local government revenue, York 51-2w
Parish councils, Uniform business rate 244w
Property development, Leeds 519w
Redditch Borough Council, Contracts for services 100w
Standard community charge, City of Westminster 363w
Standard spending assessments, Greenwich 669w
Standard spending assessments, London boroughs 46-7w
Street lighting, Crime prevention 241-2w
Street lighting, Energy conservation 241w
Street lighting, Urban areas 241w
Street lighting, Urban programme 241w
Transitional relief, Hackney 47w
Transitional relief, Wolverhampton 474w
Uniform business rate, Rate increases 667-8w
Uniform business rate, Small businesses 668w
Uniform business rate, Transitional arrangements 668w
Urban areas, Government grants to local authorities 516w
Urban programme, Employment opportunities 369w

Khmer Rouge
937-8, 942-4
Thailand 938

Kidnapping
Prosecutions 82w

Kidney patients
209-10w
Erythropoietin 272
Scotland 272

Kilfedder, Mr James
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (11:03:91) 744-7
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1115
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 300
Questions
Environment protection, Northern Ireland 655w
Republic of Ireland, State visits 1083

Kimball Committee
see Firearms Consultative Committee

King, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 966
Questions
Business statements 464-5
Concessionary television licences, Pensioners 441
Dept of the Environment, Cash limits 673w
Grammar schools 443w

King's College Hospital
Accident & emergency departments 126

King's Cross
Railway land 8w

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Questions
Community charge 804-5, 1092

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1026-30
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 948
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 257
Questions
Business statements 464
Health service staff, Pay 110w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Manpower 691-2w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Pollution control 454-5
Local radio 270w
New towns, Property transfer 65w
Public sector housing sales, Scotland 140-6w
Regional planning & development, Borders region 273
Retirement pensions 2-3
Universities, Research finance 792

Knapman, Mr Roger
Questions
British Rail, Trains 419w
Business statements 465
Germany, Foreign relations 932-3

Knight, Dame Jill
Debates etc.
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 948
Questions
Breast cancer, Screening 495w
Family credit, Mothers 664w
Prescription drugs, Cost effectiveness 109w
Prescriptions 123
School admission, Age 445w
Sentencing, Sexual offences 476-7w
Young offenders, Parental responsibility 482w

Knox, Mr David
Questions
EC external relations 543w

Kurdistan
433-4w, 928-9, 940-1
Foreign policy 433w
Opposition parties 546w
Self-determination of states 931-2

Kuwait
542w, 941-2
British embassies 930

Kuwait—continued
British residents abroad 248w, 930
Constitutions 324w
Construction 452-3, 805-6
Democracy 434w
Departmental responsibilities 627w
Exports 304w
House of Commons Select Committees 19
Human rights 199w
Overseas aid 514w
Palestine 629w
UK companies abroad 930

Lambeth
Community charge 804
Local government borrowing 520w
Mortgage defaulters 623-4w

Lamond, Mr James
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 975-7
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 496

Lamont, Rt Hon Norman, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Questions
European Parliament Members, Treasury 373w
Tax allowances, Handicapped drivers 375w

Lanarkshire
Employment training 455
Road works 280-1

Lancashire
Community charge register 474-5w

Lancashire education authority
Manpower 106-7w

Lancaster University
60w

Land acquisition
Forestry Commission 246-7w, 278w, 404w
National parks 57-8w
Playing fields 520w, 1080
Power stations 505w
South Glamorgan Health Authority 459w
Water & sewerage companies 57-8w, 468-9w

Land ownership & tenure
Forestry Commission 278-9w
Power stations 505-6w

Land reclamation
Derelict land 245w
Sewage 52w

Land use
Ashford remand centre 451-2
Structure plans 476w

Land values
NHS 261-2w

Lang, Rt Hon Ian, Secretary of State for Scotland
Questions
Capital value rating 268
Capital value rating, Scotland 268
Community charge, Glasgow 268
Community charge, Scotland 267-8
Day care of children, Scottish Office 572-3w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 460-1w
Ethnic monitoring, Scottish Office 277-8w
European Parliament Members, Scottish Office 402w
Forestry 279-80
Forestry, Highlands of Scotland 280
Forestry, Scotland 220-1w
Forth Valley Health Board, Public appointments 271
Higher civil servants, Scottish Office 277-8w
Local authorities, Capital investment 267
Local enterprise companies, Finance 276
Objects in lieu of tax, Art works 461w
Public appointments, Scottish Office 214-5w

Lang, Rt Hon Ian—continued
Public expenditure, Per capita costs 205w
Scottish Agricultural Industries, Factory closures 275
Scottish health boards, Public appointments 270-1
Scottish Office, Public appointments 580-612w
Security marking, Scottish Office 211-3w
Unemployment, Glasgow 275
Unemployment, Leith 274-5

Lasers
Cervical cancer 112w

Latham, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Business statements (12:03:91) 810
War Crimes Bill, House of Commons procedure (12:03:91) 903, 906
Questions
Barkestone School, Property transfer 42-3w
Community charge, Leicestershire 48w
Community charge reduction scheme, Leicestershire 47-8w
Employment training, Leicestershire 489w
IRA, Terrorism 18w
Israel, Peace negotiations 542w
Israel, UK companies abroad 361w
Northern Ireland government 1088
Stocken Hall, Inspections 517-8w

Law Officers' Dept
see Attorney General

Lawrence, Mr Ivan
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 59-61, 64-5

Lazarus Committee
see Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising

Lead
Water supply 472w

Lead free petrol
Surveys 99w

Leadbitter, Mr Ted
Questions
Science & technology policy 454

Leasehold housing
Private Members' motions (08:03:91) 577-634

Leasehold land
Westminster County Court 361w

Lebanon
Hostages 545w, 629w, (14:03:91) 1131-3, 1142-4
Israel 37w

Lee, Mr John
Debates etc.
Lotteries (14:03:91) 1212, 1216
Questions
Industrial tribunals, Efficiency scrutinies 98w

Leeds
59w, 72w, 176-8w, 193-4w, 244-5w
City grants 519w
Employment by sector 3-4w
Employment level 3w, 97w
Government grants to local authorities 237-40w
Mortgage defaulters 1w
NHS finance 343w
Pay 6w
Property development 519w
Redundancy 2-4w
Social Fund 80w, 325-6w

Leeds Development Corporation
519w
Compulsory purchase 193w
Employment opportunities 59w
Expenditure 244-5w, 519w

***Leeds Development Corporation**—continued*
Property development 193-4w

Leeds-Bradford railway
Railway electrification 427w

Legal aid
Barristers 624w
Expenditure 623w, 682w
Fees & charges 572w
Scotland 572w, 682w
Solicitors 624w

Legal representation
Immigrant detainees 447

Legionnaires' disease
Power stations 489w

Legislation
32-4w
Local government 400w

Leicester
666

Leicestershire
Community charge 48w
Community charge reduction scheme 47-8w
Crime 159w, 270w
Employment training 489w
School buildings 797-8
Training & enterprise councils 489w

Leicestershire Constabulary
Finance 11-2w

Leicestershire Health Authority
Hospital waiting lists 259-60w

***Leigh, Mr Edward** Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs*
Debates etc.
Tin, Cornwall (06:03:91) 436-8
Questions
Advertising codes of practice, Mobility allowance 248-9w
Balance of trade, Germany 87-8w
Beer, Measurement 302w
Cans, Domestic accidents 63-4w
Cans, Food contamination 63w
Computer software, EC action 427-8w
Cosmetics, Product safety 537w
Day care of children, Dept of Trade & Industry 538w
Disabled workers, Dept of Trade & Industry 250w
EC grants & loans 64w, 430w
EC Trade Marks Office 385w
Energy conservation, Dept of Trade & Industry 717w
Engineering industries, Balance of trade 60w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Trade & Industry 61w
Export credit guarantees 62w
Fire resistant materials, Babies 62-3w
Fire resistant materials, Health hazards 63w
Fire resistant materials, Poisoning 62w
Government assistance to industry, Northern region 716w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Trade & Industry 61w
Inner cities initiative 627-8w
Oil pollution control, Equipment 717-8w
Post Office, Personnel 429w
Post Office, Relocation of employees 385w
Post Office, Termination of employment 385w
Public appointments, Dept of Trade & Industry 169w
Radioactive Products (Safety) Regulations 1991 62w
RECHAR 170w
Regional aid 60w
Regional aid, Northern region 539w
Regional planning & development, Government grants 249-50w
Regional selective assistance, Northern region 429-30w
Security marking, Dept of Trade & Industry 59-61w

***Leigh, Mr Edward**—continued*
Smoke & chimney gases, Air pollution control 384w
Smoking, Dept of Trade & Industry 541w
Space technology, Universities 387w
Trade marks, EC law 385w

Leighton, Mr Ron
Questions
Bulgaria, Foreign relations 36w
Bulgaria, State visits 36w
Kuwait, British residents abroad 930
London Underground 422w
Manufacturing industries, Redundancy 287w
Metropolitan Police, Finance 334w
Unemployment benefits, Costs 412w

Leith
Unemployment 274-5

***Lennox-Boyd, Mr Mark**, Under-Secretary of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office*
Debates etc.
European Bank of Reconstruction & Development (Immunities & Privileges) Order 1991 (13:03:91) 168-9, 1071
USSR, Foreign relations (14:03:91) 1204-8
Questions
Albania, Gold 434w
Antarctic, Environment protection 121w
Arms control, Conventional weapons 630w
BBC External Services, Armed forces 35w
BBC External Services, Gulf states 35w
BBC External Services, Television 937
Cambodia, Politics & government 942-4
Cost effectiveness, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 629w
Council of Europe 711w
Day care of children, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 359-60w
Disabled workers, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 202w
Eastern Europe, British embassies 122w
Eastern Europe, Food aid from EC 712-3w
Ethnic monitoring, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 34w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Advertising 199-200w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Government contracts 121w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Government information services 198-202w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Public relations 710w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Research 201w
Foreign policy, Human rights 545w
Greenhouse effect, Treaties 543w
Higher civil servants, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 34-5w
Hong Kong 543-4w
Hong Kong, Immigration applications 36w, 121-2w
Hong Kong, Passports 36-7w
Immigration applications, Administrative delays 359w
India, Human rights 544w
International cooperation, Drug abuse 935-6
Iraq, Armed conflict 543w
Iraq, Diplomatic relations 542w
Iraq, Human rights 433-4w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, BBC External Services 937
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Jordan 545-6w
Israel, Occupied territories 432w
Israel, Peace negotiations 542w
Kashmir 201w
Khmer Rouge, Thailand 938
Kurdistan, Foreign policy 433w
Kurdistan, Opposition parties 546w
Kuwait 542w
Kuwait, Democracy 434w
Kuwait, Palestine 629w
Lebanon, Hostages 545w, 629w
Myanmar, Foreign relations 710w
NATO, Warsaw Pact 432w

***Lennox-Boyd, Mr Mark**—continued*
Procurement, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 628-9w
Public appointments, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 201-2w
Saudi Arabia, Disasters 433w
Smoking, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 361w
Sri Lanka 544w
Sri Lanka, Tamils 35-6w
Thailand, Martial law 937-8
Tourist taxes 541w
Tripartite Commission for the Restitution of Monetary Gold 433w
Tripartite Commission for the Restitution of Monetary Gold, Wealth 433w
United Nations, Diplomatic service 252w
Yugoslavia, Ministers' visits abroad 544w
Zimbabwe, Homicide 545w

Lestor, Miss Joan
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1032-4
Questions
Health service staff, North Western Regional Health Authority 555w
Hospital beds, North Western Regional Health Authority 555w
Income support 78w
Infant foods, EC action 399w
Maintenance, Children 1-2w, 77-8w
Maintenance, Handicapped children 77w
Road accidents, Children 89w
Shackleton aircraft, Air accidents 715-6w
Uniform business rate, North West region 515w

Level crossings
Northern Ireland 43w
Safety barriers 43w

Lewis, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
Leasehold housing (08:03:91) 586-90
Roads, Greater Manchester (04:03:91) 112-4, 116, 118
Telecommunications industry (14:03:91) 1170
Questions
Community charge register, Lancashire 474-5w
Government grants to local authorities 197w
Government grants to local authorities, Community charge 671-2w
Government grants to local authorities, Per capita costs 475w

Library & Information Services Council (Northern Ireland)
Publishing 127w

Library & Information Services Council (Wales)
Publishing 180w

Libyan Arab Republic
Exports 169w
Foreign relations 121w

Licensed teachers
Graduates 39-40w
Manpower 39-40w

Licensing laws
269w

Life imprisonment
82w
European Court of Human Rights 651w

Light dues
147w

Lighting
Bicycles 421w, 656

***Lilley, Rt Hon Peter**, Secretary of State for Trade & Industry*
Debates etc.
Telecommunications industry, Ministerial statements (05:03:91) 137-48

Lilley, Rt Hon Peter—continued
Questions
Cross-Media Ownership Inquiry 428w
Export controls 62w
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Privatisation 88-9w

Limavady
310-2w

Listeria monocytogenes
24w

Litter
Motorways 251w, 503w

Liver diseases
Transplant surgery 109w

Liverpool
42w
Ophthalmology 492w

Liverpool Health Authority
Hospital beds 261w

Liverpool Prison
277w

Livingstone, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Exchange rates (08:03:91) 643-6
London Regional Transport (11:03:91) 701, 709-12
Questions
Broadcasting, Accountability 10w

Lloyd, Sir Ian
Questions
Science & technology policy 801

Lloyd, Mr Peter, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office
Debates etc.
Lotteries (14:03:91) 1219-24
Prisoners on remand, Greater Manchester (14:03:91) 1304-9
Questions
Blood sports, Demonstrations 482w
Broadcasting, Accountability 10w
Concessionary television licences, Pensioners 440-2
Criminal records, Disclosure of information 652w
European Parliament Members, Home Office 335w
Firearms, Foreign tourists 14w
Foreign tourists 478-9w
Gambling, Expenditure 477w
Hassan, Hazem Ali, Deportation 507w
Homicide, Detection rates 157-8w
Imitation guns, Retail trade 269w
Immigrant detainees, National security 14w
Immigrants, Iraq 699w
Immigration appeals 306w, 652w
Immigration applications, Iraq 653w
Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 479-80w
Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987, Fines 479w
Immigration controls, EC internal trade 270w
Immigration controls, Iraq 511w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Immigrant detainees 84w, 481w, 509w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Immigration controls 481w
Leicestershire Constabulary, Finance 11-2w
Licensing laws 269w
Local radio 270w, 449
Local radio, Ownership 449-50
Lotteries 478w
Lotteries, EC countries 478w
Lotteries, Germany 477-8w
Lotteries, Harmonisation of standards 477w
Malone, Paul, Evidence 83-4w
Metropolitan Police, Special constables 509w
Nature conservation, Wales 334w
New Forest hunt, Public order policing 482w

Lloyd, Mr Peter—continued
Passport Office, Official hospitality 651w
Police, Expenditure 270w
Police, Manpower 159w
Police, Northumberland 269w
Police, Nottingham 268w
Police, Wales 335-6w
Police & ethnic minorities 698-9w
Police cautions, Departmental circulars 12w
Political refugees, EC countries 480w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 10-1w, 510-1w, 652-3w
Political refugees, Immigration rules 481w
Television programmes, Local press 13-4w
Temporary immigrants, Private health services 159w
Tobacco industry, Sports sponsorship 335w
Visas, Iraq 159w

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 158
Questions
British Tourist Authority, Government grants 551w
Employment Service local offices, Handicapped 489w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Tourist industry 549-50w
Lebanon, Hostages 545w
Tourist industry, Government assistance 550-2w

Lloyd's Bank
697w

Loan guarantee scheme
Banks 697w

Loans
Fringe benefits 255-6w
Social Fund 9-10

Local authorities
Capital investment 267
Community charge 367w
Planning permission 362w
Scotland 267
Waste disposal 613w

Local education authorities
Expenditure 341-2w

Local enterprise companies
273
Finance 276
Scotland 316w
Training 316w

Local government
Legislation 400w
Scotland 400w

Local Government Act 1972
Questions
239-40w

Local Government Act 1988
Questions
100w

Local government audit
London boroughs 515-6w

Local government borrowing
Council housing 574-6w
Interest charges 575-6w
Lambeth 520w
Scotland 575w

Local Government Boundaries Commissioner
311w

Local Government Boundary Commission for England
1094

Local government constituencies
Enfield 1094
Northern Ireland 311w

Local government expenditure

Local government expenditure—continued
50-1w
Arts finance 232-4w, 665-6
Community charge 672w
Community charge capping 100-1w
London boroughs 46w
Personal social services 114-6w
School administration 794
Urban areas 515w
Waltham Forest 672w

Local government finance
133
Barnsley (14:03:91) 1156-8
Bradford 672w
EC countries 299-300w
Salford 671-2w
South Tyneside 671w
Wakefield 671w

Local government functions
52w
Child abuse 805
Housing 368w
Snow & ice 101-2w
Waste disposal 195-6w

Local government land
Planning permission 295w
Walsall 239-40w

Local government pensions
Widowers' benefits 515w

Local government revenue
549-50w
Capital investment 48-9w, 313-4w, 645-7w
Cynon Valley 646w
Domestic rates 671w
Fees & charges 51w
Wales 645-7w
York 51-2w

Local government social services
Expenditure 498-500w
Income support 283w
Occupational therapists 320w
Residential care 175-6w, 413w
Respite care 320w

Local government staff
Curriculum 624w
Redundancy pay (11:03:91) 782
Wales 179w

Local press
Television programmes 13-4w

Local radio
270w, 449
Ownership 449-50
Radio frequencies 449

Lofthouse, Mr Geoffrey
Questions
Government grants to local authorities, Community charge 671w
Prisoners on remand, Police custody 451

London Ambulance Service
641w
Industrial disputes 559w

London Arts Board
665-6

London boroughs
Electoral register 699w
Local government audit 515-6w
Local government expenditure 46w
Standard spending assessments 46-7w

London boroughs grants scheme
Finance 370w

London Docklands Development Corporation
426-7w

London Docklands Railway (Lewisham etc) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (07:03:91) 439, (14:03:91) 1079

London Regional Transport
Estimates days (11:03:91) 685-723
Investment 419w

London Regional Transport (Penalty Fares) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (07:03:91) 439, (14:03:91) 1079

London Residuary Body
520w

London Underground
8w, 422w, 656-7, 661-2, (11:03:91) 685-723
Railway travel 657-8
Safety 426w, 657
Women 657

London Underground (King's Cross) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (07:03:91) 439, (14:03:91) 1079

London Underground (No 2) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (05:03:91) 119, (07:03:91) 439
2R* (12:03:91) 789

London Zoo
244w
Finance 244w

Long stay patients
319-20w, 558w

Lourho
Company accounts 627w

Look After Your Heart
358w

Lord Advocate
Ethnic monitoring 315w
Higher civil servants 315w
Security marking 211w

Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Legal Education Etc
Public appointments 150-1w

Lorries
Licensing 503-5w
Road tax 503-4w

Lost working days
Smoking related diseases 346-7w

Lothian Health Board
Family doctors 279w
Finance 279w

Lotteries
478w
Consolidated Fund debates (14:03:91) 1209-24
EC countries 478w
Germany 477-8w
Harmonisation of standards 477w

Lough Neagh
Freshwater fishing 465w, 658w

Low flying
331-2w

Low incomes
Pensions 80w

Low pay
Health service ancillary staff 119-20

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Questions
Business statements 1103
Police, Merseyside 268w

Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Questions
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Hong Kong 197-8w

Lung cancer
Death 346w
Smoking 346w

M1-M62 link
Road construction 422-3w

M4
Road accidents 636w
Road works 420w

M8
Environment protection 205w
Road construction 573-4w

M20
Road works 8w

M62
(04:03:91) 112-8

M80
Road construction 404w

McAllion, Mr John
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 837-42
Questions
Concessionary television licences, Pensioners 440
Homelessness, Housing 613-9w
Housing construction, Scotland 270
Inflation 161-3w
Recycling, Government grants 670w
Recycling, Government grants to local authorities 471-2w
Recycling, Scotland 577-8w
Scottish Homes, Capital investment 207-8w
Scottish Homes, Finance 206w
Scottish Homes, Government grants 206-7w
Scottish Homes, Income 207w

McAvoy, Mr Thomas
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 851
Questions
Educational assessment, Primary education 281-2
Israel, Peace negotiations 542w
Takare, Geriatrics 139w

McCartney, Mr Ian
Questions
Child benefit, Bury 123w
Educational finance, Standard spending assessments 791
Kidnapping, Prosecutions 82w

McCrea, Rev William
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (11:03:91) 736, 738, 754-7, 760-1
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 304-5, 324-7, 338, 346, 385-7, 429
Questions
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 1086-7

McCrindle, Sir Robert
Debates etc.
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 682
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 173
Questions
Air Europe, Company liquidations 675
Business statements 462
Social Fund, Loans 9-10

Macdonald, Mr Calum
Questions
Community charge review 208w

McFall, Mr John
Questions
Regional aid, Dumbarton 709w
Scottish Office, European Communities 210-1w

McGrady, Mr Eddie
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (11:03:91) 741-4
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 322-4, 326, 341
Questions
Downshire Hospital, Mental health services 389w

McGrady, Mr Eddie—continued
Employment protection, EC internal trade 1090-1
Northern Ireland Dept of Economic Development, Budgeting 311w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Housing standards 390w
Post Office, Northern Ireland 43w
Rural areas, Industrial development 390w

MacGregor, Rt Hon John, Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons
Debates etc.
Business questions point of order (06:03:91) 471
Business statements (12:03:91) 809-12
Community charge, Points of order (14:03:91) 1153-4
Recess motions, Easter (14:03:91) 1165-8
War Crimes Bill, House of Commons procedure (12:03:91) 901-4, 906, 908
Questions
Business statements 457-71, 1097-108
By elections, Ribble Valley 136
Community charge 135-6
Community charge, Clitheroe 132-3
Community charge, Inner London boroughs 133
Community charge, Ribble Valley Borough Council 131-2
Council of Europe, UK delegations 295w
European Standing Committees 17-8
Grant maintained schools 135
Hoaxes & false alarms, Punishment 132
House of Commons accommodation 31-2w
House of Commons accommodation, Millbank 620w
House of Commons Select Committees, Kuwait 19
House of Commons stationery, Recycling 17
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 19
Legislation 32-4w
Local government finance 133
Members' correspondence, Postal services 32w
Members' facilities, County Hall 16-7
Members' facilities, Satellite broadcasting 16
New Parliamentary building, House of Commons accommodation 620-2w
Official engagements 86w
Orders & regulations, House of Commons debates 31w
Parliamentary procedure 32w
Railway Reopenings (Tribunal) Bill 1990/91 134
Short Brothers, Bombings 134
Surgery, Blackburn Hyndburn & Ribble Valley Health Authority 133
Wealth distribution 134-5

McKay, Mr Allen
Debates etc.
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 951
Local government finance, Barnsley (14:03:91) 1156-8
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 869-71
Questions
Fire services, West Yorkshire 443
Safety glass, Government buildings 296w
Territorial Army, Armed forces strength 410w

MacKay, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 160
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 818
Questions
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Immigrant detainees 447
Northern Ireland, Politics & government 656w

McKelvey, Mr William
Questions
A77, Road works 206w
Northern Ireland Prison Service 654w

***Maclean, Mr David**, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture Fisheries & Food*
Questions
Animal feed, Food contamination 104w
Animal feed, Food labelling 104w
Animals, Poisoning 182w
Badgers, Bovine tuberculosis 257w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 70w
Cattle, Animal housing 104w
Foxes, Pest control 69w
Fruit juices, Food standards 183w
Infant foods, EC action 399w
Poultry, Food labelling 70w
Salmonella, Disease control 104w
Sheep dipping, Enforcement 257w
Sheep dipping, Health hazards 397w
Sheep scab 257w

McLeish, Mr Henry
Questions
Employment Service 288w
Employment Service, Civil service manpower 288w
Employment training, Expenditure 289-90w, 552w
Employment training, Scotland 67w
Hard core unemployed, Employment schemes 6w
Social security recipients, Unemployed 286-8w
Special training needs 6w
Training, Costs 5w
Training, Expenditure 5w
Training & enterprise councils, Rochdale 291w
Youth training, Expenditure 288-90w

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 25-6, 40-3, 62
War Crimes Bill, House of Commons procedure (12:03:91) 902, 909-11
Questions
Ambulance services, Scotland 611w
Forestry, Highlands of Scotland 280
Invalid care allowances, Administrative delays 693w
Invalid care allowances, Manpower 692w
Railway transport, Rural areas 419w

***McLoughlin, Mr Patrick**, Under-Secretary of State for Transport*
Questions
Air routes, Competition 662
Air traffic, RAF Northolt 308w
Air traffic control, RAF Northolt 308w
Aircraft noise, Ealing 308w
Antifouling paint, Pollution control 505w
British Midland Airways, Unfair competition 422w
British Rail, Research finance 91w
Concessionary fares, Rural areas 662-3
Day care of children, Dept of Transport 425w
Disabled workers, Dept of Transport 149w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Transport 90w
European Parliament Members, Dept of Transport 422w
Heathrow Airport, Night flying 308w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Transport 90w
HM Coastguard 91-2w, 418w, 427w
HM Coastguard, Bristol Channel 417w
Leeds-Bradford railway, Railway electrification 427w
MFV Antares, Inquiries 149w
MV Breydon, Shipping accidents 90w
MV Cam Spirit 635w
MV Cam Spirit, Inspections 635w
MV Cam Spirit, Offshore safety 635w
MV Cam Spirit, Safety standards 635w
MV Cam Spirit, Shipbuilding 635-6w

***McLoughlin, Mr Patrick**—continued*
Offshore supply vessels, Safety standards 635w
Public appointments, Dept of Transport 149w
Railway land, Wakefield 307-8w
Railway transport, Rural areas 419w
Railway travel, Northern region 634w
Roll-on roll-off ships, Safety standards 653-4
Shipping 658-9
Smoking, Dept of Transport 422w
Swinton Station, Railway closures 251w

McMaster, Mr Gordon
Questions
Disabled workers, Scotland 211-3w
Nuclear weapons tests, Armed forces dependants 223w
Nuclear weapons tests, Departmental records 223w
Nuclear weapons tests, Exservicemen 222-3w
Nuclear weapons tests, Pollution monitoring 222-3w
Revenue support grant, Scottish councils 280-1w

McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 332
Questions
Devolution, Northern Ireland 1087
Erythropoietin, Tayside Health Board 209-10w
Kidney patients, Erythropoietin 272
M4, Road accidents 636w
Newbury bypass 427w
Transplant surgery, Special health authorities 496-7w

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland, Politics & government (14:03:91) 1313-6, 1320
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 295-6, 299, 342-4, 359-60, 377-9, 390-1, 393, 400-2, 406-7, 425-6
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 26, 43
Questions
Northern Ireland government 1084
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 1087

McWilliam, Mr John
Debates etc.
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 142

Madden, Mr Max
Questions
Apex Trust, Employment training 675-6w
Business statements 465, 1105-6
Child benefit 8-9
Dept of Social Security local offices, Bradford 328w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Home visits 328w
EC free food scheme 678w
EC free food scheme, Bradford 678w
Hospital admissions, Bradford Health Authority 264w
NHS trusts, Bradford 119-20w
North Lincolnshire Health Authority, Contracts for services 120w
Racial attacks 268w
Taylorplan Services, Defence contracts 294w
Taylorplan Services, Pay 97w

Madel, Mr David
Questions
North of England Building Society, Trade union recognition 382w

Magherafelt
310-2w

Maginnis, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (11:03:91) 752-4

Magistrates
Stockport 642w

Magistrates' courts
Efficiency scrutinies 443-4

Magpies
57w

Mahon, Mrs Alice
Debates etc.
Business statements (12:03:91) 810
Questions
Age of criminal responsibility 480w
Baby milks, Marketing 705w
Business statements 466
Children & Young Persons Act 1969 481-2w
Export controls 62w
Export credit guarantees 62w
Exports, Indonesia 62w
Fire services, West Yorkshire 442
Young offenders, EC countries 481w

Maiden speeches
Carr, Michael (13:03:91) 980-3

Maidstone
Government grants to local authorities 672w

Maintenance
Children 1-2w, 6-7, 75-8w
Disclosure of information 78w
Handicapped children 77w
Personal income 15-6
Social security benefits reductions 414w

Maintenance defaulters
6-7, 77-8w

***Major, Rt Hon John**, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service*
Questions
Amphibious vehicles, Marines 1092
Armed forces training 1092
Arms trade, Middle East 1094
Buy British 1093-4
Child abuse, Local government functions 805
Child benefit, Index linking 456
Community charge 804-8, 1091-3
Community charge, Haringey 1094
Community charge, Lambeth 804
Community charge, Scotland 806-7
Conservative Party 456
Cost effectiveness, Prime Minister 355w
Council house waiting lists, Housing construction 1094
Credit controls, House purchase 455
EC internal relations 805
Economic & monetary union 807, 1096
European currency unit 807
Foreign policy, House of Commons questions 19w
Government grants to local authorities, City of Westminster 1095-6
Higher civil servants, Cabinet Office 19-20w
Hussein, Saddam 454
Intergovernmental conference 248w
IRA, Terrorism 18w
Iraq, Arms control 247-8w
Iraq, Chemical weapons 1095
Iraq, Missile technology control regime 248w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces casualties 248w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces deployment 19w, 452-3
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, British residents abroad 248w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Hong Kong 1094-5
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Iraq 247w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Military bands 454

***Major, Rt Hon John**—continued*
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Pollution control 454-5
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Prisoners of war 247w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Radio 19w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, War casualties 247w
Kuwait, Construction 805-6
Manufacturing industries 453-4
Mining, Tin 807
Ministry of Defence, Research finance 468w
Official engagements 247w, 468w
Procurement, Prime Minister 355w
Ravenscraig steelworks, Factory closures 1096
Science & technology policy 454
Scottish Assembly 455-6
Tibet 806
Tourism, Germany 808
Tourism, Ministerial duties 808
Unemployment 1095
Unemployment, Scotland 455
UNICEF, UK contributions 468w
Water charges 1093

Malins, Mr Humfrey
Questions
Aircraft, Insurance 252w

Mallon, Mr Seamus
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (11:03:91) 751, 761-2, 774
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1115-6
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 298-300, 302, 305, 308-9, 324, 327, 364-5, 382-4, 385-6, 389, 402, 422-3, 427
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 46-50, 52
Questions
Bomb disposal, Compensation 392w
Family credit, Ex gratia payments 391w
Northern Ireland government, Republic of Ireland 1088
Pensioners, Income support 391-2w
Pensioners, Northern Ireland 391w

Malone, Paul
Evidence 83-4w

Management consultants
Dept of Social Security 73-6w

Manchester Airport
Air Europe 673

Manchester Prison
697w

Manchester Strangeways Prison Riot Inquiry
450-1

Mans, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1005, 1011
Telecommunications industry (14:03:91) 1178-80, 1184

Manufactured goods
Balance of trade 169w, 538-9w
International trade 256-7w
Market share 718w

Manufacturing industries
453-4
Manpower 254-5w
Redundancy 287w

***Maples, Mr John**, Economic Secretary to the Treasury*
Debates etc.
Exchange rates (08:03:91) 646-50
Questions
Developing countries, Debts 546-7w
Exchange rates 372w
Industrial research, Research finance 163w
Inflation 161-3w

***Maples, Mr John**—continued*
Interest rates 254w
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 254-5w
National income 27w
Oil revenues, North Sea oil 164w
Retail price index, Community charge 372w
Retail price index, Community charge reduction scheme 371-2w
Retail price index, Mortgage interest rates 163-4w
Tobacco, Prices 375w
Travel, Expenditure 27w

Marek, Dr John
Questions
Civil service agencies, Departmental responsibilities 522w
Day care of children, Dept of Education & Science 337w
Day care of children, Dept of Employment 675w
Day care of children, Dept of Energy 357w
Day care of children, Dept of Health 492w
Day care of children, Dept of Social Security 663w
Day care of children, Dept of the Environment 689w
Day care of children, Dept of Trade & Industry 538w
Day care of children, Dept of Transport 425w
Day care of children, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 359-60w
Day care of children, Government departments 372w
Day care of children, Greater London 388w
Day care of children, Home Office 483w
Day care of children, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 567-8w
Day care of children, Ministry of Defence 687w
Day care of children, Northern Ireland Office 656-7w
Day care of children, Office of Arts & Libraries 425w
Day care of children, Scottish Office 572-3w
Day care of children, Treasury 434-5w
Day care of children, Welsh Office 524-5w
Payroll deduction scheme 434w

Marginal tax rates
Social security benefits 314-5w

Marine & Aviation Insurance (War Risks) Act 1952
Questions
252w

Marines
Amphibious vehicles 1092

Market share
Manufactured goods 718w

Marketing
Baby milks 705w

Marlow, Mr Tony
Questions
Army 25-6w
Community charge, Local authorities 367w
Community charge reduction scheme 367-8w
Hong Kong, Immigration applications 121-2w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces medical services 222w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Helicopters 103w, 407-8w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, International cooperation 30w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Military aircraft 222w
Israel, Lebanon 37w

Married couples allowance
Costs 95w

Married men
Take-home pay 27w

Married women
Community charge exemptions 45w

Marshall, Mr David
Debates etc.
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 681
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 155-6
London Regional Transport (11:03:91) 685-9, 701
Questions
Air Europe, Company liquidations 674
British Rail, Investment 651
Unemployment, Glasgow 275
Unemployment, Scotland 210w

Marshall, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (11:03:91) 729-33, 736
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 332-5, 361-3, 367-70, 373-5, 394-5, 397-8

Marshall, Mr John
Debates etc.
London Regional Transport (11:03:91) 698-703, 710
Persian Gulf, Environment protection (15:03:91) 1374, 1375, 1377-8
Shops, Motion to introduce Bill negatived (05:03:91) 163-5
Questions
Air routes, Competition 662
Civil service agencies, Job satisfaction 668-9
Community charge, Glasgow 268
Community charge, Lambeth 804
Education, Expenditure 655w
House of Commons accommodation 31w
Public sector housing sales, Scotland 206w
Redundant Churches Fund, Finance 14
USSR, Emigration 120w, 198w, 358-9w

Marshall, Sir Michael
Debates etc.
Eastern Europe, EC aid (04:03:91) 92-5, 107-8
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 148
Questions
Companies Act 1989, Commencement orders 88w

Martial law
Thailand 937-8

Martin, Mr David
Debates etc.
Leasehold housing (08:03:91) 589, 600, 604-6, 616
Questions
Area museum councils, Finance 664
Civil Service College, Equal opportunities 388w
Family credit, Social security recipients 72w

Martin, Mr Michael J
Questions
Greater Glasgow Health Board 278
Health services, Rural areas 122

Martlew, Mr Eric
Questions
Baby milks, Advertising 24w
British Waterways Board, Performance indicators 53w
Coffee 386w
Defence Quality Assurance Directorate, Civil service dispersal 226w
East Cumbria Health Authority, Finance 112w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission, Coffee 61-2w

Maryport Harbour
Safety standards 564w

Maternity leave
171w
Armed forces women 715w

Maternity pay
171w

Maternity payments
124w

Maternity services
Home births 492w
Hospital beds 705w

Matrix Churchill
225w

***Maude, Mr Francis**, Financial Secretary to the Treasury*
Debates etc.
Consolidated Fund (No 2) Bill, 1R (11:03:91) 758
Court of Auditors, EC budget (13:03:91) 1045-8, 1065-6
European Economic Community, Cost (14:03:91) 1295-8
Shareholders (14:03:91) 1280-4
Questions
Business expansion scheme 164-5w
Business expansion scheme, Investment 28-30w
Business expansion scheme, Rented housing 95-6w
Capital gains tax 700-1w
Capital transfer tax, Tax allowances 375w
Company cars, Tax yields 30w
Corporation tax, Tax yields 700w
Employee share ownership trusts 547w
ESOPS 547w
Income distribution 166w
Income tax, Entertainers 28w
Income tax, Personal tax allowances 94-6w
Income tax, Tax burden 165-6w, 548-9w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Income tax assessment 93-4w
Loans, Fringe benefits 255-6w
Married couples allowance, Costs 95w
Mortgage relief 28w, 31w, 700w
Mortgage relief, Costs 548w
Mortgage relief, Economic regions 161-2w
Mortgage relief, Tax rates & bands 160-1w
Mortgage relief, Taxpayers 96w
Payroll deduction scheme 29w, 434w
Personal equity plans 436-7w
Personal income 166-7w
Personal income, Tax rates & bands 27-8w
Profit related pay 29w, 437w, 633w
Profit sharing 547w
Share option scheme 632w
Take-home pay, Married men 27w
Tax allowances, Health insurance 29-30w
Tax allowances, Pensions 700w
Tax allowances, Personal pensions 633w
Tax allowances, Shares 699w
Tax yields, Company cars 632w
Tax yields, Tax allowances 95w
Taxpayers, Personal income 94w

***Mawhinney, Dr Brian**, Minister of State for Northern Ireland*
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (11:03:91) 724-9, 742
Northern Ireland, Politics & government (14:03:91) 1316-21
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 336-9, 357-9, 365-9, 387-90, 393, 395-7, 404-6, 408-9, 423, 425
Questions
Arts finance, Northern Ireland 656w
Ballycloughan Primary School, School admission 127-9w
Bomb disposal, Compensation 392w
Church unity, Northern Ireland 1085-6
Civil servants, Coleraine 129-30w
Civil servants, Overseas workers 463-4w
Community relations, Business 655w
Community relations, Church unity 1085
Day care of children, Northern Ireland Office 656-7w
Dyslexia, Northern Ireland 653w
Education, Expenditure 655w
Electric lighting, Northern Ireland Office 43w

***Mawhinney, Dr Brian**—continued*
Ethnic monitoring, Northern Ireland Office 462-3w
Higher civil servants, Northern Ireland Office 463w
Library & Information Services Council (Northern Ireland), Publishing 127w
Northern Ireland education & library boards, Manpower 390-1w
Northern Ireland Prison Service 654w
Playing fields, Land acquisition 1080
Post Office, Northern Ireland 43w
Public appointments, Northern Ireland Office 152w
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland 656w
Security, Northern Ireland 135-8w, 1089-90
Security marking, Northern Ireland Office 462w
Sports facilities, Primary education 1080
Storms, EC grants & loans 137-9w
Student loans, Student numbers 311-2w

Maxton, Mr John
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 997
Questions
Community charge, Transitional relief 209w
Community charge benefits, Expenditure 371w
Community charge reduction scheme, Scotland 208-9w
Community charge register, Scotland 64w
Employment training, Scotland 278w

Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr Robin
Questions
Business statements 460

May Inquiry
see Guildford Four Inquiry

***Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick**, Attorney-General*
Questions
Antisemitism, Publishing 501w
Arms control, Conventional weapons 362w
Authorised Conveyancing Practitioners Board, Public appointments 150w
Court of Appeal, Criminal appeals 361w
Court of Appeal, Sentencing 362w
Court of Appeal, Trials 361-2w
Ethnic monitoring, Attorney General 227-8w
Higher civil servants, Attorney General 227-8w
Legal aid, Expenditure 623w
Legal aid, Solicitors 624w
Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Legal Education Etc, Public appointments 150-1w
Maintenance, Children 1-2w
Mohammed, Omar Bakri, Incitement to murder 150w
Mortgage defaulters, Lambeth 623-4w
Mortgage defaulters, Leeds 1w
Mortgage defaulters, Repossession orders 295w
Mortgage defaulters, York 229w
Security marking, Attorney General 149-50w
Trials, Crown courts 624w
War crimes, USSR 150w
Westminster County Court, Leasehold land 361w

Meacher, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1004-12, 1014-5, 1016-20
Questions
Attendance allowance, Children 122-3w
Attendance allowance, Terminal care 75w
Civil proceedings, Community charge 83w
Cold weather payments, Social security recipients 281w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Quality control 693w
Disabled workers, Working hours 694w
Income support, Social security benefits reductions 536w

***Meacher, Mr Michael**—continued*
Pensioners, Personal income 5
Personal pensions, National insurance contributions 170w
Severe disablement allowance, Income support 122w
State earnings related pension scheme, Additional pensions 173w, 411-2w
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits disqualification 535-6w

Meale, Mr Alan
Questions
Animal products, Hazardous wastes 678-9w
Blood sports, Defence land 330w, 713w
Blood sports, Demonstrations 482w
Hare coursing, Defence land 330w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces casualties 713w
New Forest hunt, Public order policing 482w

Measurement
Beer 302w

Mecca
433w

Medical appeal tribunals
Scotland 175w

Medical examinations
Nuclear weapons tests 223w

Medical research
Antenatal care 491-2w

Medical Research Council
333w

Medical treatments
Achondroplasia 119w, 497w
Ashworth Hospital 494-5w

Medicines Control Agency
124, 317w
Accountability 318w
Administrative delays 318-9w
Fees & charges 318w
Parallel imports 318-9w

***Mellor, Rt Hon David**, Chief Secretary to the Treasury*
Questions
Balance of trade 550w
Community charge benefits, Expenditure 371w
Debts written off, Nationalised industries 546w
Industrial investment 162w, 256w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Costs 255w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Defence expenditure 30-1w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, International cooperation 30w
Local government revenue, Capital investment 313-4w
Manufactured goods, International trade 256-7w
Public expenditure, EC grants & loans 167w

Members' conduct
Speaker's rulings & statements (13:03:91) 962, 970, 975, (14:03:91) 1099

Members' correspondence
Postal services 32w

Members' facilities
County Hall 16-7
Satellite broadcasting 16

Members' interests
Speaker's rulings & statements (13:03:91) 959-60

Members' interventions
Speaker's rulings & statements (04:03:91) 63, (05:03:91) 225, (08:03:91) 638, (13:03:91) 968, 1009

Members' oath & affirmation
Carr, Michael (12:03:91) 812

Members' Post Office
32w

Members' speeches
Speaker's rulings & statements (05:03:91) 180-1, 239, (11:03:91) 733, 760, (12:03:91) 876, 884, (13:03:91) 959, (14:03:91) 1232, 1295

Mental health community care
Government grants to local authorities 350w
Wales 457w

Mental health services
Downshire Hospital 389w
Northern Regional Health Authority 260-1w

Mental patients
Hospital discharges 319-20w

Mentally disadvantaged
Homelessness 319-20w
Social Fund 10

Mentally handicapped
Handicapped children 639w

Merchant ships
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 687-8w

Mercury Communications
(05:03:91) 137-48, 387w

Merseyside
Government grants to local authorities 475w
Police 268w

Merseyside Police
482w

Merthyr Tydfil
House condition survey 235w

Meteorological Office
714w

Meteorology
Antarctic 714w
HMS Endurance 714w

Methane
Tipping of waste 613w

Metropolitan Police
159w, 305-6w, 365w, 452
Finance 334w
Manpower 650-1w
Special constables 509w

Meyer, Sir Anthony
Debates etc.
Persian Gulf, Environment protection (15:03:91) 1352-5, 1385
Questions
Government achievements, Welsh Office 527-34w
Social security, Computers in government departments 71-2w

MFV Antares
Inquiries 149w
Submarines 24w

MI5
276w

Michael, Mr Alun
Questions
Civil servants, Job security 666-7
Community care 127
Juvenile courts, Rehabilitation of offenders 445
Overseas trade, Somalia 325w
Small businesses, Wales 523-4w
Somalia 543w
Surgery, Wales 236w
University of Wales 695w
University of Wales, University finance 695w
Welsh Water, Water conservation 15w

Michie, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 855-7, 858, 859
Questions
Community charge, Ribble Valley Borough Council 131-2

Michie, Mr Bill—continued
Food stocks, Emergency planning 679w
Hospital closures 351w
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 654w

Michie, Mrs Ray
Questions
Food poisoning, Fish 684w
MFV Antares, Inquiries 149w
MFV Antares, Submarines 24w
Processed food, Food hygiene 399w
Scottish health boards, Public appointments 270-1

Middle East
Arms trade 929, 1094
Defence industries 226w
Foreign relations 930-1
Health aid 282
Peace negotiations 711w, 928-9, 938, 940
Politics & government 932
United Nations 253w

Midland Bank
697w

Midland Metro Bill 1989/90
Debates etc.
Rep° (07:03:91) 439

Midland Metro (No 2) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (07:03:91) 439
2R° (14:03:91) 1079

Military aircraft
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 222w

Military attaches
British embassies 120w

Military bands
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 454

Milk
Inflation 708w
Production quotas 677-8w

Millbank
House of Commons accommodation 620w

Miller, Sir Hal
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 857-9

Mills, Mr Iain
Questions
Economic & monetary union 807

Mine safety
Coal mining 432w

Mining
Cornwall 807
Tin (06:03:91) 431-8, 807

Minister for the Civil Service
Ethnic monitoring 15w
Higher civil servants 86w

Ministerial duties
Energy conservation 632w, 696w, 717w
Tourism 808

Ministerial statements
Air routes (11:03:91) 676-83
Air traffic (05:03:91) 149-62
Criminal appeals (14:03:91) 1109-25
Family doctors (13:03:91) 945-54
Speaker's rulings & statements (12:03:91) 812, (13:03:91) 953, 954
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 137-48

Ministers' visits abroad
Argentina 170w
European Commission 356w
Treasury 255w
Yugoslavia 544w

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food
Cost effectiveness 569-70w
Day care of children 567-8w

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food—continued
Ethnic monitoring 181w
European Parliament Members 397-8w
Higher civil servants 181w
Procurement 568w
Public appointments 182-3w
Security marking 104w
Smoking 398w

Ministry of Defence
224w
Day care of children 687w
Disabled workers 226w
Ethnic monitoring 291w
European Parliament Members 409w
Higher civil servants 291w
Public appointments 224w
Research finance 468w
Security marking 223w
Smoking 410w

Ministry of Defence Votes A
(11:03:91) 758

Mink
Licensing 399w
Scotland 399w

Minors
Scotland (08:03:91) 641

Missile technology control regime
Iraq 248w

Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
Questions
444-5

Mitchell, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Education (Publication of Examination Results) Bill, 1R (13:03:91) 956-8
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 951
Telecommunications industry (14:03:91) 1170-5, 1182-3, 1184, 1190
Questions
Community charge reduction scheme, Gedling 99-100w
Deer, Scotland 209w
Magistrates' courts, Efficiency scrutinies 443
Social Fund, Dept of Social Security local offices 534w

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Debates etc.
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 236, 239-40
Questions
Balance of trade, Germany 87-8w
Balance of trade, Manufactured goods 169w, 538-9w
Bananas, Imports 258w
Bananas, Windward Islands 254w, 563-4w
Exchange rates 372w
Interest rates 254w
Lonrho, Company accounts 627w

Mobility allowance
Advertising codes of practice 248-9w

Mohammed, Omar Bakri
Incitement to murder 150w

Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Debates etc.
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 678
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (11:03:91) 733
Business questions intervention (06:03:91) 460
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 176
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 296-8, 359, 363-4, 368
Questions
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 1086

Monkeys
334w

Monofilament gill nets
Freshwater fishing 657w

Monopolies & Mergers Commission
152w, 273-4, 386w
Coffee 61-2w

Monro, Sir Hector
Debates etc.
Armed forces, Scotland (11:03:91) 786-7
Forestry Bill, 1R (06:03:91) 285
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 240-1
Questions
Dumfries & Galloway Health Board, Finance 271
Local authorities, Capital investment 267
Whisky, Taiwan 429w

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 160
Questions
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, BBC External Services 937

Moorings
54w

Morgan, Mr Rhodri
Questions
Achondroplasia, Medical treatments 119w, 497w
Achondroplasia, Scotland 460w
Acid rain 101w
Alternative energy, Non-fossil fuel obligation 102w
Association of Artists & Designers in Wales, Arts finance 259w
Channel tunnel, Railway freight transport 252w
Civil servants, South Wales 373w
Cold weather payments, Press advertising 124w
Cold weather payments, Social security claims 282w
Director General of Electricity Supply 103w
European Court of Justice, Nature conservation 473-4w
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Privatisation 302-3w, 428w
Gas fired power stations, Licensing 631w
Gas tariffs, Electricity generation 259w
Hospital beds, War casualties 459w
Hospitals, South Glamorgan Health Authority 459w
Inland waterways, Recreation spaces 58w
Land acquisition, South Glamorgan Health Authority 459w
Nature conservation, EC law 236w
Non-fossil fuel obligation 631w
Non-fossil fuel obligation, Alternative energy 102-3w
Prosthetics, Wales 179-80w
Retail price index, Mortgage interest rates 163-4w
River Taff, Pollution control 647-8w
Salmonella, Disease control 265w
Sites of special scientific interest, Planning permission 243w
Sizewell B, Computer applications 630w
Somalia, Foreign policy 253-4w
South Glamorgan Health Authority, Finance 458w
Training & enterprise councils, Conflict of interests 168w
Training & enterprise councils, South Glamorgan 6-7w, 167w, 490w
Trawsfynydd power station, Nuclear safety 630-1w
University finance, Higher education 232w

Morley, Mr Elliot
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 158
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 233-6
Questions
British Waterways Bill (HL) 1990/91 54-5w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 154-5
Questions
Advertising codes of practice, Mobility allowance 248-9w
Air Europe, Manchester Airport 673
Church buildings, Handicapped 13
Disability living allowance, Diets 417w
Disability Living Allowance & Disability Working Allowance Bill 1990/91, Orders & regulations 283w
Disabled workers, Aids for handicapped 379w
Disabled workers, Employment rehabilitation 379-80w
Disabled workers, Special training needs 379w
Motability, Social security recipients 283w
Quota of disabled workers 380w
Social Fund, Mentally disadvantaged 10
Social security, Consolidation Bills 327w
Tax allowances, Handicapped drivers 375w

Morris, Rt Hon John
Questions
Duffryn Workshops, Factory closures 355w

Morris, Mr Michael
Questions
Drugs, Patents 114w
Prescriptions 124

Mortgage defaulters
Lambeth 623-4w
Leeds 1w
Repossession orders 295w
Romford 295w
Scotland 265, 279-80w
Wandsworth 623-4w
York 229w

Mortgage interest rates
Retail price index 163-4w

Mortgage relief
28w, 31w, 700w
Costs 548w
Economic regions 161-2w
Tax rates & bands 160-1w
Taxpayers 96w

Motability
Social security recipients 283w

Mothers
Family credit 664w

Motor vehicle parts
Standardisation 9w

Motor vehicle safety
Cars 10w
Northern Ireland 392w
Secondhand cars 392w

Motor Vehicles (International Circulation) (Amendment) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(04:03:91) 20

Motorways
Litter 251w, 503w

Moynihan, Mr Colin, Under-Secretary of State for Energy
Debates etc.
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 536, 557-67
Questions
Alternative energy, Non-fossil fuel obligation 102w
Benzene, Petrol 371w
Gas reserves, Scotland 168-9w
Non-fossil fuel obligation, Alternative energy 102-3w
Petroleum production, EC countries 17-8w

Mudd, Mr David
Debates etc.
Tin, Cornwall (06:03:91) 434-6

Mullin, Mr Chris
Debates etc.
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 476, 486
Questions
Hassan, Hazem Ali, Deportation 507w

Mullin, Mr Chris—continued
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces casualties 410-1w

Multiple births
Child benefit 693w

Multiply handicapped
Handicapped pupils 105w
Wales 179w

Museums & galleries
664-5
Consolidated Fund debates (14:03:91) 1244-59
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 21w
Repairs & maintenance 423w

Museums & Galleries Commission
423w, 664

MV Breydon
Shipping accidents 90w

MV Cam Spirit
635w
Inspections 635w
Offshore safety 635w
Safety standards 635w
Shipbuilding 635-6w

Myalgic encephalomyelitis
(13:03:91) 955

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (13:03:91) 955

Myanmar
Foreign relations 710w

National Association of Governors & Managers
Government grants 40w

National Audit Office
663w

National Coal Board
see British Coal Corporation

National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations
111w

National Finance
see Treasury

National House Building Council
386w

National income
27w

National Institute for Medical Research
333w

National insurance contributions
Personal pensions 170w
Social security finance 446-8w

National Loans Fund
546w

National No Smoking Day
336w, 339w, 350w, 361w, 368w, 384w, 398w, 402w, 410w, 413w, 422w, 424w, 437w, 541w

National parks
Land acquisition 57-8w

National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949
Questions
68w
Sites of special scientific interest 243w

National Power
431w, 505-6w

National Radiological Protection Board
222w

National Rivers Authority
58w, 236w, 245w, 564w

National security
Immigrant detainees 14w

National Westminster Bank
697w

Nationalised industries
Debts written off 546w

NATO
203-4w, 224w, 226w
Arms trade 225w
Warsaw Pact 432w

NATO Conference of National Armaments Directors
225w

Natural gas
Electricity generation 356-7w

Natural gas production
EC countries 17-8w

Nature Conservancy Council
243w, 521w
Repairs & maintenance 572w

Nature conservation
Badgers 242-3w, 522-3w, 571-2w
Birds 57w
Customs 372-3w
EC action 364w
EC law 236w
European Court of Justice 473-4w
Game 243-4w
Planning permission 242w
Wales 236w, 334w
West Germany 473-4w

Nazi war crimes
Criminal proceedings (07:03:91) 472, (12:03:91) 901-13

Neale, Sir Gerrard
Debates etc.
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 145, (14:03:91) 1175-8, 1181
Questions
Archaeology, Wrecks 197w

Neath
927
By election writs (12:03:91) 789

***Needham, Mr Richard**, Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Debates etc.
Oral question time intervention (14:03:91) 1081
Questions
Building regulations, Fees & charges 127w, 151w
Bus services, Northern Ireland 152w
Electricity distribution, Rathlin Island 655w
Employment level, Coleraine 129-32w
Employment opportunities, Northern Ireland 1091
Employment protection, EC internal trade 1090-1
Environment protection, Northern Ireland 655w
Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland, Recruitment 139w
Government grants to local authorities, Northern Ireland 126w
Level crossings, Safety barriers 43w
Non-fossil fuel obligation, Northern Ireland 151-2w
Private roads, Antrim 127w, 658-9w
Private roads, Northern Ireland 654w
Public sector housing, Antrim 128w
Railway accidents, Northern Ireland 266w
Rates & rating, Northern Ireland 125-8w
Small businesses, Northern Ireland 1080-1
Tipping of waste, Carrickfergus 266w
Tourism, Northern Ireland 654w
Unemployment, Coleraine 131-2w
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 654w, 1091

Nellist, Mr Dave
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 996
Iraq-Kuwait conflict (14:03:91) 1138-42
Questions
Business statements 1108
Civil proceedings, Community charge 509-10w
Elderly, Death 155-6w
Income distribution 166w
Industrial investment 256w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Merchant ships 687-8w
Manufactured goods, Market share 718w
Taxpayers, Personal income 94w

Nelson, Mr Anthony
Questions
Middle East, Politics & government 932

Network SouthEast
91w
Performance indicators 418-9w

New businesses
435-6w

"New Directions"
105w

New Forest
482w

New Forest hunt
Public order policing 482w

New Parliamentary building
House of Commons accommodation 620-2w

New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL) 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R, Money res & Ways & means res* (05:03:91) 169-232
Questions
92-3w

New towns
Property transfer 65w
Scotland 65w

Newbury bypass
427w

Newcastle upon Tyne
Government grants to local authorities 517w

Newham Hospital
Construction 130

Newspaper press
Distributive trade 384-5w

***Newton, Rt Hon Tony**, Secretary of State for Social Security*
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1011, 1013-20, 1027
Questions
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Social security benefits 3-4
Pensioners, Community charge 2
Pensioners, Income support 7
Pensioners, Inflation 5
Pensioners, Owner occupied housing 1-2, 4-5
Pensioners, Personal income 4-5
Pensioners, Social security benefits 7-8
Retirement pensions 2-3

Newton Abbot
54w

Newtownabbey
266w
Private roads 127w, 658-9w
Public sector housing 128w
Road traffic 388-9w

Next steps initiative
388w, 522w, 668-9
Public Accounts Committee 669

NHS
Capital investment 495w
Expenditure 116w
Land values 261-2w
Per capita costs 110w
Trade unions 119-20

NHS administration
Supra-regional services 112-3w

NHS charges
353-5w
Hearing aids 641w

NHS complaints
Compensation 558w

NHS finance
23w
Leeds 343w

NHS Management Executive
316-7w

NHS trusts
109w, 344w
Bradford 119-20w
Christie Hospital Manchester 263-4w
Hospitals 205w
Scotland 205w, 272-3, 279
South Yorkshire Ambulance Service 345w
Wales 458w, 526w

Nicholls, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 30
Questions
Business statements 466-7
Public sector housing, Rural areas 246w

Nicholson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 844, 871-4
Questions
Children Act 1989 111w
Civil service agencies 388w
Disabled workers 376-9w
English education, Educational standards 803
Hospital waiting lists, Bloomsbury Health Authority 553w
Public libraries, Taunton 663
Squatting, Shops 482w
Veterinary Investigation Service, Efficiency scrutinies 183-4w

Nicholson, Miss Emma
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1007-8, 1015, 1034-5
Persian Gulf, Environment protection (15:03:91) 1347-9
Questions
By elections, Ribble Valley 136
Computer software, EC action 427-8w
Food poisoning, Cheese 112w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces dependants 293-4w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Postal services 221w, 329w
Processed food, Food hygiene 112w
Schools, Capital investment 797
Spelling, Educational standards 185-6w
Spelling, Research 185w

Night flying
Heathrow Airport 308w

Nitrogen oxides
14-5w
Pollution monitoring 473w, 669-70w

Non-fossil fuel obligation
16w, 631w
Alternative energy 102-3w
Northern Ireland 151-2w
Scotland 459w

Non-Fossil Fuel Purchasing Agency
258-9w

Norfolk
Teachers 338w

Norfolk broads
57-8w

Norris, Mr Steve
Debates etc.
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 143
Questions
Domestic rates, Hackney 241w
Households, Hackney 99w
Transitional relief, Hackney 47w

North Devon Health Authority
153w

North Devon link road
Compensation 421w

North East Derbyshire
517w

North Lincolnshire Health Authority
Contracts for services 120w

North of England Building Society
Trade union recognition 382w

North Sea
Sea pollution 679w

North Sea oil
Oil revenues 164w

North West region
Uniform business rate 515w

North West Water Group
60w

North Western Regional Health Authority
Health service staff 555w
Hospital beds 555w

North Yorkshire
Crime 277w

Northern Development Company
249-50w

Northern Health & Social Services Board
Hospitals 655w

Northern Ireland
Appropriations in aid (11:03:91) 724-57, 759-82
Arts finance 656w
Bomb disposal 392w
Building regulations 127w, 151w, 310w
Bus services 152w
Cancer 391w
Cattle 660w
Church unity 1085-6
Civil servants 463-4w
Cold weather payments 513w
Community relations 655w, 1085
Consolidated Fund debates (14:03:91) 1310-21
Defence review 688w
Devolution 1087
Dyslexia 653w
Education 655w
Employment discrimination 466-7w
Employment opportunities 1091
Employment protection 1090-1
Enterprise initiative 1080-1
Environment protection 655w
Family credit 391w
Food hygiene (04:03:91) 110
Freshwater fishing 465w, 657-8w
Government grants to local authorities 126w
Hospital beds 656w
Hospitals 132-5w
Level crossings 43w
Local government constituencies 311w
Motor vehicle safety 392w
Non-fossil fuel obligation 151-2w
Pensioners 391-2w
Playing fields 1080
Politics & government 656w, 1087-8
Post Office 43w

***Northern Ireland**—continued*
Private roads 654w
Public expenditure 656w
Radioactivity 464-6w
Railway accidents 266w
Rates & rating 125-8w
Recreation spaces 266w
Residential care 44w
Retirement pensions 513w
Rural areas 390w
Security 135-8w, 1089-90
Sheep 660-2w
Small businesses 1080-1
Social security abuse 659-60w
Social security payments 466w
Social security recipients 512-3w
Sports facilities 1080
Storms 137-9w
Student loans 311-2w
Terrorism (04:03:91) 21-71, 135-8w, (06:03:91) 430, 1086-7
Tourism 654w
Unemployment 654w, 1091

Northern Ireland Dept of Economic Development
Budgeting 311w

Northern Ireland Dept of Health & Social Services
391w

Northern Ireland education & library boards
Manpower 390-1w

Northern Ireland (Emergency & Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(06:03:91) 430

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Ways & means res*, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 290-430
Questions
18w

Northern Ireland government
1083-4, 1088-9
Republic of Ireland 1082-4, 1088-9

Northern Ireland health & social services boards
44w, 132-4w

Northern Ireland Housing Executive
127-8w, 658-9w
Housing standards 390w
System building 310-2w

Northern Ireland Local Government Boundaries Commissioner
see Local Government Boundaries Commissioner

Northern Ireland Office
129-30w, 463w
Day care of children 656-7w
Electric lighting 43w
Environmental policy 267w
Ethnic monitoring 462-3w
Higher civil servants 463w
Public appointments 152w
Security marking 462w
Smoking 392w

Northern Ireland Prison Service
654w

Northern Ireland Railways
43w

Northern Ireland Rural Development Council
390w

Northern Ireland Tourist Board
Scottish Tourist Board 208w

Northern line
Streatham 657

Northern region
Capital investment 495w
Doctors 493-4w

***Northern region**—continued*
Educational finance 511w
Employment level 550w
Employment opportunities 551w
Government assistance to industry 716w
Higher education 338w
Nurses 493-4w
Railway travel 634w
Regional aid 539w
Regional selective assistance 429-30w
Road construction 501-4w
Self-employed 487w, 551-2w
Small businesses 435-6w
Urban areas 516w

Northern Regional Health Authority
Mental health services 260-1w

Northumberland
Police 269w

Norway
Salmon 303w

Norwich
Crime prevention (05:03:91) 258-64

Nottingham
456
Police 268w

Nottingham Health Authority
119

Nottinghamshire
Derelict land grants 240w

Nuclear Electric
431w, 506w, 630-1w

Nuclear fuel reprocessing
Plutonium 16-7w, 431w
Radioactive wastes 17w, 431-2w

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate
630w

Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty
Iraq 253w

Nuclear physics
Daresbury 801-2

Nuclear power stations
Decommissioning 506w

Nuclear safety
Sizewell B 301w
Trawsfynydd power station 630-1w

Nuclear weapons tests
Armed forces dependants 223w
Departmental records 223w
Exservicemen 222-3w
Medical examinations 223w
Pollution monitoring 222-3w
War pensions 667w

Nursery nurses
Basford Hall College of Further Education 168w

Nursery schools
799-800
School population 442w, 799

Nurses
Career structure 576w
Greater Glasgow Health Board 576w
Northern region 493-4w
Scotland 404-8w

Nurses' homes
Greater London 118w

Nursing homes
Hospital beds 265w
Income support 172w, 323-4w
Operating costs 80w

Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Debates etc.
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 189-93

Objects in lieu of tax
Art works 461w
Scotland 461w

O'Brien, Mr William
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 874-6
Questions
Parish councils, Uniform business rate 244w
Urban areas, Government grants to local authorities 515w
Urban areas, Local government expenditure 515w
Urban development corporations 365-6w

Obstetrics
Hospital beds 705w

Occupational pensions
6

Occupational therapists
Local government social services 320w

Occupied territories
232w, 361w, 712w
Israel 432w, 929

Offenders
Women 12w

Office of Arts & Libraries
Day care of children 425w
Environmental policy 21w
Ethnic monitoring 97w
Higher civil servants 96-7w
Public appointments 160w
Smoking 424w
Tobacco industry 424w

Office of Electricity Regulation
258-9w

Office of Population Censuses & Surveys
417w

Offices
European Development Bank 159-60w
Property Services Agency 54w

Official engagements
86w, 247w, 468w

Official hospitality
Passport Office 651w

Offshore Installations (General Provisions) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (07:03:91) 472
2R order read (15:03:91) 1399

Offshore safety
MV Cam Spirit 635w

Offshore supply vessels
Safety standards 635w

O'Hara, Mr Edward
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 859-61
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 146-7
Questions
Educational finance 794
Fire Service College, Revenue support grant 45w
Homelessness 236-7w
Housing investment programmes, Council housing 98w
Housing investment programmes, Homelessness 98-9w
Shipping 658-9
Widows, Pensions 5-6

Oil exports
Eastern Europe 301-2w

Oil pollution
Persian Gulf 189-90w, 297w, 367w

Oil pollution control
Civil service manpower 367w
Equipment 717-8w

Oil revenues
North Sea oil 164w

Older workers
6w

Ombudsman
Tourism 674-5

One parent families
Social security benefits rules 71w

O'Neill, Mr Martin
Questions
Arms trade 203w
Arms trade, Export controls 440w
Arms trade, Iraq 226w, 440w
Defence equipment 224w
Defence industries, Iraq 225-6w
Defence industries, Middle East 226w
Defence procurement 224w
Global & Technical Management Services, Iraq 202w
NATO, Arms trade 225w
Space Research Corporation, Exports 225w
USSR, CFE Treaty 711w
Walter Somers, Arms exports 440w
Walter Somers, Departmental correspondence 224w

Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 834-7
Questions
Beer, Measurement 302w

Open prisons
Prison escapes 158w, 305w, 334w, 648-9w, 698w, (14:03:91) 1129-31

Operating theatres
Wales 643w

Ophthalmology
Hospital beds 492w
Liverpool 492w

Oppenheim, Mr Phillip
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 959
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 67-8
Questions
Business statements 469, 1105
Credit controls, House purchase 455
NHS charges 353-5w
Warrant sales, Community charge 277

Opposed Bill Committee
(13:03:91) 923-6

Opposition
Accountability 1093

Opposition days
Community charge (13:03:91) 959-1003
Family income (13:03:91) 1004-44

Opposition parties
Kurdistan 546w

Oppression
Turkey 935

Oral questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (04:03:91) 19, (05:03:91) 125, (06:03:91) 284, (14:03:91) 1081, 1089, 1090

Oral tobacco
348w

Orange juice
183w

Order confirmation bills
(13:03:91) 923-6

Orders & regulations
Broadcasting Act 1990 649-50w
Community charge 518-9w
Disability Living Allowance & Disability Working Allowance Bill 1990/91 283w
House of Commons debates 31w
Road traffic control 400w

Orders & regulations—continued
Speaker's rulings & statements (05:03:91) 233
Special schools 342w
Transport of hazardous materials 332w
Waste disposal 670w
Water pollution 472w

Orimulsion
Ince B power station 313w

Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Questions
Cold weather payments, Administrative costs 664w
Cold weather payments, Expenditure 664w

Out-patients
York Health Authority 119w

Oversea Superannuation Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Rep* & 3R (04:03:91) 79-81

Oversea superannuation scheme
(04:03:91) 79-81

Overseas aid
Arms trade 513-4w
Cyprus 438-9w
Ghana 438w
Iraq 514w, 712w
Kuwait 514w
Palestine 232w

Overseas Development
see Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Overseas Development Administration
199-200w, 359-60w

Overseas trade
Somalia 325w

Overseas workers
Civil servants 463-4w

Owner occupied housing
520w
Pensioners 1-2, 4-5

Ownership
Local radio 449-50

Ozone
14-5w

P & O
Industrial disputes 381-2w

Packaging
Pharmacy 320w
Prescription drugs 320w

Paediatrics
Hospital consultants 554w

Page, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 142
Questions
Social security, Civil service agencies 70w

Paice, Mr James
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1004
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 837-8, 881-4
Questions
Imitation guns, Retail trade 269w
Maintenance, Personal income 15-6
Pre-payment certificates 127
Smoking 15
Waste disposal, Local government functions 195-6w

Paintings
Exhibitions 664

Paisley
269-70

Paisley, Rev Ian
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (11:03:91) 724, 727, 732, 733-9
Court of Auditors, EC budget (13:03:91) 1046, 1061-3

***Paisley, Rev Ian**—continued*
European Bank of Reconstruction & Development (Immunities & Privileges) Order 1991 (13:03:91) 1068
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 297-8, 304, 320, 325-7, 329-30, 333, 335-6, 338, 344-6, 381, 389
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 22, 24-6
Questions
Church unity, Northern Ireland 1085-6
Economic & monetary union 1096
Government grants to local authorities, Northern Ireland 126w
Rates & rating, Northern Ireland 125-8w
Small businesses, Northern Ireland 1081

Palace of Westminster
14-5

Palace Theatre Southend
Arts finance (14:03:91) 1127-8

Palestine
Human rights 629w
Israel 939-40
Kuwait 629w
Overseas aid 232w
Self-determination of states 940

Palestine Liberation Organisation
930-1, 939-40
Peace negotiations 932, 939

Parallel imports
Drugs 317w, 552-3w
Medicines Control Agency 318-9w

Parental responsibility
Young offenders 482w

Parents rights
Children in care 402w

Parish councils
Uniform business rate 244w

Parking
Cumbria 420-1w

Parkinsons' disease
Prescription charges exemptions 126-7

Parliamentary constituencies
Electorate 269w
Private Members' motions (08:03:91) 635-40

Parliamentary procedure
32w

Parliamentary security
Speaker's rulings & statements (06:03:91) 335

Parliamentary sovereignty & European Community
Foreign policy 935

Parry, Mr Robert
Questions
Playhouse Theatre Liverpool, Arts finance 96w

Passport Office
Official hospitality 651w

Passports
Hong Kong 36-7w

Patents
Drugs 114w

Patients
Basingstoke Hospital 558w

***Patnick, Mr Irvine**, Lord Commissioner to the Treasury*
Debates etc.
Lotteries (14:03:91) 1216

***Patten, Rt Hon Chris**, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster*
Debates etc.
Business questions intervention (06:03:91) 459

***Patten, Rt Hon Chris**—continued*
Questions
Magistrates, Stockport 642w
Public appointments, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 184w

***Patten, Rt Hon John**, Minister of State, Home Office*
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 34-5, 56, 65-8
Questions
Age of criminal responsibility 480w
Association of Chief Police Officers, Inner city areas 769w
Charities, Income 276w
Charity Commission, Finance 11w
Children & Young Persons Act 1969 481-2w
Civil proceedings, Community charge 83w, 509-10w
Court of Appeal, Criminal appeals 81w
Crime, Leicestershire 159w, 270w
Crime, North Yorkshire 277w
Crime Concern 12w
Detection rates, Greater London 305-6w
Domestic violence 450
False imprisonment, Compensation 270-1w
Fire services, Pay 507-9w
Fire services, West Yorkshire 442-3
Government grants to voluntary organisations 651-2w
Huckfield, Les, Complaints against police 482w
Juvenile courts, Rehabilitation of offenders 445
Kidnapping, Prosecutions 82w
Life imprisonment 82w
Magistrates' courts, Efficiency scrutinies 443-4
Offenders, Women 12w
Prerogative of mercy 81w
Prisoners of war, Wormhoudt 480w
Probation, Wales 509w
Sentencing, Sexual offences 476-7w
Shoplifting, Acquittals 268-9w
Speed limits, Prosecutions 507w
Squatting, Shops 482w
Swansea Accommodation for the Single Homeless, Government grants 483w
Traffic wardens, Greater London 276w
Video recordings, Children 649w
Young offenders, Crime prevention 267-8w
Young offenders, EC countries 481w
Young offenders, Parental responsibility 482w
Young offenders, School leaving 450
Youth courts, Rehabilitation of offenders 446

Pawsey, Mr James
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 963
Questions
Bankruptcy 436w
Community charge reduction scheme, Rugby 47w
Government achievements, Dept of Employment 483-6w
Motorways, Litter 251w, 503w
Power stations, Land acquisition 505w
Power stations, Land ownership & tenure 505-6w
Power stations, Warwickshire 506w
School administration, Local government expenditure 794
War crimes, USSR 150w

Pay incentives
Railway workers 652-3

Pay settlements
Teachers 336-7w

Payroll deduction scheme
29w, 434w

Peace negotiations
Hussein, Saddam 939
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 542w, 941

***Peace negotiations**—continued*
Israel 542w, 939-40
Middle East 711w, 928-9, 938, 940
Palestine Liberation Organisation 932, 939

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Questions
Fire services, West Yorkshire 443

Pembrokeshire Health Authority
526w

Pendle
474w

Pendry, Mr Tom
Questions
Homelessness, Greater Manchester 296w

Pension books
284w

Pensioners
Community charge 2
Concessionary television licences 440-2
Expenditure 536-7w
Health insurance 29-30w
Heating 666w
Income 5
Income support 7, 391-2w
Inflation 5
Northern Ireland 391-2w
Owner occupied housing 1-2, 4-5
Personal income 4-6, 70w, 79w
Personal savings 11
Social security benefits 7-8, 284w
Wealth 10-1, 70-1w

Pensions
Fire services 507-9w
Interest rates 11
Low incomes 80w
Tax allowances 700w
Widows 5-6

Performance related pay
Family doctors 642w

Persian Gulf
Environment protection (15:03:91) 1335-95
Oil pollution 189-90w, 297w, 367w

Personal equity plans
436-7w

Personal income
166-7w
Maintenance 15-6
Pensioners 4-6, 70w, 79w
Tax rates & bands 27-8w
Taxpayers 94w

Personal pensions
National insurance contributions 170w
Tax allowances 633w

Personal savings
Pensioners 11

Personal social services
Elderly 22-3w
Local government expenditure 114-6w

Personal stereos
Road safety 422w

Personal tax allowances
Income tax 94-6w

Personnel
Post Office 429w
Residential care 703w
Scottish Enterprise 459-60w

Peru
Cholera 15w
Health aid 15w

Pest control
Birds 69w
Foxes 69w, 140w, 570w, 696w

Pesticides
Poisoning 182w

Petrol
Benzene 371w

Petrol pumps
Air pollution control 55w

Petroleum production
631-2w
EC countries 17-8w

Pharmacists
Prescriptions 262w

Pharmacy
Packaging 320w

Phonecards
450-1

Physical education
446w
Curriculum 39w
Scotland 146w

Pig Husbandry Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Instruction to Com (04:03:91) 111
Order for consideration read (08:03:91) 641

Pike, Mr Peter L
Debates etc.
Iraq-Kuwait conflict (14:03:91) 1142
Questions
Dangerous driving 656

Piper Alpha Inquiry
(07:03:91) 473-567

Piper Alpha platform
(07:03:91) 473-567

Planning & Compensation Bill (HL) 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R & Money res* (12:03:91) 816-900

Planning appeals
55w
Administrative costs 55w

Planning authorities
Waste disposal 613w

Planning Inspectorate
55w

Planning permission
370w
Environment protection 56w
Forests 362w
Heliports 471w
Incinerators 516-7w
Local authorities 362w
Local government land 295w
Nature conservation 242w
Sites of special scientific interest 243w, 521w

Playhouse Theatre Liverpool
Arts finance 96w

Playing fields
Greenwich 520w
Land acquisition 520w, 1080
Northern Ireland 1080

Plutonium
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 16-7w, 431w

Pneumoconiosis etc (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations 1991
Debates etc.
(05:03:91) 162

Points of order
Speaker's rulings & statements (04:03:91) 20, 65, (05:03:91) 236, (06:03:91) 281-2, 284, (13:03:91) 965-6, 969, (14:03:91) 1154, 1169

Poisoning
Animals 182w
Fire resistant materials 62w
Pesticides 182w

Pol Pot
942-4

Police
Community charge capping 448-9
Expenditure 270w
Finance 334w
Manpower 159w
Merseyside 268w
Northumberland 269w
Nottingham 268w
Video equipment 482w
Wales 335-6w

Police & ethnic minorities
698-9w

Police cautions
Departmental circulars 12w

Police civilians
335-6w

Police custody
Prisoners on remand 451

Police grant
11-2w

Police housing
Community charge reduction scheme 474w

Police pensions
306w

Police vehicles
Royal Parks Constabulary 365-6w

Political refugees
EC countries 480w
Immigration applications 10-1w, 510-1w, 652-3w
Immigration rules 481w
Social security benefits rates 172w

Politics & government
Cambodia 942-4
Middle East 932
Northern Ireland 656w, 1087-8

Pollution control
297w
Antifouling paint 505w
Fees & charges 297-9w
Fossil fuels 16w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 454-5
River Taff 647-8w
Water pollution 66-7w

Pollution Inspectorate
see HM Inspectorate of Pollution

Pollution monitoring
Nitrogen oxides 473w, 669-70w
Nuclear weapons tests 222-3w

Population projection
Elderly 22w

Port Glasgow
174-5w, 580w, 664-7w
Community care grants 173-4w

Porter, Mr David
Debates etc.
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 488, 511-4
Questions
EC integration, Intergovernmental conference 203-4w
Housing investment programmes, Waveney District Council 368w
Local government functions, Housing 368w

Portillo, Mr Michael, Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 994-8
Questions
Community charge capping 521w
Community charge capping, Local government expenditure 100-1w
Domestic rates, Local government revenue 671w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Community charge exemptions 48-9w, 100-1w
Leeds Development Corporation, Compulsory purchase 193w

Portillo, Mr Michael—continued
Leeds Development Corporation, Property development 193-4w
Local government revenue, Capital investment 48-9w
London boroughs grants scheme, Finance 370w
Tyne & Wear Development Corporation, Employment opportunities 364w
Uniform business rate, North West region 515w
Urban areas, Government grants to local authorities 515w
Urban areas, Local government expenditure 515w
Urban development corporations 365-6w

Portsmouth
664

Post Office
Disclosure of information 306w
Northern Ireland 43w
Personnel 429w
Relocation of employees 385w
Termination of employment 385w

Postal services
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 221w, 329w, 440-1w
Members' correspondence 32w

Poultry
Food labelling 70w

Powell, Mr Ray
Debates etc.
Shops, Motion to introduce Bill negatived. (05:03:91) 165-6
Training & Enterprise Councils Bill, 1R (12:03:91) 813-5
Questions
Members' facilities, County Hall 16-7

Powell, Mr William
Questions
AIDS, Disease control 119w
British Library, Construction 424w
EC Agriculture Council 183w
Pensioners, Personal income 79w

Power stations
Bacteria 489w
Land acquisition 505w
Land ownership & tenure 505-6w
Legionnaires' disease 489w
Licensing 356-7w
Warwickshire 506w

PowerGen
505-6w

Powys
Hospital waiting lists 696w

Pregnancy
Health education 556w

Pregnancy tests
Costs 556w

Pregnant women
Income support 123w

Pre-payment certificates
127

Prerogative of mercy
81w

Pre-school education
441w
Curriculum 799

Prescott, Mr John
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 150-2

Prescription charges
127

Prescription Charges (Exempt Medical Conditions) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (15:03:91) 1399

Prescription charges exemptions
Parkinson's disease 126-7

Prescription drugs
Cost effectiveness 109w
Packaging 320w

Prescriptions
122-4
Interleukin 322w
Pharmacists 262w

Press advertising
Absent voting 336w
Cold weather payments 124w

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989
Questions
18w, 698w

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(04:03:91) 21-71

Price, Sir David
Questions
Church buildings, Handicapped 12-3
Light dues 147w
Supra-regional services, Finance 112-3w

Price increases
Electricity tariffs 16w
Water charges 469w

Price Waterhouse
80w, 120w

Primary education
Ceredigion 355-6w
Dyfed 355-6w
Educational assessment 281-2, 400-1w
Grant maintained schools 444w
Sports facilities 1080

Primary health care
110-1w

Prime Minister
Cost effectiveness 355w
Procurement 355w

Priority routes
Civil service manpower 307w
Greater London 426w

Prison accommodation
Prison discipline 275w
Prison hospitals 13w

Prison discipline
271-2w
Body belts 271-2w, 274-6w
Prison accommodation 275w

Prison education services
157w

Prison escapes
Open prisons 158w, 305w, 334w, 648-9w, 698w, (14:03:91) 1129-31

Prison hospitals
Barker, Joseph Arthur Lewis 277w
Prison accommodation 13w

Prison overcrowding
Bullwood Hall Prison 13w
Styal Prison 13w

Prison staff
Crimes of violence 274-5w

Prisoners
Ex gratia payments 275w
Israel 120w

Prisoners of war
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 247w, 329w
Rollerstone camp 25w
Wormhoudt 480w

Prisoners on remand
Consolidated Fund debates (14:03:91) 1299-309

Prisoners on remand—continued
Custodial treatment 450-1
Greater Manchester 697w, (14:03:91) 1299-309
Police custody 451
Yorkshire & Humberside 451

Prisoners' release
Barker, Joseph Arthur Lewis 277w

Prisoners' transfers
271w

Privacy
Residential care 324w

Private Bills
House of Commons standing orders (13:03:91) 923-6

Private education
Special education 342w

Private health services
Temporary immigrants 159w

Private Members' Bills
Speaker's rulings & statements (08:03:91) 642

Private Members' motions
Iraq-Kuwait conflict (15:03:91) 1335-95
Leasehold housing (08:03:91) 577-634
Parliamentary constituencies (08:03:91) 635-40
Recycling (15:03:91) 1396-8

Private notice questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (11:03:91) 674, (12:03:91) 816

Private rented housing
520w

Private roads
Antrim 127w, 658-9w
Newtownabbey 127w, 658-9w
Northern Ireland 654w

Private sector
Residential care 353w
Road construction 92-3w, (05:03:91) 169-232

Private sector housing
Empty housing 221w
Scotland 221w

Private transport
Import controls 9w

Privatisation
Civil servants 667
Crown Suppliers 692w
Electricity supply industry 314-6w, 460-1w, 506w
Export Credits Guarantee Department 88-9w, 302-3w, 428w
Remand in custody 451

Probation
Wales 509w

Processed food
Food hygiene 112w, 280, 399w

Procurement
Civil service manpower 355w, 357-8w, 445w, 488w, 568w, 629w
Dept of Education & Science 445w
Dept of Employment 488w
Dept of Energy 357-8w
Dept of Health 701-2w
Dept of Social Security 664-5w
Dept of the Environment 690w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 628-9w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 568w
Prime Minister 355w

Procurement Executive
Air force bases 715w

Product safety
Cosmetics 537w

Production quotas
Milk 677-8w

Professional organisations
Residential care 704w

Professional qualifications
Electricians 366-7w

Profit related pay
29w, 437w, 633w

Profit sharing
547w

Project 2000
Student grants 496w

Property development
Leeds 519w
Leeds Development Corporation 193-4w
Tipping of waste 612-3w

Property Misdescriptions Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Instruction to Com. & Money res*
(12:03:91) 914

Property Services Agency
690w
Offices 54w
Woolwich Arsenal 299w

Property Services Agency Supplies Trading Fund Order 1976 (Revocation) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(11:03:91) 684

Property transfer
Barkestone School 42-3w
New towns 65w
Residential care 704w

Proprietary drugs
Harmonisation of standards 317-8w

Prosecutions
Kidnapping 82w
Speed limits 507w
Terrorism 698w

Prosthetics
Wales 179-80w

Psychiatry
Geriatric patients 457w
Wales 457w

Public Accounts Committee
Next steps initiative 669

Public appointments
Authorised Conveyancing Practitioners' Board 150w
Boundary Commission for England 84w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 184w
Christie Hospital Manchester 263-4w
Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising 349w
Dept of Education & Science 343w
Dept of Employment 167w
Dept of Health 154w
Dept of Social Security 173w
Dept of the Environment 191-2w
Dept of Trade & Industry 169w
Dept of Transport 149w
District health authorities 643w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 201-2w
Forth Valley Health Board 271
HM Inspectorate of Schools 42w
Home Office 157w
Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Legal Education Etc 150-1w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 182-3w
Ministry of Defence 224w
Northern Ireland Office 152w
Office of Arts & Libraries 160w
Scottish health boards 270-1
Scottish Office 214-5w, 580-612w
Treasury 162w
Welsh Office 179w, 448-58w

Public contracts

Public contracts—continued
EC action (11:03:91) 782

Public expenditure
EC grants & loans 167w
Northern Ireland 656w
Per capita costs 205w
Scotland 205w

Public footpaths
Cycling 420w

Public Health Laboratory Service
Fees & charges 495-6w
Food inspection 523w

Public houses
Scotland 273-4
Tenants 273-4

Public inquiries
Ashworth Hospital 494w

Public libraries
Community charge 668
Community charge capping 663-4
Taunton 663-4

Public order policing
New Forest hunt 482w

Public participation in planning
A13 8w

Public petitions
Fish conservation (07:03:91) 568

Public Record Office
150w

Public relations
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 710w
Government contracts 121w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 710w

Public Safety Information Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Order for resuming adjourned 2R read (08:03:91) 642, (15:03:91) 1400

Public sector housing
Antrim 128w
Newtownabbey 128w
Rural areas 246w

Public sector housing sales
Scotland 140-6w, 206w

Public service pensions
(04:03:91) 79-81

Public transport
Government grants 421w
Greater London (11:03:91) 685-723

Public utilities
Road works (05:03:91) 169-232

Publishing
Antisemitism 501w
Library & Information Services Council (Northern Ireland) 127w
Library & Information Services Council (Wales) 180w
Racial discrimination 507w
Science & technology research 800
Television programmes 13-4w

Punishment
Hoaxes & false alarms 132

Pupil records
Schools & parents 793-4, 796

Pupils
Hospitals 796-7

Qa Business Services
316-7w

Quality control
Dept of Social Security local offices 693w

Quantity surveyors
167w

Quin, Ms Joyce
Debates etc.
Telecommunications industry (14:03:91) 1171, 1183-6, 1189
Questions
Prisoners on remand, Custodial treatment 450-1

Quota of disabled workers
380w
Crown immunity 282w, 381w

Racial attacks
268w

Racial discrimination
Publishing 507w

Radiation hazards
Shellfish 569w

Radice, Mr Giles
Questions
Germany, Foreign relations 933-4

Radio
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 19w

Radio Authority
449

Radio engineering
Defence equipment 330w
Glengarry Forest 330w

Radio frequencies
Local radio 449

Radioactive Products (Safety) Regulations 1991
Questions
62w

Radioactive waste disposal
369w
Conferences 64w
Drigg 369-70w
Seas & oceans 670w
Tipping of waste 369-70w

Radioactive wastes
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 17w, 431-2w

Radioactivity
Agricultural land 464-6w
Northern Ireland 464-6w

RAF Carlisle
226w

RAF Fairford
331w
Fire services 224w, 331w

RAF Northolt
Air traffic 308w
Air traffic control 308w

RAF Upper Heyford
Repairs & maintenance 332w

Raffan, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Caravan sites, VAT (14:03:91) 1147-50
Community charge (14:03:91) 1163

Railway accidents
Central line 8w
Northern Ireland 266w

Railway closures
Swinton Station 251w

Railway electrification
Leeds-Bradford railway 427w

Railway freight transport
Channel tunnel 252w, 634-5w

Railway land
King's Cross 8w
Wakefield 307-8w

Railway network
Bridges 652
Channel tunnel 418w
Tribunals (06:03:91) 284

Railway Reopenings (Tribunal) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (06:03:91) 284
Questions
134

Railway transport
Investment 652-3
Rural areas 419w
Snow & ice 651-2

Railway travel
London Underground 657-8
Northern region 634w

Railway workers
Pay incentives 652-3

Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 979, 994-5

Randall, Mr Stuart
Debates etc.
Lotteries (14:03:91) 1214, 1215-9, 1224
Questions
Magistrates' courts, Efficiency scrutinies 443-4

Rate increases
Uniform business rate 667-8w

Rate precepts
334w

Rateable value
Scotland (04:03:91) 110

Rates & rating
Northern Ireland 125-8w

Rathbone, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 854, 861-2
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 25
Questions
Channel tunnel, Roads 655
Civil servants, International organisations 387-8w
Departmental responsibilities, Kuwait 627w
House of Commons stationery, Recycling 17
International cooperation, Drug abuse 936
Physical education, Curriculum 39w
Road construction 659

Rathlin Island
Electricity distribution 655w

Ravenscraig steelworks
Factory closures 1096

Reading
Teacher training 442w

Rear seat belts
634w

Recess motions
Easter (14:03:91) 1127-69

RECHAR
170w, 192w
Scotland 462w
South Yorkshire 192w

Recreation spaces
Housing construction 266w
Inland waterways 58w
Northern Ireland 266w

Recruitment
Census enumerators 154w, 266-7w, 380-1w
Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland 139w

Recycling
Government grants 670w
Government grants to local authorities 471-2w
House of Commons stationery 17
Private Members' motions (15:03:91) 1396-8
Scotland 278w, 577-8w

Red Cross
see International Red Cross

Redbridge London Borough Council Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (07:03:91) 439, (14:03:91) 1079

Redditch Borough Council
Contracts for services 100w

Redmond, Mr Martin
Questions
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces medical services 222w

Redundancy
Commission for Racial Equality 307w
Greenock 210w
Leeds 2-4w
Manufacturing industries 287w
Scotland 210w
Social Security Benefits Agency 3

Redundancy pay
Administrative delays 5w
Local government staff (11:03:91) 782

Redundancy Payments (Local Government) (Modification) (Amendment) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(11:03:91) 782

Redundant Churches Fund
Finance 14

***Redwood, Mr John**, Minister of State for Industry*
Debates etc.
Telecommunications industry (14:03:91) 1186-90
Questions
Coffee 386w
Companies Act 1989, Commencement orders 88w
Exports, Indonesia 62w
Facsimile transmission, Unsolicited goods & services 384w
Insurance, EC action 385w
Integrated Services Digital Network, Wales 386-7w
Lonrho, Company accounts 627w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission, Coffee 61-2w
National House Building Council 386w
Newspaper press, Distributive trade 384-5w
Satellite broadcasting, EC action 540w
Telephone exchanges, Wales 387w
Telephone systems, Saudi Arabia 387w
Telephones, Hoaxes & false alarms 86-7w

Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1124

Regional aid
60w
Dumbarton 709w
Northern region 539w

Regional arts associations
522w

Regional arts boards
522w

Regional enterprise grants
709w

Regional planning & development
Borders region 273
Government grants 249-50w

Regional selective assistance
709w
Northern region 429-30w

Registered homes
Residential care 353w
Scotland 219w

Registered Homes (Amendment) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Money res* (12:03:91) 913-4

Rehabilitation of offenders
Juvenile courts 445
Youth courts 446

Reid, Dr John
Debates etc.
Armed forces, Ethnic minorities (14:03:91) 1265-9, 1272
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1122
Questions
Pensioners, Owner occupied housing 4-5
Ravenscraig steelworks, Factory closures 1096

Religious buildings
Iraq 942

Relocation of employees
Post Office 385w

Remand in custody
Privatisation 451

Remarriage
War widows' pensions 408-9w, 412w

RENAVAL
Strathclyde 709w

Rent arrears
Council tenants 191w

Rented housing
Business expansion scheme 95-6w

***Renton, Rt Hon Tim**, Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Minister of State for the Arts)*
Debates etc.
Museums & galleries (14:03:91) 1253-9
Sadlers Wells Theatre (14:03:91) 1329-34
Questions
Area museum councils 423w, 664-5
Area museum councils, Finance 664
Arts finance 522w
Arts finance, Local government expenditure 665-6
Association of Artists & Designers in Wales, Arts finance 259w
British Library, Construction 424w
Civil servants, International organisations 387-8w
Civil servants, Job security 666-7
Civil servants, Privatisation 667
Civil service, Job satisfaction 667-8
Civil service agencies 388w
Civil service agencies, Departmental responsibilities 522w
Civil service agencies, Job satisfaction 668-9
Civil Service College, Equal opportunities 388w
Crafts Council, Government grants 20w
Day care of children, Greater London 388w
Day care of children, Office of Arts & Libraries 425w
Defence Quality Assurance Directorate, Civil service dispersal 668
Environmental policy, Office of Arts & Libraries 21w
Ethnic monitoring, Civil service 151w
Ethnic monitoring, Minister for the Civil Service 15w
Ethnic monitoring, Office of Arts & Libraries 97w
Greater London Arts, Arts finance 424w
Haymarket Theatre Leicester, Arts finance 666
Higher civil servants, Disabled workers 669-70
Higher civil servants, Minister for the Civil Service 86w
Higher civil servants, Office of Arts & Libraries 96-7w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Museums & galleries 21w
Museums & galleries, Repairs & maintenance 423w
Paintings, Exhibitions 664

***Renton, Rt Hon Tim**—continued*
Playhouse Theatre Liverpool, Arts finance 96w
Public Accounts Committee, Next steps initiative 669
Public appointments, Office of Arts & Libraries 160w
Public libraries, Community charge 668
Public libraries, Community charge capping 663-4
Public libraries, Taunton 663
School libraries 423w
Smoking, Office of Arts & Libraries 424w
Tobacco industry, Arts sponsorship 424w
Tobacco industry, Office of Arts & Libraries 424w
Welsh Arts Council, Government grants 20-1w

Rents to mortgages scheme
265-6
Rural areas 575w
Scotland 575w

Repairs & maintenance
Blackwall tunnel 654
Museums & galleries 423w
Nature Conservancy Council 572w
RAF Upper Heyford 332w
School buildings 269

Repossession orders
Mortgage defaulters 295w

Representation of the People (Variation of Limits of Candidates Election Expenses) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(11:03:91) 684

Republic of Ireland
654w
Extradition 653-4w, 1088
Northern Ireland government 1082-4, 1088-9
State visits 1083

Research finance
British Rail 91w
Environment 240w
Health Promotion Research Trust 347w
Industrial research 163w
Industry 792-3, 800
Ministry of Defence 468w
Science & Engineering Research Council 337w
Science & technology research 441w, 443w, 793, 800
Universities 792

Residential care
110w, 703-4w
Codes of practice 703-4w
Complaints 353w, 704-5w
Elderly 264w
Expenditure 44w
Hospital discharges 702w
Housing benefits 282w
Income support 171w, 175-6w, 326-7w, 413w, 694w
Incontinence aids 557w
Local government social services 175-6w, 413w
Northern Ireland 44w
Operating costs 80w
Personnel 703w
Privacy 324w
Private sector 353w
Professional organisations 704w
Property transfer 704w
Registered homes 353w
Research 702-3w

Resignations
Health service ancillary staff 494w

Respite care
Local government social services 320w

Restart programme
488w

Retail price index
Community charge 372w
Community charge reduction scheme 371-2w

Retail price index—continued
Mortgage interest rates 163-4w
Tobacco duties 377w

Retail trade
Imitation guns 269w

Retirement pensions
2-3
Northern Ireland 513w

Revenue support grant
Fire Service College 45w
Scottish councils 280-1w

Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1991
Questions
280-1w

Rhodes James, Mr Robert
Questions
BBC External Services, Television 937

Ribble Valley
By elections 136

Ribble Valley Borough Council
Community charge 131-2

Richardson, Ms Jo
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1037-9
Questions
Bullwood Hall Prison, Prison overcrowding 13w
Offenders, Women 12w
Sunbeam Nursery Croydon, Child care 506-7w
Sunbeam Nursery Croydon, Fees & charges 506w
Temporary immigrants, Private health services 159w

Richmond Committee
see Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food

Riddick, Mr Graham
Debates etc.
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 213-7, 224-5
Questions
Disposable income, Scotland 211w

Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas,
Questions
Council house sales 520w
Council housing 520w
Pensioners, Personal income 79w
Private rented housing 520w

Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm, Secretary of State for Transport
Debates etc.
Air routes, Ministerial statements (11:03:91) 676-83
Air traffic, Ministerial statements (05:03:91) 149-62
Questions
Air Europe, Company liquidations 671-5
Air Europe, Manchester Airport 673
Air transport 661
Air transport, EC internal trade 661
Aircraft, Insurance 252w
Airlines, EC transport policy 654-5
Bridges, Railway network 652
British Airways, Air routes 660
British Airways, Scotland 660-1
British Rail, Buy British 652
British Rail, Investment 651
Bus services, Greater London 423w
Heathrow Airport, Airlines 655
Light dues 147w
Railway transport, Investment 652-3
Railway transport, Snow & ice 651-2
Rear seat belts 634w
Road construction, Private sector 92-3w

River Dun
Coastal protection 465w, 657w
Freshwater fishing 658w

River Lea
Bridges 426-7w

River pollution
Eels 690w

River Taff
Pollution control 647-8w

RNAD Coulport
408w

Road accidents
Children 89w
Fees & charges 493w
M4 636w

Road construction
9w, 147-8w, 419w, 659
A1-M1 link 251-2w
M1-M62 link 422-3w
M8 573-4w
M80 404w
Northern region 501-4w
Private sector 92-3w, (05:03:91) 169-232
Scotland 404w
West Midlands 92-3w

Road freight transport
Hungary 634w

Road humps
655-6

Road safety
Fords 620w
Personal stereos 422w

Road safety education
Wales 85w

Road signs
Harmonisation of standards 9w
Standardisation 9w

Road tax
Lorries 503-4w

Road tolls
419w

Road traffic
9w
Antrim 388-9w
Blackwall tunnel 654
Environmental impact assessment 659
Greater London 419w, 452, 661-2
Newtownabbey 388-9w

Road Traffic Act 1988
Questions
493w

Road Traffic Bill 1990/91
Questions
307w

Road traffic control
655-6
Greater London 307w
Orders & regulations 400w

Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989
Questions
9w

Road works
9w
A13 8w
A44 644w
A77 206w
Lanarkshire 280-1
M4 420w
M20 8w
Public utilities (05:03:91) 169-232
Wales 644w

Roads
Channel tunnel 655
Expenditure 251w
Greater Manchester (04:03:91) 112-8

Roberts, Sir Wyn, Minister of State for Wales

Roberts, Sir Wyn—continued
Questions
A44, Road works 644w
Arts, Wales 178w
Curriculum, Wales 645-6w
Educational advisers, Wales 646w
Educational assessment, Wales 643-4w
History education, Curriculum 457-8w
Library & Information Services Council (Wales), Publishing 180w
Primary education, Dyfed 355-6w
Road safety education, Wales 85w
Road works, Wales 644w
School libraries, Wales 644-5w

Robertson, Mr George
Debates etc.
Eastern Europe, EC aid (04:03:91) 87-92
Questions
EC Social Charter 936
South Africa, Economic sanctions 928
Street lighting, Crime prevention 241-2w
Street lighting, Energy conservation 241w
Street lighting, Urban areas 241w
Street lighting, Urban programme 241w

Robinson, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (11:03:91) 728, 736, 740, 746, 769-71
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1118
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 305-6, 312, 329, 349-56
Questions
Building regulations, Fees & charges 127w, 151w, 310w
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 466-7w
Fair Employment Agency for Northern Ireland, Costs 466-7w
Local government constituencies, Northern Ireland 311w
Northern Ireland education & library boards, Manpower 390-1w
Northern Ireland government, Republic of Ireland 1082-3

Rochdale
Training & enterprise councils 291w

Rochdale task force
627-8w

Roe, Mrs Marion
Debates etc.
Horticulture (07:03:91) 569-72
Questions
Pensioners, Inflation 5

Rollerstone camp
Prisoners of war 25w

Roll-on roll-off ships
Safety standards 653-4

Romford
Mortgage defaulters 295w

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Debates etc.
Census (Confidentiality) Bill (HL), 3R (04:03:91) 72-3
Questions
Absent voting, Press advertising 336w
Albania, Gold 434w
Community care 129
Day centres, Fees & charges 559w
Electricians, Professional qualifications 366-7w
Free movement of labour 486w
Health service staff, EC countries 492-3w
Home helps, Manpower 321w
Immigration applications, Administrative delays 359w
Mental health community care, Government grants to local authorities 350w
Mental patients, Hospital discharges 319-20w

Rooker, Mr Jeff—continued
Occupational therapists, Local government social services 320w
Prisoners of war, Wormhoudt 480w
Respite care, Local government social services 320w
Saudi Arabia, Disasters 433w
Tripartite Commission for the Restitution of Monetary Gold 433w
Tripartite Commission for the Restitution of Monetary Gold, Wealth 433w

Rooney, Mr Terry
Questions
NHS complaints, Compensation 558w

Ross, Mr Ernie
Debates etc.
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 474, 479, 489, 490, 519, 522-34, 535-6, 559
Questions
Arms trade, Middle East 1094
Palestine Liberation Organisation, Peace negotiations 932
Roll-on roll-off ships, Safety standards 653-4
Scottish Homes, Finance 206w

Ross, Mr William
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (11:03:91) 730-1, 762, 765-8, 779
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1117-8
Community charge (13:03:91) 959-60
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 300-4, 310-1, 321, 323, 327-9, 331, 332, 347-9
Questions
Agricultural land, Radioactivity 464-6w
Cancer, Northern Ireland 391w
Cattle, Prices 660w
Civil servants, Coleraine 129-30w
Civil servants, Overseas workers 463-4w
Dyslexia, Northern Ireland 653w
Employment level, Coleraine 129-32w
Freshwater fishing 566-7w
Freshwater fishing, Lough Neagh 465w, 658w
Freshwater fishing, Northern Ireland 465w, 657-8w
Freshwater fishing, River Dun 658w
Freshwater fishing, Scotland 681-2w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, System building 310-2w
River Dun, Coastal protection 465w, 657w
Sheep, Prices 660-2w
Storms, EC grants & loans 137-9w
Trout 568w
Trout, Scotland 681w
Unemployment, Coleraine 131-2w

Ross & Cromarty District Council
140w

Rosyth dockyard
408w

Rotherham
363w
Government grants to local authorities 1095-6
Standard community charge 363w

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Court of Auditors, EC budget (13:03:91) 1046, 1055
Questions
Access to buildings, Houses 129
Business statements 1103
Channel tunnel, Railway network 418w

Rowlands, Mr Ted
Debates etc.
Business statements (12:03:91) 810
Questions
House condition survey, Merthyr Tydfil 235w

Royal Bank of Scotland
697w

Royal Commission on Criminal Justice
see Criminal Justice Royal Commission

Royal Manchester Children's Hospital
125-6

Royal National Institute for the Blind
105w

Royal Parks Constabulary
365-6w
Arrests 366w
Conditions of employment 365w
Costs 364-5w
Manpower 364-5w
Pay 365w
Police vehicles 365-6w

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
63w

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
57w

Royal Ulster Constabulary
135-8w, 1086

RU486
Clinical trials 500w

Ruddock, Mrs Joan
Debates etc.
London Regional Transport (11:03:91) 714-9, 722-3
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 221-5, 229-30
Oral question time intervention (11:03:91) 662
Questions
European Court of Human Rights, Life imprisonment 651w
Haberdashers' Aske's School, City technology colleges 186-8w
London Underground, Railway travel 657-8
Road traffic, Greater London 661-2

Rugby
Community charge reduction scheme 47w

Rumbold, Rt Hon Angela, Minister of State, Home Office
Debates etc.
Parliamentary constituencies (08:03:91) 639-40
Questions
Absent voting, British residents abroad 267w
Absent voting, Press advertising 336w
Animal experiments 333w
Animal experiments, Wild animals 334w
Ashford Remand Centre, Land use 451-2
Barker, Joseph Arthur Lewis, Prison hospitals 277w
Barker, Joseph Arthur Lewis, Prisoners' release 277w
Bullwood Hall Prison, Prison overcrowding 13w
Commission for Racial Equality, Redundancy 307w
Electoral register, Ethnic minorities 481w
Electoral register, Greater London 275-6w
Electorate, Parliamentary constituencies 269w
Feldberg, Wilhelm, Animal experiments 333w
Post Office, Disclosure of information 306w
Prison accommodation, Prison discipline 275w
Prison discipline 271-2w
Prison discipline, Body belts 271-2w, 274-6w
Prison education services 157w
Prison escapes, Open prisons 158w, 305w, 334w, 698w
Prison hospitals, Prison accommodation 13w
Prison staff, Crimes of violence 274w
Prisoners, Ex gratia payments 275w
Prisoners on remand, Custodial treatment 450-1

Rumbold, Rt Hon Angela—continued
Prisoners on remand, Police custody 451
Prisoners' transfers 271w
Racial discrimination, Publishing 507w
Remand in custody, Privatisation 451
Segregation of prisoners 271-4w

Runciman Committee
see Criminal Justice Royal Commission

Rural areas
Concessionary fares 662-3
Health services 122
Housing 390w, 401w
Industrial development 390w
Northern Ireland 390w
Public sector housing 246w
Railway transport 419w
Rents to mortgages scheme 575w
Schools 797

Rural Development Council for Northern Ireland
see Northern Ireland Rural Development Council

Rural Development Interdepartmental Committee
390w

Sadler Inquiry
see Cross-Media Ownership Inquiry

Sadlers Wells Theatre
(14:03:91) 1327-34

Safety barriers
Level crossings 43w

Safety belts
School transport 7-8w

Safety glass
Government buildings 296w

Safety measures
Surgery 494w

Safety standards
Maryport Harbour 564w
MV Cam Spirit 635w
Offshore supply vessels 635w
Roll-on roll-off ships 653-4

Sainsbury, Mr Tim, Minister of State for Trade
Questions
Argentina, Ministers' visits abroad 170w
Balance of trade, Manufactured goods 169w, 538-9w
Departmental responsibilities, Kuwait 627w
European Parliament members, Dept of Trade & Industry 386w
Export credit guarantees, Iraq 540-1w
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Privatisation 302-3w, 428w
Exports, Iraq 169w
Exports, Kuwait 304w
Film industry, France 428w
Foreign trade 540w
High technology, Export controls 303-4w
Joint Directorate for Export Promotion, Export promotion 628w
Manufactured goods, Market share 718w
Overseas trade, Somalia 325w
Salmon, Norway 303w
UK companies abroad, Iraq 628w
Whisky, Taiwan 429w

St Pancras
British Library 667-8

St Paul's Eye Hospital Liverpool
Hospital closures 490-1w

Salford
197w
Local government finance 671-2w

Salmon
Food hygiene 280
Norway 303w

Salmond, Mr Alex
Debates etc.
Fish conservation, Public petitions (07:03:91) 568
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 540-3

Salmond, Mr Alex—continued
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 247-8
Questions
Business statements 1101-2
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 315-6w
Pensioners, Expenditure 536-7w

Salmonella
116w
Disease control 104w, 265w

Sanitation
Building regulations 672w
Women 672w

Satanism
Child abuse (14:03:91) 1144-7

Satellite broadcasting
EC action 540w
Members' facilities 16

Saudi Arabia
Disasters 433w
Telephone systems 387w

Sayeed, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1008
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Antarctic 714w
Business statements 1100
Employees' contributions 71w
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 130-1
HMS Endurance 714w
HMS Endurance, Costs 714-5w
HMS Endurance, Hydrography 713-4w
HMS Endurance, Meteorology 714w
Procurement Executive, Air force bases 715w
Pupil records, Schools & parents 793-4

Schedule D income tax
28w

Schedule E income tax
28w

Scheduled offences
135-8w, (06:03:91) 290-430

School administration
Budgeting 341-2w, 442-5w
Church schools 13
Hounslow 445w
Local government expenditure 794
Manpower 792
School buildings 798-9

School admission
Age 445w
Ballycloughan Primary School 127-9w
Cheshire 105w
Judgments 793-4
Torquay 40w

School buildings
795
Building repairs 797-9, 803-4
Educational finance 803-4
Highlands of Scotland 269
Leicestershire 797-8
Repairs & maintenance 269
School administration 798-9

School closures
Durants' School Rickmansworth 108w

School leaving
Young offenders 450

School libraries
423w
Wales 644-5w

School population
Gloucestershire 340w
Nursery schools 442w, 799
Scotland 217-8w
Special education 625-7w

School transport
Safety belts 7-8w

Schools
Capital investment 797
Rural areas 797
Scotland 140w

Schools & parents
Educational assessment 232w
Pupil records 793-4, 796

Science & Engineering Research Council
443w
Consolidated Fund debates (14:03:91) 1322-6
Research finance 337w

Sciences & technology policy
454, 801

Science & technology research
Publishing 800
Research finance 441w, 443w, 793, 800

Science & Technology Select Committee (HL)
454

Science budget
337w

Scope of debate
Speaker's rulings & statements (04:03:91) 68, 75, 80, (06:03:91) 429, (11:03:91) 724, 751, (13:03:91) 967, (14:03:91) 1169

Scotland
Achondroplasia 460w
Ambulance services 219-20w, 611w
Armed forces deployment (11:03:91) 783-90
Assisted places scheme 213-4w
Badgers 571-2w
Bank nurse employment scheme 279w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 611-2w
British Airways 660-1
Capital value rating 268
Cervical cancer 215-6w
Channel tunnel 634-5w
Child care 462w
Children in care 402-3w
Cold weather payments 663w
Community charge 208-9w, 267-8, 806-7
Community charge benefits 277
Community charge exemptions 578w
Community charge reduction scheme 208-9w, 371w
Community charge register 64w
Company liquidations 217w
Council house rents 575-6w
Council housing finance 574-6w
Deer 209w
Disabled workers 211-3w
Disposable income 211w
Domestic rates 578-9w
EC grants & loans 64w
Educational assessment 281-2, 400-1w
Electricity supply industry 315-6w, 460-1w
Employment training 67w, 278w
Exercisemen 270
Family credit 664-5w
Family doctors 684w
Fertility 578w
Fire services 65w
Food poisoning 684w
Fords 620w
Forestry 139w, 220-1w
Forestry Commission 684-6w
Foxes 140w
Freshwater fishing 681-2w
Gas reserves 168-9w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 682-3w
Higher education 577w
Hill livestock allowances 140w
Homelessness 266, 613-9w
Homicide 709-10w
Hospitals 460w
Housing 401w
Housing construction 270
Housing support grants 269-70
Hypothermia 402w
Immigrant detainees 509w
Industrial development 220w
Interest rates 211w

Scotland—continued
Intervention stocks 403w
Iron & steel industry 208w
Kidney patients 272
Legal aid 572w, 682w
Local authorities 267
Local enterprise companies 316w
Local government 400w
Local government borrowing 575w
Medical appeal tribunals 175w
Mink 399w
Minors (08:03:91) 641
Mortgage defaulters 265, 279-80w
New towns 65w
NHS trusts 205w, 272-3, 279
Non-fossil fuel obligation 459w
Nurses 404-8w
Objects in lieu of tax 461w
Physical education 146w
Private sector housing 221w
Public expenditure 205w
Public houses 273-4
Public sector housing sales 140-6w, 206w
Rateable value (04:03:91) 110
RECHAR 462w
Recycling 278w, 577-8w
Redundancy 210w
Registered homes 219w
Rents to mortgages scheme 575w
Road construction 404w
School population 217-8w
Schools 140w
Silicosis 309-10w
Sites of special scientific interest 68w
Special education 278
Tipping of waste 612-3w
Tourism 683-4w
Trials 572w
Trout 681w
Unemployment 210w, 455
Warrant sales 276-7
Waste disposal 613w
Water pollution 65-7w
Water supply 205w
Young people 266

Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas, Minister of State, Dept of Social Security
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1039-40
Questions
Attendance allowance, Children 122-3w
Attendance allowance, Terminal care 75w
Child benefit, Social security benefits rates 536w
Cold weather payments, Advertising 534-5w
Cold weather payments, Energy prices 663-4w
Cold weather payments, Expenditure 664w
Cold weather payments, Press advertising 124w
Cold weather payments, Scotland 665w
Cold weather payments, Social security claims 11-2, 281-2w
Cold weather payments, Social security recipients 281w
Community care grants, Birmingham 9
Community care grants, Greenock 173-4w
Disability living allowance, Diets 417w
Disability Living Allowance & Disability Working Allowance Bill 1990/91, Orders & regulations 283w
Disability working allowance 73w
Disability working allowance, Disability test 693-4w
Disabled workers, Working hours 694w
Exceptional needs payments, Administrative costs 283-4w
Income support, Social security benefits reductions 536w
Independent Living Fund 326w
Independent Living Fund, Social Security Benefits Agency 326w
Invalid care allowances, Administrative delays 693w
Invalid care allowances, Manpower 692w
Invalid care allowances, Women 12
Motability, Social security recipients 283w

Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas—continued
Pensioners, Expenditure 536-7w
Serviscope, Employers' contributions 535w
Social Fund 10
Social Fund, Barnsley 325w
Social Fund, Budgeting 284-6w
Social Fund, Debt collection 413w
Social Fund, Dept of Social Security local offices 534w, 667w
Social Fund, Leeds 80w, 325-6w
Social Fund, Loans 9-10
Social Fund, Mentally disadvantaged 10
Social Fund, Research 284w
Social Fund, Social security benefits rules 71w
Social Fund, Social security recipients 124w
Social services, Research 327-8w
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits disqualification 535-6w
War pensions, Nuclear weapons tests 667w

Scottish Agricultural Industries
Factory closures 275

Scottish Assembly
455-6

Scottish councils
Revenue support grant 280-1w

Scottish Development Agency
220w, 709w

Scottish Enterprise
Industrial development 316w
Personnel 459-60w
Training 316w

Scottish Examination Board
401w

Scottish health boards
Pay 578w
Public appointments 270-1

Scottish Health Service Advisory Council
578w

Scottish Homes
140-6w, 269-70, 401w
Capital investment 207-8w
Finance 206w
Government grants 206-7w, 580w
Income 207w

Scottish Hydro-Electric plc (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(04:03:91) 110

Scottish Nuclear Limited (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(04:03:91) 110

Scottish Office
Day care of children 572-3w
Environmental policy 67-8w
Ethnic monitoring 277-8w
European Communities 210-1w
European Parliament Members 402w
Higher civil servants 277-8w
Public appointments 214-5w, 580-612w
Security marking 211-3w
Smoking 402w

Scottish Power plc (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(04:03:91) 110

Scottish Tourist Board
684w, 709w
Northern Ireland Tourist Board 208w

Screening
Breast cancer 495w
Cervical cancer 121, 263w, 351-2w
Family doctors 120-1
Inner city areas 121

Sea Fishing (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991

Sea Fishing (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991—continued
Debates etc.
(05:03:91) 233-57

Sea pollution
Blackpool 60w, 244w
North Sea 679w
Tributyl tin 679w

Seas & oceans
Radioactive waste disposal 670w

Secondary education
Grant maintained schools 444w

Secondhand cars
Motor vehicle safety 392w

Secure accommodation
Wales 86w, 178w

Security
Gulf states 324-5w, 571w
Northern Ireland 135-8w, 1089-90

Security marking
Attorney General 149-50w
Dept of Social Security 172w
Dept of Trade & Industry 59-61w
Lord Advocate 211w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 104w
Ministry of Defence 223w
Northern Ireland Office 462w
Scottish Office 211-3w
Welsh Office 85w

Security of tenure
Houseboats 54w

Security Service Commissioner
Annual reports 276w

Security Service Tribunal
Complaints 276w

Sedgemore, Mr Brian
Questions
Immigration appeals 306w

Segregation of prisoners
271-4w

Selby
229w

Self-determination of states
Kurdistan 931-2
Palestine 940

Self-employed
Northern region 487w, 551-2w

Sellafield
16-7w, 431w

Senile dementia
175-6w, 413w

Sentencing
Court of Appeal 362w
Hoaxes & false alarms 510w
Sexual offences 476-7w

Serious Fraud Office
227-8w

Serviscope
Employers' contributions 535w

Sevenoaks
Community charge reduction scheme 49w

Severe disability premium
Attendance allowance 123w

Severe disablement allowance
Income support 122w

Severn Bridges Bill Select Committee
(08:03:91) 642

Sewage
Cornwall 53-4w
Land reclamation 52w

Sewage—continued
Viruses 54w
Waste disposal 53-4w, 679-80w

Sexual offences
Sentencing 476-7w

Shackleton aircraft
Air accidents 715-6w

Share option scheme
632w

Shareholders
Consolidated Fund debates (14:03:91) 1275-84

Shares
Tax allowances 699w

Shaw, Mr David
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 990
Questions
Corporation tax, Tax yields 700w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Community charge 673-4w
Pensioners, Personal savings 11
Remand in custody, Privatisation 451
Tax allowances, Shares 699w
Tax yields, Company cars 632w

Shaw, Sir Giles
Debates etc.
War Crimes Bill, House of Commons procedure (12:03:91) 903

Sheen Committee
see Zeebrugge Ferry Disaster Inquiry

Sheep
Northern Ireland 660-2w
Prices 660-2w

Sheep dipping
Enforcement 257w
Health hazards 397w

Sheep scab
257w

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 51, 61-5
Questions
Association of Chief Police Officers, Inner city areas 269w
Peru, Health aid 15w
Prison accommodation, Prison discipline 275w
Prison discipline 271-2w
Prison discipline, Body belts 271-2w, 274-6w
Prison hospitals, Prison accommodation 13w
Prison staff, Crimes of violence 274w
Prisoners, Ex gratia payments 275w
Prisoners' transfers 271w
Segregation of prisoners 271-4w
Trevi Group 82w

Sheffield
Government grants to local authorities 363-4w

Shellfish
Radiation hazards 569w

Shelton, Sir William
Questions
Northern line, Streatham 657

Shephard, Mrs Gillian, Minister of State, Treasury
Questions
Alcoholic drinks duties, Tax yields 373-4w
Bankruptcy 436w
Betting & gaming duties, Horse racing 313w
Civil servants, South Wales 373w
Customs, Nature conservation 372-3w

Shepherd, Mrs Gillian—continued
Day care of children, Government departments 372w
Day care of children, Treasury 434-5w
Energy conservation, Treasury 632w
Ethnic monitoring, Treasury 26w
Food imports, Import duties 680-2w
Higher civil servants, Treasury 26w, 93w
Import duties 570-1w
Public appointments, Treasury 162w
Small businesses, Northern region 435-6w
Smoking, Treasury 437w
Stansted Airport, Animal quarantine 373w
Tax rates & bands, VAT 549-50w
Tobacco duties, Retail price index 377w
Tobacco duties, Tax rates & bands 374w
Tobacco duties, Tax yields 374-5w
Treasury, Ministers' visits abroad 255w
VAT repayment, Electricity supply industry 314w

Shepherd, Mr Richard
Questions
Local government land, Walsall 239-40w

Shersby, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 680-1
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 158
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1123-4
London Regional Transport (11:03:91) 687, 689-94, 700
Questions
Air traffic control, RAF Northolt 308w
Boundary Commission for England, Public appointments 84w
Community charge reduction scheme, Police housing 474w
Detection rates, Greater London 305-6w
Police pensions 306w
South Yorkshire Police, Manpower 448
Tax rates & bands, VAT 549w

Ship chartering
687-8w

Shipbuilding
MV Cam Spirit 635-6w

Shipping
658-9

Shipping accidents
MV Breydon 90w

Shop Bill 1990/91 (Proposed)
Debates etc.
Motion to introduce Bill negatived (05:03:91) 163-8

Shoplifting
Acquittals 268-9w

Shops
Squatting 482w

Short, Ms Clare
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1114-5, 1120
Questions
Restart programme 488w
Training & enterprise councils, Contracts 487w
Training & enterprise councils, Finance 487w
Training & enterprise councils, Performance indicators 486-7w

Short Brothers
311w
Bombings 134

Shotton steelworks
458w

Sign posts
Tourist information 140w

Sikhs
(14:03:91) 1158-9

Silicosis
Disease control 309-10w
Scotland 309-10w

Sillars, Mr Jim
Questions
Council housing, Local government borrowing 574-6w
Debts written off, Nationalised industries 546w
Greater Glasgow Health Board, Finance 683w
Income support, Social security benefits reductions 666w
Industrial development, Scotland 220w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Jordan 545-6w
Kurdistan, Opposition parties 546w
Local government borrowing, Interest charges 575-6w
Pensioners, Heating 666w
RENAVAL, Strathclyde 709w
Scottish health boards, Pay 578w

Sims, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 950
Questions
Child abuse 344-5w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Hong Kong 1094-5
Mental patients, Hospital discharges 319-20w
School admission, Judgments 793-4
Vaccination, Children 121

Sinclair Committee
see Child Care Law in Scotland Review Group

Single homeless
Housing 59w
Social security recipients 446w

Sites of special scientific interest
British Waterways Board 53w
Civil service manpower 243w
National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949 243w
Planning permission 243w, 521w
Scotland 68w
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 243w

Sizewell B
Computer applications 630w
Nuclear safety 301w

Skeet, Sir Trevor
Questions
Greenhouse effect, Treaties 543w
Pensioners, Wealth 10-1

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 680
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1123
Business statements (12:03:91) 812
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 952-3
Shops, Motion to introduce Bill negatived (05:03:91) 164
Ten minute rule Bills (06:03:91) 289
War Crimes Bill, House of Commons procedure (12:03:91) 907
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 653w
Business statements 470-1, 1108
Concessionary television licences, Pensioners 440-1
Government grants to local authorities, Per capita costs 517w
Parliamentary procedure 32w
Pensioners, Social security benefits 7-8
Public libraries, Community charge 668
Wealth distribution 134-5

Slaughterhouses
569w
Animal cruelty 679w
EC countries 437w
Inspections 68-9w

Sleeping rough
Death 702w
Hypothermia 702w

Small businesses
Northern Ireland 1080-1
Northern region 435-6w
Uniform business rate 668w
Wales 523-4w

Smith, Mr Andrew
Questions
Council for National Academic Awards 108w
Geography education, Educational standards 106w
Science & technology research, Research finance 793
Student grants, Expenditure 512w
Student loans 40-1w
Student loans, Debt collection 41w
Student loans, Student numbers 229w, 311-2w
Student loans, Take-up 40w
Television programmes, Local press 13-4w
University finance 107-8w

Smith, Mr Chris
Debates etc.
Court of Auditors, EC budget (13:03:91) 1048-52
European Economic Community, Cost (14:03:91) 1292-5, 1296
Sadlers Wells Theatre (14:03:91) 1327-9, 1331
Questions
Greater London Arts, Arts finance 424w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Costs 255w
Treasury, Ministers' visits abroad 255w

Smith, Sir Dudley
Questions
Redundancy pay, Administrative delays 5w

Smith, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Court of Auditors, EC budget (13:03:91) 1047-8
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 827, 831
Questions
Business statements 1103-4
Employment opportunities, Northern Ireland 1091
Transplant surgery, Liver diseases 109w

Smoke & chimney gases
Air pollution control 384w

Smoking
15
Children 347w
Dept of Education & Science 339w
Dept of Employment 384w
Dept of Energy 358w
Dept of Health 350w
Dept of Social Security 413w
Dept of the Environment 368w
Dept of Trade & Industry 541w
Dept of Transport 422w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 361w
Home Office 336w
House of Commons catering 15
House of Commons staff 14-5
Lung cancer 346w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 398w
Ministry of Defence 410w
Northern Ireland Office 392w
Office of Arts & Libraries 424w
Scottish Office 402w
Treasury 437w
Welsh Office 356w

Smoking related diseases
560-1w
Costs 346w
Death 559-60w
Hospital beds 347w
Lost working days 346-7w

Smyth, Rev Martin
Debates etc.
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 950
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 356-7
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 144
Questions
Business statements 467
Community relations, Church unity 1085
Educational assessment 796
Hospitals, Capital investment 132-4w
Hospitals, Northern Ireland 135w
Private roads, Northern Ireland 654w
Residential care, Expenditure 44w
Scottish Tourist Board, Northern Ireland Tourist Board 208w
Screening, Inner city areas 121
Sports facilities, Primary education 1080
Territorial Army, Defence review 715w

Snape, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 676-7
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 172-3, 175, 177-84, 228
Questions
Air Europe, Company liquidations 671-2
Railway transport, Investment 652

Snow & ice
Local government functions 101-2w
Railway transport 651-2

Soames, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 156
Questions
Air Europe, Company liquidations 672
British Airways, Air routes 660

Social Fund
10
Barnsley 325w
Budgeting 284-6w
Debt collection 413w
Dept of Social Security local offices 413w, 534w, 667w
Leeds 80w, 325-6w
Loans 9-10
Mentally disadvantaged 10
Research 284w
Social security benefits rules 71w
Social security recipients 124w

Social Policy Research Unit
284w, 287w

Social security
Civil service agencies 70w
Computers in government departments 71-2w
Consolidation bills 327w

Social security abuse
Building industry 660w
Northern Ireland 659-60w

Social security benefits
Administrative delays 413-4w
Compensation 413-4w
Earnings rules 125w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 3-4
Marginal tax rates 314-5w
Pensioners 7-8, 284w
Research 80w

Social Security Benefits Agency
3
House of Commons questions 79w
Independent Living Fund 326w
Redundancy 3

Social security benefits disqualification
Unemployment benefits 535-6w

Social security benefits rates
Child benefit 536w
Political refugees 172w

Social security benefits rates—continued
Water charges 282w

Social security benefits reductions
Glasgow 666w
Income support 172-3w, 536w, 666w
Maintenance 414w

Social security benefits rules
Criminal injuries compensation 665w
One parent families 71w
Social Fund 71w

Social security claims
Cold weather payments 11-2, 281-2w
Computers in government departments 174w
Family credit 415-8w
Greenock 174w
Income support 177w, 666-7w
Telephones 281-2w

Social security finance
National insurance contributions 446-8w

Social security payments
446w
Northern Ireland 466w

Social security recipients
Child benefit 175w
Cold weather payments 281-2w
Family credit 72w, 176-8w, 664-5w
Homelessness 663w
Income support 176-8w
Motability 283w
Northern Ireland 512-3w
Single homeless 446w
Social Fund 124w
Transitional arrangements 284w
Unemployed 286-8w
Young people 282w

Social services
Armed forces casualties 119w
Research 327-8w

Social Services Inspectorate
Career structure 265w

Soley, Mr Clive
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 823, 826-34
Questions
Homelessness, Death 702w
Housing action trusts, Expenditure 473w
Private sector housing, Empty housing 221w
Single homeless, Housing 59w
Sleeping rough, Hypothermia 702w
Social security recipients, Homelessness 663w
Social security recipients, Single homeless 446w
Territorial Army, Armed forces strength 292w

Solicitors
Legal aid 624w

Somalia
543w
Foreign policy 253-4w
Overseas trade 325w

Somerset
Water resources 397w, 564w

Somerset County Council
663

South Africa
Apartheid 927-8
Economic sanctions 541w, 927-8
Foreign relations 541w
Sports boycotts 927

South Atlantic
HMS Endurance 224w

South Glamorgan
Training & enterprise councils 6-7w, 167w, 490w

South Glamorgan Health Authority
Compensation 459w
Finance 458w
Hospitals 459w
Land acquisition 459w

South Manchester Health Authority
Hospital waiting lists 152-3w

South Tyneside
Government grants to local authorities 296w
Local government finance 671w

South Wales
Civil servants 373w
Council housing 644w

South West region
Family doctors 130-1

South Yorkshire
RECHAR 192w

South Yorkshire Ambulance Service
NHS trusts 345w

South Yorkshire Police
Community charge capping 448
Manpower 448

Space Research Corporation
Exports 225w

Space technology
Universities 387w

Speaker and his deputies, For rulings & statements see separate heading Speaker's rulings & statements
Debates etc.
Amendments & new clauses (06:03:91) 292, 394, 400, 408, 423, (13:03:91) 959, 1045, 1066
By election writs, Neath (12:03:91) 789
Orders & regulations motions (04:03:91) 20, 110, (05:03:91) 162, (11:03:91) 684, (13:03:91) 955
Private Bills, 2R order read (06:03:91) 439, (14:03:91) 1079
Private Members' Bills, 2R order read (08:03:91) 641-2, (15:03:91) 1397-8
Procedure (04:03:91) 15, (05:03:91) 139, 225, (06:03:91) 288, (11:03:91) 713, (12:03:91) 803, 871, (13:03:91) 958, (14:03:91) 1243, 1324
Royal Assent (06:03:91) 439
Supplementary questions (14:03:91) 1093

Speaker's rulings & statements
Business questions (07:03:91) 464, 467, (12:03:91) 809-12, (14:03:91) 1108
Calling of Members (05:03:91) 146, 162, 233, (06:03:91) 284, (11:03:91) 714, (14:03:91) 1123-4, 1126
Consolidated Fund debates (07:03:91) 471-2
Documents (13:03:91) 966, (14:03:91) 1126
House of Commons annunciator system (14:03:91) 1123-4, 1126
Members' conduct (13:03:91) 962, 970, 975, (14:03:91) 1099
Members' interests (13:03:91) 959-60
Members' interventions (04:03:91) 63, (05:03:91) 225, (08:03:91) 638, (13:03:91) 968, 1009
Members' speeches (05:03:91) 180-1, 239, (11:03:91) 733, 760, (12:03:91) 876, 884, (13:03:91) 959, (14:03:91) 1232, 1295
Ministerial statements (12:03:91) 812, (13:03:91) 953, 954
Oral questions (04:03:91) 19, (05:03:91) 125, (06:03:91) 284, (14:03:91) 1081, 1089, 1090
Orders & regulations (05:03:91) 233
Parliamentary security (06:03:91) 335
Points of order (04:03:91) 20, 65, (05:03:91) 236, (06:03:91) 281-2, 284, (13:03:91) 965-6, 969, (14:03:91) 1154, 1169 Private Members' Bills (08:03:91) 642
Private notice questions (11:03:91) 674, (12:03:91) 816

Speaker's rulings & statements—continued
Scope of debate (04:03:91) 68, 75, 80, (06:03:91) 429, (11:03:91) 724, 751, (13:03:91) 967, (14:03:91) 1169
Supplementary questions (05:03:91) 153, 158, (07:03:91) 441, 456
Ten minute rule Bills (06:03:91) 289-90, (12:03:91) 815
Ten minutes rule (12:03:91) 816, 847
Transfer of questions (06:03:91) 283
Unparliamentary expressions (06:03:91) 283
Written questions (11:03:91) 684

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Questions
A13, Road works 8w
Bridges, River Lea 426-7w
Census of population, Disclosure of information 262-3w
Central line, Railway accidents 8w
European Standing Committees 17-8
London Ambulance Service, Industrial disputes 559w
London boroughs grants scheme, Finance 370w
Newham Hospital, Construction 130
Priority routes, Civil service manpower 307w
Priority routes, Greater London 426w
Road traffic control, Greater London 307w

Special constables
Metropolitan Police 509w

Special education
Educational finance 278
Private education 342w
School population 625-7w
Scotland 278

Special health authorities
Transplant surgery 496-7w

Special procedure orders
(13:03:91) 923-6

Special schools
Autism 337w
Orders & regulations 342w

Special training needs
6w
Disabled workers 379w

Speed, Mr Keith
Questions
Albania, Diplomatic relations 711-2w
Fruit juices, Food standards 183w

Speed governors
655-6

Speed limits
Prosecutions 507w

Speller, Mr Tony
Questions
Cycling, Public footpaths 420w
District health authorities, Devon 153w
Exports, Kuwait 304w
HM Coastguard, Bristol Channel 417w
Iraq, Chemical weapons 1095
North Devon link road, Compensation 421w
Sheep dipping, Health hazards 397w
Training & enterprise councils, Devon 382w, 490w
Training & enterprise councils, Finance 382-3w

Spelling
Educational standards 185-6w
Research 185w

Spelthorne Borough Council
451-2

Spinal Injuries Association
21-2w

Spoil heaps
Waste disposal 370w

Sports boycotts
South Africa 927

Sports Council
Government grants 343w

Sports facilities
Northern Ireland 1080
Primary education 1080

Sports sponsorship
Tobacco industry 335w, 339w

Spring Hill Prison
305w

SPUR
523-4w

Squatting
Shops 482w

Squire, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 962, 972
Questions
Community charge, Inner London boroughs 133
"Housing Benefit Reviews Final Report" 287w

Sri Lanka
544w
Tamils 35-6w

Stanbrook, Mr Ivor
Debates etc.
Employment Protection (Government Communications Headquarters) Bill, 1R (06:03:91) 286
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 294, 322, 370, 373-5, 387
Oversea Superannuation Bill, 3R (04:03:91) 79-80
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 29-30, 50-4
War Crimes Bill, House of Commons procedure (12:03:91) 904, 908-9, 910
Questions
Business statements 464
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 1086

Standard community charge
City of Westminster 363w
Rotherham 363w

Standard Life Assurance Company Bill (HL) 1989/90
Debates etc.
3R* (05:03:91) 119
Royal Assent (07:03:91) 439

Standard spending assessments
Educational finance 442w, 791, 802
Greenwich 669w
London boroughs 46-7w

Standardisation
Motor vehicle parts 9w
Road signs 9w

Standards specifications
Exhaust emission controls 10w

Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 847-9

Stansted Airport
Animal quarantine 373w
Birds 373w

State earnings related pension scheme
Additional pensions 173w, 411-2w
Costs 667w

State visits
Bulgaria 36w
Republic of Ireland 1083

Statistics
Childbirth 555-6w

Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Debates etc.
Eastern Europe, EC aid (04:03:91) 83, 86
Questions
Business statements 461

Steel, Rt Hon Sir David—continued
Infant foods, EC action 557w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 938
Palestine, Overseas aid 232w
Road accidents, Fees & charges 493w
Sri Lanka, Tamils 35-6w

Steen, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 681
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 159
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 818-9, 823, 830, 865, 883, 889-91
Questions
Airlines, EC transport policy 654-5
Antifouling paint, Pollution control 505w
Arts finance 522w
British Midland Airways, Unfair competition 422w
Dartmoor National Park 369w
HM Coastguard 427w
Inner cities initiative 674w
Local government finance, EC countries 299-300w
One parent families, Social security benefits rules 71w
Planning appeals 55w
Processed food, Food hygiene 280
School admission, Torquay 40w
Schools, Capital investment 797
Vacant land, Public sector 56w
Vacant land registers 56-7w

Steinberg, Mr Gerry
Questions
British Rail, Research finance 91w
British Waterways Board, Houseboats 54w
Death, Homelessness 116w
Nursery schools, School population 442w

Sterilisation
Women 496w

Stern, Mr Michael
Questions
Road traffic control 655-6
School administration, Budgeting 442-3w

Steroid drugs
444-5
Asthma 123

Stevens, Mr Lewis
Debates etc.
Leasehold housing (08:03:91) 597, 623-4
Persian Gulf, Environment protection (15:03:91) 1381
Recycling (15:03:91) 1396-8
Recycling, Private Members' motions (15:03:91) 1396-8
Questions
Pollution control 297w
Small businesses, Northern Ireland 1080-1
Spoil heaps, Waste disposal 370w

Stewart, Mr Allan, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Questions
Community charge, Grampian 276-7
Community charge, Scotland 208w
Community charge, Transitional relief 209w
Community charge benefits, Scotland 277
Community charge reduction scheme, Scotland 208-9w
Community charge register, Scotland 64w
Community charge review 208w
Company liquidations, Scotland 217w
Disabled workers, Scotland 211-3w
Disposable income, Scotland 211w
Domestic rates, Scotland 578-9w
EC grants & loans, Scotland 64w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 315-6w
Employment training, Scotland 67w, 278w
Industrial development, Scotland 220w
Interest rates, Scotland 211w
Inverclyde enterprise zone, Employment opportunities 219w

Stewart, Mr Allan—continued
Inverclyde initiative, Employment opportunities 219w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Community charge 218w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Community charge exemptions 578w
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 208w
Local enterprise companies, Training 316w
Local government, Legislation 400w
New towns, Property transfer 65w
Non-fossil fuel obligation, Scotland 459w
Public houses, Tenants 273-4
RECHAR, Scotland 462w
Redundancy, Greenock 210w
Regional aid, Dumbarton 709w
RENAVAL, Strathclyde 709w
Revenue support grant, Scottish councils 280-1w
Road works, Lanarkshire 280-1
Scottish Enterprise, Industrial development 316w
Scottish Enterprise, Personnel 459-60w
Scottish Office, European Communities 210-1w
Scottish Tourist Board, Northern Ireland Tourist Board 208w
Tourism, Scotland 683-4w
Unemployment, Scotland 210w
Warrant sales, Community charge 276-7

Stewart, Mr Andy
Debates etc.
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 952
Questions
Derelict land grants, Nottinghamshire 240w
Family credit, Publicity 281w
Health service ancillary staff, Family doctors 119
Homelessness, Empty housing 266

Stewart, Rt Hon Ian
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1116

Stobhill Hospital
278

Stocken Hall
Inspections 517-8w

Stockport
Magistrates 642w

Stokes, Sir John
Debates etc.
British Rail (13:03:91) 1072-4
Questions
Hoaxes & false alarms, Punishment 132

Storms
EC grants & loans 137-9w
Northern Ireland 137-9w

Stott, Mr Roger
Questions
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 1091

Strang, Mr Gavin
Debates etc.
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 475-6
Science & Engineering Research Council (14:03:91) 1322-5
Questions
Bank nurse employment scheme, Scotland 279w
Business statements 1104-5
Family doctors, Lothian Health Board 279w
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 208w
Lothian Health Board, Finance 279w
Nurses, Scotland 404-8w

Strathclyde
Cold weather payments 534-5w
Crime 215-6w
RENAVAL 709w

Strathclyde Police
Manpower 215w

Straw, Mr Jack
Questions
City technology colleges, Voluntary schools 337-8w
Educational finance 802-3
Grant maintained schools, Building repairs 798
Grant maintained schools, Capital investment 301w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Annual reports 41-2w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, City technology colleges 299-300w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Public appointments 42w
Teachers, Pay settlements 336-7w

Stretham
Northern line 657

Street lighting
Crime prevention 241-2w
Energy conservation 241w
Urban areas 241w
Urban programme 241w

Structure plans
Land use 476w

Student grants
Expenditure 512w
Project 2000 496w

Student loans
40-1w
Costs 108w
Debt collection 41w
Northern Ireland 311-2w
Student numbers 229w, 311-2w
Take-up 40w

Student Loans Company
40-1w, 108w

Student numbers
Student loans 229w, 311-2w

Student unions
447w

Students
Community charge 47w

Styal Prison
Prison overcrowding 13w

Submarines
MFV Antares 24w

Subsidiarity
543w

Sudan
Food aid from UK 439w

Suffolk broads
57-8w

Sulphur dioxide
101w
Formalloys & Metals 242w

Sumberg, Mr David
Debates etc.
Roads, Greater Manchester (04:03:91) 115-6
Questions
Adult education, Bury 442w
Business statements 1101
Mohammed, Omar Bakri, Incitement to murder 150w
Prescription charges exemptions, Parkinson's disease 126-7
Social Fund, Social security recipients 124w
Tax allowances, Pensions 700w

Summerson, Mr Hugo
Debates etc.
Leasehold housing (08:03:91) 583, 588, 627-31, 633

Sunbeam Nursery Croydon
Child care 506-7w
Fees & charges 506w

Sunday trading
(05:03:91) 163-8

Sunrise radio
449

Supplementary questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (05:03:91) 153, 158, (07:03:91) 441, 456

"Supply Estimates, 1989/90, Statement of Excess"
(11:03:91) 758

"Supply Estimates, 1990/91, Ministry of Defence Votes A"
(11:03:91) 758

"Supply Estimates 1990/91, Supplementary Estimates"
(11:03:91) 685-723, 758

"Supply Estimates, 1991/92, Ministry of Defence Votes A"
(11:03:91) 758

"Supply Estimates, Votes on Account"
(11:03:91) 758

Supra-regional services
Finance 112-3w
NHS administration 112-3w

Surgery
Babies 111w
Blackburn Hyndburn & Ribble Valley Health Authority 133
Family doctors 648w
Safety measures 494w
Wales 236w, 648w

Swansea
483w, 642-3w

Swansea Accommodation for the Single Homeless
Government grants 483w, 642-3w

Swinton Station
Railway closures 251w

System building
Coleraine 310-2w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 310-2w

Tai Cymru
see Housing for Wales

Taiwan
Whisky 429w

Takare
Geriatrics 139w
Greater Glasgow Health Board 139w

Take-home pay
Married men 27w

"Taking Up the Challenge"
278

Tamils
Sri Lanka 35-6w

Tanks
Defence procurement 292w, 411w

Tapsell, Sir Peter
Questions
Hussein, Saddam 454

Taunton
Public libraries 663-4

Tax allowances
Business expansion scheme 28-30w
Capital transfer tax 375w
Exhaust emission controls 660
Handicapped drivers 375w
Health insurance 29-30w, 120
Pensions 700w
Personal pensions 633w
Shares 699w
Tax yields 95w

Tax avoidance
Income tax 7

Tax burden
Income tax 165-6w, 548-9w

Tax collection
Deeds of covenant (04:03:91) 110

Tax rates & bands
Mortgage relief 160-1w
Personal income 27-8w
Tobacco duties 374w
VAT 549-50w

Tax yields
Alcoholic drinks duties 373-4w
Company cars 30w, 632w
Corporation tax 700w
Tax allowances 95w
Tobacco duties 374-5w

Taxation
Fossil fuels 16w

Taxpayers
Mortgage relief 96w
Personal income 94w

Taylor, Mrs Ann
Debates etc.
Persian Gulf, Environment protection (15:03:91) 1378-84, 1386-7, 1393
Questions
Air pollution control, Codes of practice 242w
British Waterways Board, Dredging 98w
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Codes of practice 470w
Formalloys & Metals, Sulphur dioxide 242w
Genetically modified organisms 308-9w, 371w
Genetically modified organisms, Disclosure of information 470-1w
Incontinence, Advisory services 22w
Incontinence, Health services 21-2w
Incontinence, Surveys 21w
Integrated pollution control 471w
Nature conservation, EC action 364w
Sea pollution, Blackpool 244w
Sites of special scientific interest, Civil service manpower 243w
Sites of special scientific interest, National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949 243w
Sites of special scientific interest, Planning permission 243w
Tipping of waste 470w
Water & sewerage companies, Land acquisition 468-9w
Water pollution, EC law 472w
Water pollution, Orders & regulations 472w
Water supply, Water pollution 469w

Taylor, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 992
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 824
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 32
Questions
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 506w
Employee share ownership trusts 547w
ESOPS 547w
Kuwait 941-2
Profit sharing 547w
Share option scheme 632w
Young offenders, Crime prevention 267-8w

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1121
Questions
Ballycloughan Primary School, School admission 127-9w
Business statements 1106

Taylor, Rt Hon John David—continued
Census enumerators, Recruitment 266-7w
Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland, Recruitment 139w
Intergovernmental conference 937
Northern Ireland government, Republic of Ireland 1082

Taylor, Mr Matthew
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 157
Tin, Cornwall (06:03:91) 431-4
Questions
Concessionary fares, Rural areas 662-3
Mining, Tin 807
School buildings 795
Sewage, Viruses 54w
Sewage, Waste disposal 53-4w
Tertiary education, Truro 695w
Water pollution, Water sports 58w

Taylor, Mr Teddy
Debates etc.
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 680
Court of Auditors, EC budget (13:03:91) 1046
Dental services (15:03:91) 1401-3
Questions
Agriculture, EC budget 567w
Channel tunnel, EC grants & loans 426w
European Standing Committees 17-8
Export restitution, Expenditure 705-6w
Food, EC external trade 564-5w
Immigration controls, EC internal trade 270w
Import duties 570-1w
Insurance, EC action 385w
Intervention stocks 69-70w
Intervention stocks, Scotland 403w
School transport, Safety belts 7-8w
Scottish Assembly 455-6

Taylorplan Services
119-20w
Defence contracts 294w
Pay 97w

Tayside Health Board
Erythropoietin 209-10w

Teacher training
GCE A level 186w
Reading 442w

Teachers
Disabled workers 339-40w
Gloucestershire 340w
Norfolk 338w
Pay settlements 336-7w

Telecommunications industry
(14:03:91) 1170-90
Ministerial statements (05:03:91) 137-48

Telephone exchanges
Wales 387w

Telephone systems
Saudi Arabia 387w

Telephones
Hoaxes & false alarms 86-7w
Social security claims 281-2w

Television
BBC External Services 937

Television programmes
Ashworth Hospital 495w
Independent producers 649-50w
Local press 13-4w
Publishing 13-4w

Temple-Morris, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Hostages, Lebanon (14:03:91) 1131-3

Temporary immigrants
Private health services 159w

Ten minute rule bills
Speaker's rulings & statements (06:03:91) 289-90, (12:03:91) 815

Ten minutes rule
Speaker's rulings & statements (12:03:91) 816, 847

Tenants
Public houses 273-4

Tenants' incentive scheme
236-7w

Terminal care
Attendance allowance 75w

Termination of employment
Post Office 385w

TERN
458w

Territorial Army
Armed forces strength 292w, 410w
Defence review 715w

Terrorism
IRA 18w
Northern Ireland (04:03:91) 21-71, 135-8w, (06:03:91) 430, 1086-7
Prosecutions 698w

Tertiary education
Truro 695w

Thailand
Khmer Rouge 938
Martial law 937-8

Thatcherend
669w

Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Questions
Arts, Wales 178w
Arts finance, Local government expenditure 232-4w
Business statements 468
Crafts Council, Government grants 20w
Energy conservation, Performance indicators 102w
Forestry, Scotland 139w
Forestry, Uplands 139w
Welsh Arts Council, Government grants 20-1w

Thompson, Mr Donald
Debates etc.
Ten minute rule bills (06:03:91) 290

Thompson, Mr Jack
Questions
Primary health care 110-1w

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 995-6
Questions
Germany, Foreign relations 932-3
Waste disposal, Fees & charges 245w

Thorne, Mr Neil
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 864-5

Thornton, Mr Malcolm
Questions
Pre-school education, Curriculum 799

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1007, 1009, 1020, 1030-2
Questions
Assisted places scheme, Wales 695w
Child abuse, Local government functions 805
Community care 128-9
Human Fertilisation & Embryology Act 1990, Abortion 265-6w
Manufactured goods, International trade 256-7w
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 254-5w
Telephones, Hoaxes & false alarms 86-7w

Tibet
806

Timesharing
Consumer protection (14:03:91) 1154-6

Tin
Mining (06:03:91) 431-8, 807

Tipping of waste
470w
Carrickfergus 266w
Methane 613w
Property development 612-3w
Radioactive waste disposal 369-70w
Scotland 612-3w

Tobacco
348w
Prices 375w

Tobacco advertising
349-50w
Advertising codes of practice 347-8w
Research 348-9w

Tobacco Advisory Council
338-9w

Tobacco duties
Retail price index 377w
Tax rates & bands 374w
Tax yields 374-5w

Tobacco industry
Arts sponsorship 424w
Dept of Education & Science 338-9w
Dept of Health 348w
Office of Arts & Libraries 424w
Sports sponsorship 335w, 339w

Torbay Health Authority
153w

Torquay
School admission 40w

Total allowable catches
(05:03:91) 233-57

Touche Ross
153w

Tourism
(14:03:91) 1136-8
Germany 808
Ministerial duties 808
Northern Ireland 654w
Ombudsman 674-5
Scotland 683-4w

Tourist industry
Government assistance 550-2w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 549-50w

Tourist information
Sign posts 140w

Tourist taxes
541w

Town & Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988
Questions
56w

Town & Country Planning General Development Order 1988
Questions
8w

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Questions
Kuwait, Construction 805-6

Tracey, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 960, 968
London Regional Transport (11:03:91) 707-8, 716
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 62-3, 66
Questions
Business statements 463

Trade fairs
Arms trade 571w

Trade marks
EC law 385w

Trade union membership
Government Communications Headquarters (06:03:91) 286-90

Trade union officials
Facilities agreements (04:03:91) 110

Trade union recognition
North of England Building Society 382w

Trade unions
NHS 119-20

Traffic Areas (Reorganisation) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(11:03:91) 782

Traffic lights
Driving offences 655-6

Traffic Signs Regulations & General Directions 1981
Questions
9w

Traffic wardens
Greater London 276w

Training
Child Support Agency 76-7w
Costs 5w
Expenditure 5w
Food hygiene 553-4w
Local enterprise companies 316w
Scottish Enterprise 316w

Training Agency
459-60w

Training & enterprise councils
5-6w, 355w, 523-4w, 675-6w, (12:03:91) 813-5
Conflict of interests 168w
Contracts 383w, 487w
Devon 382w, 490w
Disabled workers 379w
Finance 382-3w, 486-7w
Leicestershire 489w
Performance indicators 486-7w
Rochdale 291w
South Glamorgan 6-7w, 167w, 490w

Training & Enterprise Councils Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (12:03:91) 813-5

Training credits
289w

Training managers
489w

Trains
British Rail 419w

Transfer of questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (06:03:91) 283

Transitional arrangements
Grant maintained schools 230-1w
Social security recipients 284w
Uniform business rate 668w

Transitional relief
48w, 362-3w
Community charge 209w
Hackney 47w
Wolverhampton 474w

Translation services
19w

Transplant surgery
Liver diseases 109w
Special health authorities 496-7w

Transport Act 1968
Questions
98w, 421w

Transport of hazardous materials
Explosives 332w
Orders & regulations 332w

Transport Select Committee
(11:03:91) 685-723

Travel
Expenditure 27w

Trawsfynydd power station
631w
Nuclear safety 630-1w

Treasury
Day care of children 434-5w
Energy conservation 632w
Ethnic monitoring 26w
European Parliament Members 373w
Higher civil servants 26w, 93w
Ministers' visits abroad 255w
Public appointments 162w
Smoking 437w

Treasury Solicitors' Dept
149-50w, 228w

Trestles
Greenhouse effect 543w

Tredinnick, Mr David
Debates etc.
Eastern Europe, EC aid (04:03:91) 97-9
Questions
Business statements 463
House of Commons accommodation 32w

Trevi Group
82w

Trials
County courts 624w
Court of Appeal 361-2w
Crown courts 624w
Scotland 572w

Tribunals
Railway network (06:03:91) 284

Tributyl tin
Fishing vessels 569w
Sea pollution 679w

Trident
Defence expenditure 571w

Trimble, Mr David
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (11:03:91) 728, 730, 737, 772-6
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 319-22, 337, 339-42, 353, 370-1, 374, 379-81, 390-1, 402-6, 423
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1991 (04:03:91) 45, 54-9
Questions
Business statements 470, 1100
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 653-4w
Legal aid, Expenditure 623w, 682w
Legal aid, Fees & charges 572w
Legal aid, Solicitors 624w
Northern Ireland government, Republic of Ireland 1089
Short Brothers, Bombings 134
Trials, Crown courts 624w
Trials, Scotland 572w

Tripartite Commission for the Restitution of Monetary Gold
433-4w
Wealth 433w

Trippier, Mr David, Minister for the Environment and Countryside
Questions
Air pollution control, Codes of practice 242w
Badgers, Nature conservation 242-3w
British Waterways Board, Dredging 98w
Dartmoor National Park 369w
Environment protection, Disclosure of information 472w

Trippier, Mr David—continued
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Codes of practice 470w
European Court of Justice, Nature conservation 473-4w
Formalloys & Metals, Sulphur dioxide 242w
Genetically modified organisms, Disclosure of information 470-1w
Hazardous wastes, Import controls 473w
Integrated pollution control 471w
Lead free petrol, Surveys 99w
Nature conservation, EC action 364w
Nature conservation, Game 243-4w
Nature conservation, Planning permission 242w
Nitrogen oxides, Pollution monitoring 473w
Pollution control, Fees & charges 297-9w
Radioactive waste disposal 369w
Radioactive waste disposal, Drigg 369-70w
Sea pollution, Blackpool 60w, 244w
Sites of special scientific interest, Civil service manpower 243w
Sites of special scientific interest, National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949 243w
Sites of special scientific interest, Planning permission 243w
Tipping of waste 470w
Waste disposal, Local government functions 195-6w
Water & sewerage companies, Land acquisition 468-9w
Water charges 98w
Water charges, Price increases 469w
Water distribution 470w
Water pollution, EC law 472w
Water pollution, Humberside 471w
Water pollution, Orders & regulations 472w
Water supply, Lead 472w
Water supply, Water pollution 469w

Trotter, Mr Neville
Debates etc.
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 242-3
Questions
Doctors, Northern region 493-4w
Educational finance, Northern region 511w
Employment level, Northern region 550w
Employment opportunities, Northern region 551w
Government assistance to industry, Northern region 716w
Higher education, Northern region 338w
NHS, Capital investment 495w
Railway travel, Northern region 634w
Regional aid, Northern region 539w
Regional planning & development, Government grants 249-50w
Regional selective assistance, Northern region 429-30w
Road construction, Northern region 501-4w
Self-employed, Northern region 487w, 551-2w
Small businesses, Northern region 435-6w
Urban areas, Government grants to local authorities 516w

Trout
568w, 681-2w
Scotland 681w

Truro
Tertiary education 695w

Turkey
EC external relations 935
Oppression 935

Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
438-9w

Turner, Mr Dennis
Questions
Educational qualifications, Young people 441w
Government grants to local authorities, Per capita costs 517w

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
Community charge, Haringey 1094
Science & technology research, Research finance 800

Tyne & Wear Development Corporation
Employment opportunities 364w

UK companies abroad
Housing construction 361w
Iraq 628w
Israel 361w
Kuwait 930

UK contributions
International Atomic Energy Agency 430-1w
UNICEF 468w

UK delegations
Council of Europe 295w

UK Transplant Support Service Authority
496-7w

Ulster Defence Regiment
135-8w

Ulsterbus
152w

UN Economic Commission for Europe
9w

UN General Assembly
253w

UN Interim Force in Lebanon
37w

UN Relief & Works Agency
232w

UN resolutions
Arms trade 253w

Unemployed
Social security recipients 286-8w

Unemployment
1095
Coleraine 131-2w
Dyfed 525-6w
Glasgow 275
Leith 274-5
Northern Ireland 654w, 1091
Scotland 210w, 455

Unemployment benefits
Costs 412w
Social security benefits disqualification 535-6w

Unfair competition
British Midland Airways 422w

UNICEF
UK contributions 468w

Uniform business rate
North West region 515w
Parish councils 244w
Rate increases 667-8w
Small businesses 668w
Transitional arrangements 668w

United Airlines
(11:03:91) 676-83

United Kingdom NIREX
64w

United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority (Establishment & Constitution) Order 1991
Questions
496-7w

United Nations
198w, 324-5w, 514w, 928-9
Diplomatic service 252w
Middle East 253w

United Nations Disaster Relief Office
514w

Universities
Research finance 792
Space technology 387w

Universities' Funding Council
107-8w, 232w, 792

University finance
107-8w
Higher education 232w
University of Wales 695w

University of Wales
695w
University finance 695w

Unparliamentary expressions
Speaker's rulings & statements (06:03:91) 283

Unsolicited goods & services
Facsimile transmission 384w

Uplands
Forestry 139w

Urban areas
Government grants to local authorities 515-6w
Local government expenditure 515w
Northern region 516w
Street lighting 241w

Urban development corporations
365-6w

Urban planning
Wales 458w

Urban programme
Employment opportunities 369w
Street lighting 241w

US bases
Holy Loch 332w

USA
Air routes (11:03:91) 676-83
Balance of trade 169w

USSR
Bank loans 710w
CFE Treaty 711w
Consolidated Fund debates (14:03:91) 1191-208
Emigration 120w, 198w, 358-9w
Food exports 399w
War crimes 150w

Vacancies
Health service staff 701w

Vacant land
Public sector 56w

Vacant land registers
56-7w

Vaccination
Children 121

Valleys initiative
458w

Vanunu, Mordechai
120w

VAT
Caravan sites (14:03:91) 1147-50
Tax rates & bands 549-50w

VAT repayment
Electricity supply industry 314w

Vaz, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Homeworkers Bill, 1R (05:03:91) 162
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 862, 865-7, 878
Questions
Driving tests, Cycling 426w
Hospital waiting lists, Leicestershire Health Authority 259-60w
International cooperation, Drug abuse 935-6

Vaz, Mr Keith—continued
Life imprisonment 82w
Passport Office, Official hospitality 651w
School buildings, Building repairs 797-8

Vehicle Inspectorate Trading Fund Order 1991
Debates etc.
(04:03:91) 20

Vessa
179-80w

Veterinary Investigation Service
676w
Bangor Gwynedd 86w
Civil service redundancies 438w
Efficiency scrutinies 183-4w

Veterinary services
Government laboratories 676w

Victor Hausner & Associates
369w

Video equipment
Ashworth Hospital 494w
Police 482w

Video recordings
Children 649w

Vienna Convention on Road Traffic
9w

Viggers, Mr Peter
Questions
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Civil service 407w
Sanitation, Women 672w
War widows' pensions, Remarriage 408-9w, 412w

Virgin Atlantic Airways
(11:03:91) 676-83

Viruses
Sewage 54w

Visas
Iraq 159w

Voluntary organisations
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 292w

Voluntary schools
City technology colleges 337-8w

Wages Inspectorate
97w

Wakefield
Local government finance 671w
Railway land 307-8w

Wakeham, Rt Hon John, Secretary of State for Energy
Debates etc.
Piper Alpha Inquiry (07:03:91) 473-81
Questions
Cost effectiveness, Dept of Energy 431w
Day care of children, Dept of Energy 357w
Disabled workers, Dept of Energy 169w
Electricity tariffs, Price increases 16w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Energy 16w
European Parliament Members, Dept of Energy 358w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Energy 15-6w
Oil exports, Eastern Europe 301-2w
Petroleum production 631-2w
Power stations, Licensing 356-7w
Procurement, Dept of Energy 357-8w
Sizewell B, Nuclear safety 301w
Smoking, Dept of Energy 358w

Waldegrave, Rt Hon William, Secretary of State for Health
Debates etc.
Family doctors, Ministerial statements (13:03:91) 945-54
Questions
Asthma, Steroid drugs 123
Benzodiazepines 124
Family doctors, Budgeting 116w

Waldegrave, Rt Hon William—continued
Health authorities, Finance 125-6
Health insurance, Tax allowances 120
Health service staff, Pay 120
Hospital waiting lists 131
King's College Hospital, Accident & emergency departments 126
NHS, Trade unions 119-20
NHS trusts 109w, 344w
Prescriptions 122-4

Walden, Mr George
Questions
Teacher training, GCE A level 186w

Wales
Air pollution monitoring 14-5w
Arts 178w
Arts finance 232-4w
Assisted places scheme 695w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 525-6w
Children in care 526w
Coal mining 180-2w
Common land 177w
Community charge 647w
Community charge reduction scheme 312-3w
Complaints against local government 178w
Council housing 644w
Curriculum 645-6w
Dentists 457w
District health authorities 643w
Domestic rates 528w
Educational advisers 646w
Educational assessment 643-4w
Environmentally sensitive areas 85w
Experimental farms 644w
Family planning clinics 85w
Food inspection 523w
Foster care 457w
Foxes 696w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 696w
Hard core unemployed 643w
Health service staff 459w
History education 457-8w
Housing associations 235-6w
Integrated Services Digital Network 386-7w
Iron & steel industry 180-2w
Local government revenue 645-7w
Local government staff 179w
Mental health community care 457w
Multiply handicapped 179w
Nature conservation 236w, 334w
NHS trusts 458w, 526w
Operating theatres 643w
Police 335-6w
Probation 509w
Prosthetics 179-80w
Psychiatry 457w
Road safety education 85w
Road works 644w
School libraries 644-5w
Secure accommodation 86w, 178w
Small businesses 523-4w
Surgery 236w, 648w
Telephone exchanges 387w
Urban planning 458w

Walker, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
Armed forces, Scotland (11:03:91) 783-6
Business statements (12:03:91) 812
Community charge (13:03:91) 966-7
Employment Protection (Government Communications Headquarters) Bill, 1R (06:03:91) 288
Ten minute rule bills (06:03:91) 290
Questions
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 460-1w
Family doctors, Budgeting 684w
Forestry, Scotland 220-1w
Objects in lieu of tax, Art works 461w
Rents to mortgages scheme 265-6

Walker, Mr A Cecil
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (11:03:91) 763-5
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, Rep & 3R (06:03:91) 370
Questions
Defence review, Northern Ireland 688w

Wallace, Mr James
Debates etc.
Business statements (12:03:91) 809
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 241-2
Questions
Business statements 1108
Child care, Scotland 462w
Children in care, Parents rights 402w
Children in care, Scotland 402-3w
Salmon, Norway 303w

Waller, Mr Gary
Questions
King's Cross, Railway land 8w
Social Security Benefits Agency 3

Walley, Ms Joan
Questions
Shipping 659

Walsall
Local government land 239-40w

Walsall Borough Council
239-40w

Walter Somers
Arms exports 440w
Departmental correspondence 224w

Walters, Sir Dennis
Questions
Israel, Occupied territories 929

Waltham Forest
Local government expenditure 672w

Wandsworth
475w
Chelsea-Hackney line 658
Government grants to local authorities 296w, 517w
Mortgage defaulters 623-4w

War casualties
Hospital beds 459w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 247w, 252-3w, (14:03:91) 1159-61

War crimes
Iraq 931
USSR 150w
World War II 150w

War Crimes Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (07:03:91) 472
House of Commons procedure (12:03:91) 901-13

War pensions
Nuclear weapons tests 667w

War widows' pensions
Remarriage 408-9w, 412w

Ward, Mr John
Questions
Amphibious vehicles, Marines 1092
Environmental impact assessment 56w
Planning permission, Environment protection 56w

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Questions
Cars, Motor vehicle safety 10w
Complaints against local government, Wales 178w
Local government pensions, Widowers' benefits 515w
Local government staff, Wales 179w
Severe disability premium, Attendance allowance 123w

Wardle, Mr Charles
Debates etc.
Court of Auditors, EC budget (13:03:91) 1048, 1063-4
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 867-9
Questions
Oil pollution, Persian Gulf 297w

Wareing, Mr Robert N
Debates etc.
Eastern Europe, EC aid (04:03:91) 99-102
Questions
Air Europe, Company liquidations 675
Balance of trade 550w
Benzodiazepines 124
Business statements 464
Cambodia, Politics & government 942-4
Government grants to local authorities, Per capita costs 475w

Warrant sales
Community charge 276-7
Scotland 276-7

Warren, Mr Kenneth
Debates etc.
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 682
Telecommunications industry (05:03:91) 141
Questions
Air Europe, Company liquidations 673-4
Space technology, Universities 387w

Warsaw Pact
NATO 432w

Warwick
47w

Warwickshire
Power stations 506w

Waste disposal
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 525-6w, 611-2w
Fees & charges 245w
Inquiries 689-90w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 293w
Local authorities 613w
Local government functions 195-6w
Orders & regulations 670w
Planning authorities 613w
Scotland 613w
Sewage 53-4w, 679-80w
Spoil heaps 370w

Waste management
195-6w

Water Act 1989
Questions
57-8w, 282w, 468-9w

Water & sewerage companies
Access to countryside 57-8w, 468-9w
Land acquisition 57-8w, 468-9w

Water charges
98w, 1093
Price increases 469w
Social security benefits rates 282w

Water conservation
Welsh Water 15w

Water distribution
470w

Water pollution
EC law 472w
Humberside 471w
Orders & regulations 472w
Pollution control 66-7w
Scotland 65-7w
Water sports 58w
Water supply 469w

Water Research Centre
Deposited papers 245w

Water resources
Somerset 397w, 564w

Water sports
Water pollution 58w

Water supply
Aluminium 65-6w, 205w
Lead 472w
Scotland 205w
Water pollution 469w

Water Supply (Water Quality) (Scotland) Regulations 1990
Questions
65-7w

Wath upon Dearne
Hazardous wastes 193w

Watson, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 849-52
Questions
Homelessness, Greater London 266
India, Human rights 544w

Waveney District Council
Housing investment programmes 368w

Wavertree School
Construction 42w

WE 177 nuclear bomb
Defence procurement 715w

Wealth
Pensioners 10-1, 70-1w
Tripartite Commission for the Restitution of Monetary Gold 433w

Wealth distribution
134-5

Weights & Measures Act 1979
Questions
302w

Wells, Mr Bowen
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 160

Welsh, Mr Andrew
Questions
Baltic republics of USSR, EC external relations 544w
Berries & soft fruit, Import controls 69w
EC grants & loans, Scotland 64w
Hill livestock allowances, Scotland 140w
Orders & regulations, House of Commons debates 31w
Water pollution, Pollution control 66-7w
Water supply, Aluminium 65-6w, 205w

Welsh Arts Council
259w
Government grants 20-1w

Welsh Development Agency
179w, 523-4w

Welsh Office
Day care of children 524-5w
Ethnic monitoring 234-5w
Government achievements 527-34w
Higher civil servants 233-4w
Public appointments 179w, 448-58w
Security marking 85w
Smoking 356w

Welsh Plant Breeding Station
445-6w

Welsh Water
1093
Water conservation 15w

West Germany
Engineering industries 60w
Nature conservation 473-4w

West Lancashire
474w

West Midlands
Road construction 92-3w

West Midlands Development Agency
249-50w

West Yorkshire
Fire services 442-3

West Yorkshire Fire & Civil Defence Authority
442

Western European Union
203-4w

Westminster County Court
Leasehold land 361w

Wheat
Prices 570w, 706-8w

Wheel clamps
452

Wheeler, Sir John
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1113
Questions
Fire services, Pay 507-9w
Independent producers, Television programmes 649-50w
Magistrates' courts, Efficiency scrutinies 444
Metropolitan Police, Manpower 650-1w
Public appointments, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 184w
Public appointments, Dept of Education & Science 343w
Public appointments, Dept of Employment 167w
Public appointments, Dept of Health 154w
Public appointments, Dept of Social Security 173w
Public appointments, Dept of the Environment 191-2w
Public appointments, Dept of Trade & Industry 169w
Public appointments, Dept of Transport 149w
Public appointments, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 201-2w
Public appointments, Home Office 157w
Public appointments, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 182-3w
Public appointments, Ministry of Defence 224w
Public appointments, Northern Ireland Office 152w
Public appointments, Office of Arts & Libraries 160w
Public appointments, Scottish Office 214-5w
Public appointments, Treasury 162w
Public appointments, Welsh Office 179w

Whisky
Taiwan 429w

Whitley councils
681w

Whitney, Mr Ray
Debates etc.
New Roads & Street Works Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (05:03:91) 208-10

Widdecombe, Miss Ann, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security
Questions
Alarms, Income support 693w
Child benefit, Multiple births 693w
Civil service dispersal, Dept of Social Security 79w
Cold weather payments, Administrative costs 664w
Cost effectiveness, Dept of Social Security 665-6w
Day care of children, Dept of Social Security 663w
Dept of Social Security, Accounting 663w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Bradford 328w

Widdecombe, Miss Ann—continued
Dept of Social Security local offices, Glasgow 328w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Home visits 328w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Manpower 174w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Quality control 693w
Disabled workers, Dept of Social Security 175w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Social Security 123w
Family credit, Information 665w
Family credit, Mothers 664w
Family credit, Social security recipients 664-5w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Social Security 124w
"Housing Benefit Reviews Final Report" 287w
Income support 78w
Income support, Social security benefits reductions 172-3w, 666w
Income support, Social security claims 177w, 666-7w
Income support, Social security recipients 176-8w
Local government social services, Income support 283w
Management consultants, Dept of Social Security 73-6w
Medical appeal tribunals, Scotland 175w
Nursing homes, Income support 172w
Occupational pensions 6
Pension books 284w
Pensioners, Heating 666w
Pensioners, Income 5
Pensioners, Personal income 6, 70w, 79w
Pensioners, Personal savings 11
Pensioners, Wealth 10-1, 70-1w
Pensions, Interest rates 11
Pensions, Low incomes 80w
Procurement, Dept of Social Security 664-5w
Public appointments, Dept of Social Security 173w
Quota of disabled workers, Crown immunity 282w
Residential care, Housing benefits 282w
Residential care, Income support 171w, 175-6w, 326-7w, 413w, 694w
Residential care, Local government social services 175w
Residential care, Operating costs 80w
Security marking, Dept of Social Security 172w
Severe disability premium, Attendance allowance 123w
Severe disablement allowance, Income support 122w
Smoking, Dept of Social Security 413w
Social security, Civil service agencies 70w
Social security, Computers in government departments 71-2w
Social security, Consolidation Bills 327w
Social security benefits, Administrative delays 413-4w
Social security benefits, Earnings rules 125w
Social security benefits, Research 80w
Social Security Benefits Agency 3
Social Security Benefits Agency, House of Commons questions 79w
Social Security Benefits Agency, Redundancy 3
Social security benefits rates, Political refugees 172w
Social security benefits rates, Water charges 282w
Social security benefits rules, Criminal injuries compensation 665w
Social security claims, Computers in government departments 174w
Social security payments 446w
Social security recipients, Homelessness 663w
Social security recipients, Single homeless 446w

Widdecombe, Miss Ann—continued
Social security recipients, Transitional arrangements 284w
Social security recipients, Young people 282w
State earnings related pension scheme, Additional pensions 173w, 411-2w
State earnings related pension scheme, Costs 667w
War widows' pensions, Remarriage 412w
Widows, Pensions 5-6

Widowers' benefits
Local government pensions 515w

Widows
Pensions 5-6

Wigan
197w, 671-2w

Wiggin, Mr Jerry
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 820, 823
War Crimes Bill, House of Commons procedure (12:03:91) 903

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Questions
Community charge 135-6
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986 128
Disabled workers, Employment discrimination 380w, 486w
Engineering industries, Balance of trade 60w
Family planning clinics, Wales 85w
Handicapped pupils, Multiply handicapped 105w
Income support, Social security benefits reductions 172-3w
Maintenance, Children 75-6w
Maintenance, Disclosure of information 78w
Multiply handicapped, Wales 179w
"New Directions" 105w
Orimulsion, Ince B power station 313w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 10-1w
Social security benefits rates, Political refugees 172w
Water charges 1093

Wild animals
Animal experiments 334w
Import of live animals 689w

Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981
Questions
57w, 68w
Sites of special scientific interest 243w

Wildlife & Countryside (Amendment) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Order for consideration read (15:03:91) 1399

Wilkinson, Mr John
Debates etc.
Air routes, USA (11:03:91) 681-2
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 160-1
Questions
Pensioners, Personal income 70w

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Debates etc.
Birmingham Six, Criminal appeal (14:03:91) 1126
Prison escapes, Open prisons (14:03:91) 1129-31
Questions
Educational advisers, Wales 646w
Health service staff, District health authorities 459w
Prison escapes, Open prisons 158w, 305w, 334w, 648-9w, 698w
Surgery, Family doctors 648w
Swansea Accommodation for the Single Homeless, Government grants 483w, 642-3w

Williams, Mr Alan W
Questions
Community charge 136, 1091-2
Myanmar, Foreign relations 710w

Wilshire, Mr David
Debates etc.
Air traffic control, London airports (05:03:91) 155
Community charge (13:03:91) 965, 969, 977-80
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 820-1
Questions
Ashford Remand Centre, Land use 451-2
House of Commons accommodation, Millbank 620w
NHS trusts 109w
Oil pollution, Persian Gulf 189-90w

Wilson, Mr Brian
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 973
Sea Fisheries (Days in Port) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 (05:03:91) 252-4
Questions
Betting & gaming duties, Horse racing 313w
Community charge benefits, Scotland 277
Drug labelling, EC action 320w
Drugs, Expenditure 109w
Gambling, Expenditure 477w
Generic prescribing 553w
Hospitals, Crown immunity 460w, 556w
Ibbs Report 7w
Lotteries 478w
Lotteries, EC countries 478w
Lotteries, Germany 477-8w
Lotteries, Harmonisation of standards 477w
Prescription drugs, Packaging 320w
Recycling, Scotland 278w

Windward Islands
Bananas 254w, 563-4w

Wines
EC external trade 564-5w

Winnick, Mr David
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:91) 977
Employment Protection (Government Communications Headquarters) Bill, 1R (06:03:91) 286-9
Prescription charges (11:03:91) 684
Ten minute rule bills (06:03:91) 290
War Crimes Bill, House of Commons procedure (12:03:91) 904, 907, 910
Questions
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Immigrant detainees 447
Northern Ireland government, Republic of Ireland 1083-4
Pensioners, Community charge 2
Unemployment 1095

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Questions
RU486, Clinical trials 500w

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
General Practice Fund holding scheme (13:03:91) 949
Questions
Cans, Domestic accidents 63-4w
Cans, Food contamination 63w
Health authorities, Finance 126
UK companies abroad, Iraq 628w

Wise, Mrs Audrey
Questions
Antenatal care, Medical research 491-2w
Antenatal clinics, Manpower 491w
Baby care units 636-7w
Childbirth, Anaesthetics 491w
Childbirth, Statistics 555-6w
Maternity services, Home births 492w
NHS trusts 344w
Paediatrics, Hospital consultants 554w

Wise, Mrs Audrey—continued
Pregnancy, Health education 556w

Wolfson, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 885-7

Wolverhampton
Community charge reduction scheme 474w
Government grants to local authorities 517w
Transitional relief 474w

Women
Invalid care allowances 12
London Underground 657
Offenders 12w
Sanitation 672w
Sterilisation 496w

Woodcock, Dr Mike
Questions
Higher education, Educational qualifications 105-6w

Wool
Guaranteed prices 708-9w

Woolf Inquiry
see Manchester Strangeways Prison Riot Inquiry

Woolwich Arsenal
25w, 716w
Armed forces civilians 716w
Property Services Agency 299w

Working hours
Disabled workers 694w

World Health Organisation
636w

World War II
War crimes 150w

Wormhoudt
Prisoners of war 480w

Worthington, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Oral question time point of order (06:03:91) 281-2
Questions
Assisted places scheme, Scotland 213-4w
Local enterprise companies, Finance 276
Local enterprise companies, Training 316w
Local government, Legislation 400w
Schools, Scotland 140w
Scottish Enterprise, Industrial development 316w

Wray, Mr Jimmy
Debates etc.
Families, Low incomes (13:03:91) 1024-5
Questions
Higher education, Cost per student 577w, 625w
Inner cities initiative 52w
Israel, Occupied territories 432w
Physical education, Scotland 146w
Regional aid 60w
Warrant sales, Community charge 276

Wrecks
Archaeology 197w

Written questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (11:03:91) 684

Yeo, Mr Tim, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of the Environment
Debates etc.
Leasehold housing (08:03:91) 610-20
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 839, 894-900
Questions
Council house rents, Ealing 476w
Council housing, Exeter 99w
Council housing, Homelessness 194-6w
Council tenants, Rent arrears 191w
Derelict land, Land reclamation 245w
Derelict land grants, Nottinghamshire 240w
Electricians, Professional qualifications 366-7w
Environmental impact assessment 56w
Hostels, Deficit grants 239w
Houseboats, Security of tenure 54w
Households, Hackney 99w
Housing investment programmes, Waveney District Council 368w
Incinerators, Planning permission 516-7w
Local government functions, Housing 368w
Local government land, Walsall 239-40w
Planning appeals 55w
Planning permission 370w
Planning permission, Environment protection 56w
Planning permission, Forests 362w
Planning permission, Heliports 471w
Planning permission, Local government land 295w
Playing fields, Land acquisition 520w
Property Services Agency, Offices 54w
Property Services Agency, Woolwich Arsenal 299w
RECHAR 192w
RECHAR, South Yorkshire 192w
Safety glass, Government buildings 296w
Sanitation, Women 672w
Spoil heaps, Waste disposal 370w
Vacant land, Public sector 56w
Vacant land registers 56-7w

York
Local government revenue 51-2w
Mortgage defaulters 229w

York Health Authority
Hospital patients 119w
Out-patients 119w

York University
284w, 287w

Yorkshire & Humberside
Government grants to local authorities 237-40w
Health service ancillary staff 113w
Prisoners on remand 451

Yorkshire & Humberside Development Association
249-50w

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority
Compensation 558w

Young, Sir George, Minister for Housing and Planning
Debates etc.
Planning & Compensation Bill (HL), 2R (12:03:91) 816-26
Questions
Alarms, Government grants to local authorities 691w
Archaeology, Wrecks 197w
Crown Suppliers, Privatisation 692w
Homelessness 236-7w
Homelessness, Greater Manchester 296w
Housing action trusts, Expenditure 473w
Housing investment programmes, Council housing 98w
Housing investment programmes, Homelessness 98-9w
Housing renewal areas, Birmingham 369w, 692w
Housing revenue accounts, Ealing 476w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces casualties 99w
London Zoo 244w
London Zoo, Finance 244w
Public sector housing, Rural areas 246w
Royal Parks Constabulary 365-6w
Royal Parks Constabulary, Arrests 366w
Royal Parks Constabulary, Costs 364-5w
Royal Parks Constabulary, Pay 365w
Royal Parks Constabulary, Police vehicles 365-6w
Single homeless, Housing 59w
Stocken Hall, Inspections 517-8w
Structure plans, Land use 476w

Young offenders
Crime prevention 267-8w
EC countries 481w
Parental responsibility 482w
School leaving 450

Young people
Educational qualifications 441w
Income support 284w, 536w
Scotland 266
Social security recipients 282w

Youth courts
Rehabilitation of offenders 446

Youth training
5w, 67w, 486-7w, 490w
Expenditure 288-90w
Take-up 290w

Yugoslavia
Ministers' visits abroad 544w

Zeebrugge Ferry Disaster Inquiry
653

Zimbabwe
Homicide 545w

Zoo Animal Welfare Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (08:03:91) 641

Zoological Society of London
244w